Self Assessment Tools (SAT) as One of the Basic Tools for Performance Management: A Critique

Thomas Alama Etalong[1*]

[1]*Department of Public Administration, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Nigeria.*

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The alignment of employees to the organizational goal, vision and mission is very imperative and cannot be emphasize enough. As such, there is need for organizations to deliberately bring their workforce on board to achieve this set goals or targets. It is also important for employees to assess themselves from time to time to ascertain that they are up-to- date with the vision, goal and mission of the organization, this literally translate into self-assessment- a process of keeping self in proper check to ascertain correctness and alignment with organizational objective. The central theme of this article is to examine the role of Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) in performance management, the article also examine the shortfall of this tool developed by Bureau for Public Service Reform (BPSR). The method adopted for this study is survey method using questionnaires, one hundred questionnaires were administered among forty (40) junior, thirty (30) senior staff in the Office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Enugu State, twenty (20) contract staff and ten (10) permanent staff of First Bank Plc, presidential road, Enugu. The results from the analysis shows that, the results from Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) are not made public and it gives preferences to government agencies at the detriment of private sector. The paper further X-ray the importance of performance management, ranging from reduced costs in the organization, aligns the organization directly between its employees and the strategic goals and stop project overruns. The paper concludes by noting that the result of the assessment may be made public, to guide policy making process and finally, the private sector should also be incorporated into the tool.

_____

Corresponding author: E-mail: thomasalama@gmail.com;

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nigeria is a very complex country to govern, this is evidenced in the duplication of offices and duties assigned to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). One MDAs is seen performing the same function of its sister MDAs. One practical example is the ICPC and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) all these affect the cost of governance.

It is against this backdrop that the present administration of President Buhari declared a total war against high cost of running government by streamlining and merging ministries and agencies. The Enugu state Government reducing it ministries from 25 to 18, the chief of it all is the fight against corruption as often mimic as *'kuruption'* aim at blocking leakages in government income and ensure system enhancement and performance management.

As a build up to this, the administration introduced various reforms and policies to help curb these ugly situations; reforms like Treasury Single Account (TSA), the almighty whistle blowing policy, Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information (IPPIS) and Self-Assessment Tools (SAT) amongst others. Although, TSA and SAT were a brainchild of Jonathan administration but they were implemented and popularized by the Buhari administration.

Treasury Single Account (TSA) in concert with the Central Bank of Nigeria is to streamline the accounts of all government entities, bring them into the central Bank system, and give the finance Ministry better oversight and control of public resources [1]. She further stresses that, this would also provide the central bank with an important monetary policy tool for better management of liquidity. In the other hand, SAT is an organizational strategic management 'health check'. This tool clearly shows the weaknesses and strengths of an organization, and the possible ways of enhancing the system for proper performance. It is against this background that this paper seeks to: examine the importance of self-Assessment Tool to organizations, to x-ray why performance management is important and a critique of the tool.

1.2 Objective of Study

The general objective of this work is to examine the role of Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) in performance management while the specific objectives are as follows:

1. Examine the shortfall of this tool developed by Bureau for Public Service Reform.
2. The role of Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) in employee productivity.
3. To explore how this tool curb duplication of functions in a particular MDAs.
4. To critique the tool for further improvement to cover all sectors of the economy.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Does your organization apply SAT during performance appraisal?
2. If your organization adopt Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) can it serve as 'health check' for the organization?
3. Does your organization appraise your performance?

2. METHODOLOGY

According to Derek and Kerryn (2020) research methodology simply refers to the practical ''how'' of any given piece of research. It's about how a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research aims and objectives. Methodology allows the researcher to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability, the method adopted for this research is a survey method. This method gather data through the form of questionnaires, using this method, questionnaires were self-administered among junior and senior staff at the Office of the Secretary to the State Government, Enugu State and contract and permanent staff of First Bank Plc, presidential road, Enugu, Enugu State-Nigeria .

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Concept of Self-Assessment

Just as the name suggests, the individual assesses his own performance to the set criteria. Self-assessments, also known as self-appraisals or self-evaluations, are popular tools used by management to learn how employees view their own performance against productivity. These

assessments help close the gap between expectations and performance, and provide a channel to open communication about goals, opportunities and development. While managers and supervisors share their opinions of employee performance and ability to meet expectations during evaluations, self-assessment permits employees to discuss what they see as important projects completed, share new skills and techniques acquired, and remind employers of all the great work they have done since the last performance review. This is a good method for identifying where the organization's opinion of performance and the employee's opinion are different. Employees should consider their strengths and weaknesses when conducting self-appraisal as found out by [2]. They should brainstorm a list of strengths and the tasks or skills they enjoy the most. They should then take an honest look at areas where they can improve**.** Improvement areas might include time management skills, speaking in front of groups, leading projects or even improving processes for adequate service delivery. The correlation between self-appraisal and appraisal of others had three outcomes and the respondents displayed a 'self-other bias [3]''.

According to Bureau for Public Service Reform (BPSR) handbook [4] SAT is an organizational strategic management 'health check'. It contains statements aimed at providing the user with a clearer picture of the current strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Where weaknesses are identified, advice on next steps to be taken to improve management and governance is available through the corresponding section of the guidance.

The tool is designed to establish a baseline with regards to the organization's strategic management approach from which reforms can be considered and change management plan developed in conjunction with this guide. Later, the tool can be re-used as part of a progress review. When using the, SAT, the answers category selected and results generated are now collected by BPSR; however, BPSR will use some data to help it better analysis where to invest resources in the future through relevant training events and the like in order for BPSR, to better assist organizations with delivery of public services.

The process for carrying out SAT is presented below

From Fig. 1 above, 3 teams within each parastatal should be established, with 10-12 staff in each team. The team should be structured as follows:

3.1.1 Junior staff team

This is drawn from a range of departments and units middle staff team-This is equally drawn from a range of departments and units

3.1.2 Senior staff team

Drawn from a range of departments and units. It is important to note that, each team assesses it current status of the SAT and gives its organization rating on each of the 96 statements using either: strong, well placed, developing area and needs attention.

The groups then come together and discuss and reach a consensus on their organizations' consolidated ratings. The parastatal nominates a staff member to upload the consolidated version of the parastatal's ratings onto a restricted area of the BPSR website: www.bpsr.gov.ng.

3.2 Important of Self-Assessment Tool (Sat)

1. It serve as a strategic management 'health check' of an organization, by unveiling the weaknesses and strengths of that establishment
2. It is an instrument for system enhancement and performance management. Once the weaknesses of an organization is identified, the organization develop modalities to curb these weaknesses to improve in it service delivery.
3. SAT serve as a guiding tool to policy makers, as data collected and analyzed inform reforms in MDAs
4. It mirrors the organization performance to see where resources can be committed for public service delivery.

3.3 Critique of Self-Assessment Tool (Sat)

1. The results of the assessment from MDAs are not shared publicly or externally.
2. It gives preference to only government agencies at the detriment of private sector.
3. The changes made could degrade the performance to which users are accustomed.

4. Users who are familiar with how the system works today might not like the change they are about to encounter and better still manipulate the process.
5. You might unknowingly break or omit functionality that are vital to some stakeholder group.
6. Stakeholders might take this opportunity to request new functionality that seems like good idea but is not really needed to meet the business objectives.
7. The test can only be administered in isolation, which dovetail into uniqueness of the tool for appropriate strategic management.
8. It failure to ensure consistency in administering can jeopardize organization's credibility and functionality.
9. It is time consuming and expensive.
10. It is not a true test of performance and credibility.

3.4 Concept of Performance Management

According to organizational life cycle theorist, like lester, Parnell and Carraher [5] noted that organization development is from formation, growth, maturity, decline and death. According to this school of thought, the driving force in all these stages is the nature of workforce. At maturity stage the organization cannot continue to grow or survive external competition if there is no organizational structure that supports human resource creativity, innovation, teamwork and high performance, which will withstand pressure from competitors and other external factors.

Most organizations lack this structure, often than not, after growth and maturity cannot expand further again, because their performance management cum talent management is faculty. This is evidenced in Ministries, Agencies and Department folding up. Example is the defunct NEPA, Nigerian Railway Corporation (even though the government is trying to revamp it) NITEL among others. It is a wakeup call for organizations to have adequate appraisal mechanism for every sectors to match objectives/goals with results and service delivery.

There is no single universally accepted model or definition cum meaning of performance management. Various human resource experts and practitioners have tried to explain the concept in line with their own understanding.
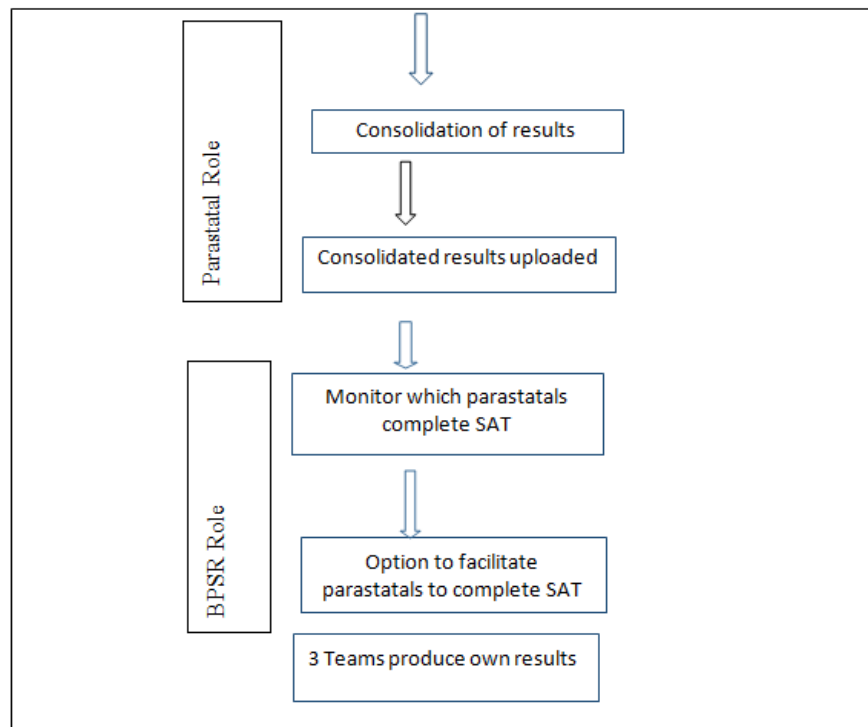

Fig. 1. process for completing SAT
Source: BPSR Handbook [4]

According to Aguinis [6] performance management is a continuous process of identifying measuring and developing the performance of individual and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization. Every organization have a strategic goals which they operate on, as such the organization need to appraise the performance of individuals in the organization to see if it is aligning with the strategic goals. This process is carried out from time to time, it helps in identifying also the weaknesses and strengths of workers to see where they can be improvement and possibly build capacity of these employees. According to BPSR (2015:64) performance management is concerns with both the individual performance of staff and the performance of the organization as a whole. It further stresses the need for such organization to ensure that its operations are fully aligned with its strategic objectives.

While to Latham et al. [7] in Okechukwu [8] performance management is the process through which supervisors and those they lead gain a shared understanding of work expectations and goals, exchange performance feedback, identify learning and development opportunities, and evaluate performance results. It is through this process that organizations are able to create and sustain a workplace environment that values continuous improvement, adapts well to changes, strives to attain ambitious goals, encourages creativity, promote learning and professional development. Agreeing to the about view, performance management is a continuous activities that organizations must give attention to at all levels, as this create rooms for development and appraisal, thereby making ways for improvement and at the same time measure the outcome of organizational resources. In the view of Okechukwu [8] it measures actual outcomes against resources used and helps in the determination of success in terms of public service delivery. For the purpose of this study, performance management is viewed as the alignment of individual goals with the strategic goals of the organization to drive needed reforms and development. South East Governors' Forum is a good example of an organization that channel its resources effectively to promote regional integration and socio-economic development among the states of the South East zone of Nigeria. SEGF have created platform for continual interaction among development partners. As for Armstrong and Baron (1998) performance management is a

''strategic and integrated approach to increase the effectiveness of companies by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors''. A performance management system is often used by the managers in order to align the goals of the company to the goals of their employees, thereby ensuring productivity. From the views of scholars as presented above, it is observed that the application of performance management at all levels of an organization leads to the achievement of the following:

1. Reduce costs in the organization.
2. Aligns the organization directly between its employees and the strategic goals.
3. Stop project overruns.
4. Decreases the time it takes to create strategic or operational change by communicating the changes through a new set of goals.
5. Optimizes incentive plans to specific goals for over achievement, not just business as usual
6. Improves employee engagement because everyone understands how they are directly contributing to the organizations high level goals.
7. Create transparency in achievement of goals.
8. High confidence in bonus payment process
9. Professional development programs are better aligned directly to achieving business level goals.

3.5 Performance Management Cycle

According to Mabey et al. (1999) performance management cycle has five elements which suggest how performance management system should be implemented in organization. The elements are represented below.

From the above, measurement of performance has to do with appraisal of the workforce to ascertain their performance and level of productivity over time and equally looked at areas that need improvement for adequate adjustment.

3.5.1 Feedback of results

This entails consistently monitoring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees and work groups on their progress toward reaching their goals. Ongoing monitoring

provides the opportunity to check how employees are contributing to a successful performance management and how they should be used in conjunction with setting performance goals.

3.5.2 Rewards based on outcomes

Employees are not economic factors that should be used and dumped but have feelings and should be treated appropriately to achieve maximum results. To achieve this, a reward system should be put in place to commend an employee who put in his or her best in executing a particular task and punishment system to also serve as discipline to others. They are two kinds of reward namely: Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards makes the employee feel better in the organization, it also tend to give personal satisfaction to individual. Examples are: information, feedback, recognitions, trust, and empowerment among others. Extrinsic rewards on the other hand focus on the performance and activities of the employee in to attain a certain outcome. Examples, Bonuses, salary raise, Gifts, Promotion. It is important to note that, reward needs to be according to the employee's inputs and specific need.

3.5.3 Amendments to objectives and activities

This phase is more of a collaborative effort between the management and employees, to review the employee's job description to determine if it reflects the work that the employee is currently doing. If the employee has taken on new responsibilities or the job has changed significantly, and if there is change, the job description/ objective should be updated. This equally identify training objectives that will help the employee grow his or her skills, knowledge, and competencies related to their work.

3.5.4 Setting objectives

This is the most difficult phase of the performance management cycle finding appropriate and clear language to describe the performance objectives and measures or indicators of success. There is need to ensure that the objectives are a good representation of the full range of duties carried out by the employee, especially those everyday tasks that can take time but often overlooked as significant accomplishments.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Goal Setting Theory

Goal setting theory refers to goals being set for the future and subsequent performance of an individual or organizations. The pioneer of goal setting theory Edwin Locke states that when individuals or organizations set more difficult goals, then they perform better. According to Locke and Latham (2006) if the set goals are easy then performance of an individual or organization decreases. This theory by Locke was developed inductively after studying the psychology of organizations and industries over the years. It is based on 400 laboratory and diverse field studies.

Goal setting will help in developing action plan designed to give people and organizations sense of direction. This helps in making it a major component of personal development and management literature. Theorists/researchers point out that, there is a positive correlation between goal setting and improved business and organizational results. This is because goal setting theory encompasses all aspects of building organizations with efficiency (Locke & Latham 2006; Spaulding & Simon, (1994); Koppes, (2014).

4.2 Properties of Goal Setting Theory

According to Locke and Latham (2006) there are five basic principles that allows goal setting to perform better. It is represented below

According to the proponents of this theory:

1. **Clarity:** refers to a clear and measurable goal that can be achieved within specific timeline and within goal setting
2. **Challenge:** refers to the goals being able to achieve decent level of difficulty motivating the individual and organization to strive for positive goal achievements.
3. **Commitment:** makes individuals or organizations to put on deliberate efforts in meeting goals. Furthermore, it also helps goals to become more achievable
4. **Feedback:** provides information on the progress towards achieving goals. Individuals and organization can adjust goal setting according to feedback
5. **Task complexity:** makes the achieving of goals easier by laying down process and
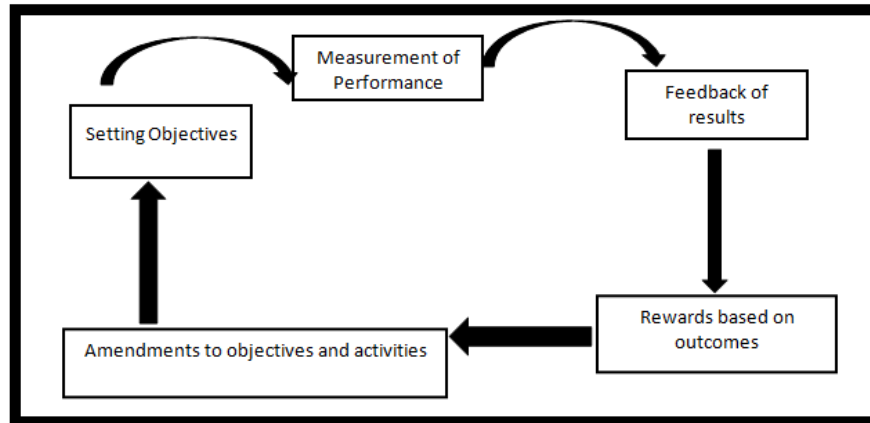
Fig. 2. Performance management cycle
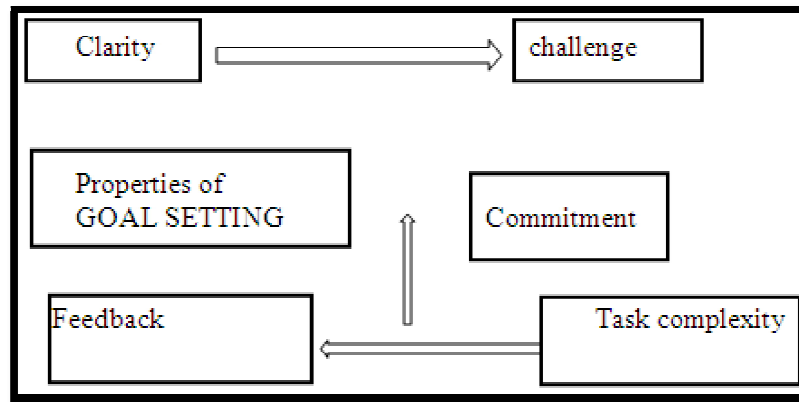*Source: Mabey et al. (1999)*

Fig. 3. Properties of goals setting theory
Source: Locke and Latham (2006)

steps. Goal setting can be achieved by applying all the principle stringently and ensuring that all goals account for the principles.

Although, often time goal setting theory is criticized as been time consuming and expensive. According to Mobley (1999); Julnes et al [9] Goal setting theory has often brought out as being time consuming and expensive in application. This is because there are various factors which needs adequate attention and proper actions to address it in order to achieve the goals set by the organization. This includes; Donovan & Williams (2003), Doren, Van, Bouckaert & Halligan (2010), Salaman, Graema, Storey, John, Sbery & John (2005)

1. Selection of right people with skills and knowledge.
2. Making training for career development and organizational productivity a necessity.

3. Involving time and incurring expenses.

Be it as it may, goal setting is integral to the achievement of performance management in an organization. This goals serve as a building block or bridge between the organization and its employees, subsequently alignment is achieved to bring about performance management.

4.3 Data Presentation

The findings of this paper were generated from the administered questionnaire. The questionnaire were administered among forty (40) junior staff and thirty (30) senior staff in the office of the Secretary to State Government, Enugu State while twenty (20) contract and ten (10) permanent staff draw from first bank presidential road branch, Enugu; making the sampling size One hundred (100). The discussion of the findings towed the line of the research question as stated below and

responses presented in the pie chart are represented in percentages. The two positive responses and negative responses respectively were often combined in the discussion for a clearer presentation of the discussion.

4.3.1 Research question 1. Does your organization apply SAT during performance appraisal?

From the pie chart above, out of 100 respondents 70 respondents representing 70% said ''NO'' indicating that Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) is alien to their establishment/organization, as the various organizations uses different format or tool to assess them. As for the civil servant, what they conversant with is performance assessment form issued by the civil servant commission during promotion exercise. The respondents from the banking sector observed that, during assessment what is used to benchmark them is meeting their targets either monthly or annually while 30% said ''YES'' noting that some agencies at the federal level have adopted this tool, they make use of it during

performance appraisal to bring about improved service delivery and employee efficiency and effectiveness. Since this tool helps in aligning the objective of the organization with employee objective.

4.3.2 Research question 2. If your organization adopt Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) can it serve as 'health check' for the organization?

65% of the respondents agreed that, if organizations adopt or introduce Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) it will serve as a 'health check' for the organization as the tool will mirror the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. The workforce weaknesses and strengths, with this SAT create room for improvement. 35% disagreed that it cannot serve as 'health check' as the result of the assessment is not made public for constructive criticism and at times employees are not given the necessary support or right tool for improvement of service delivery.
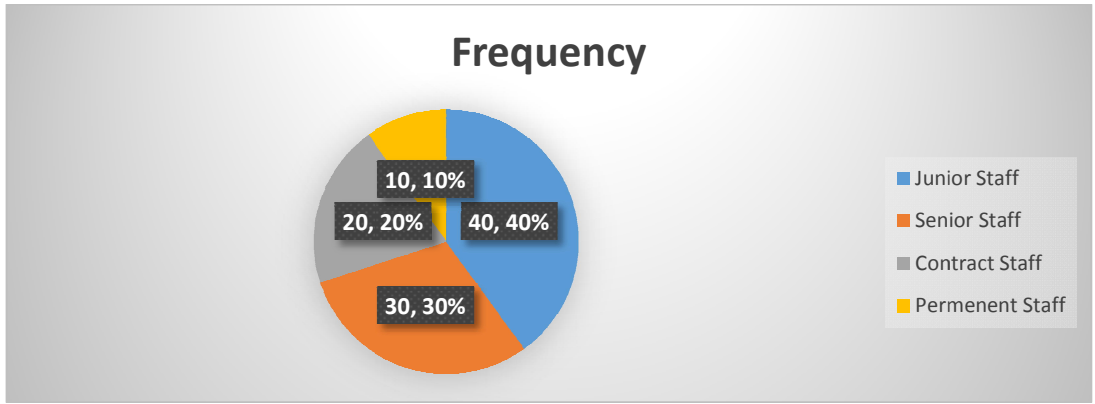

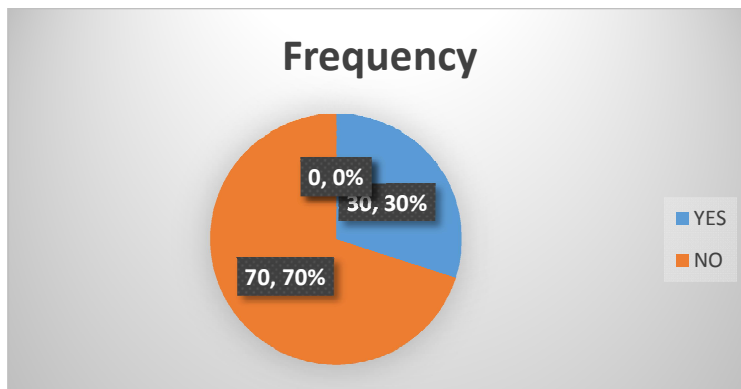**Fig. 4. Distribution of respondents according to status**
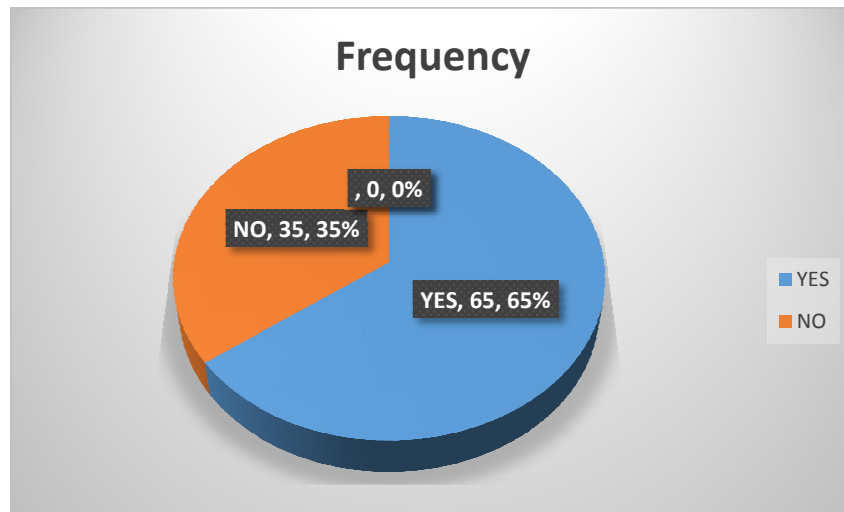

Fig. 5. Research question 1
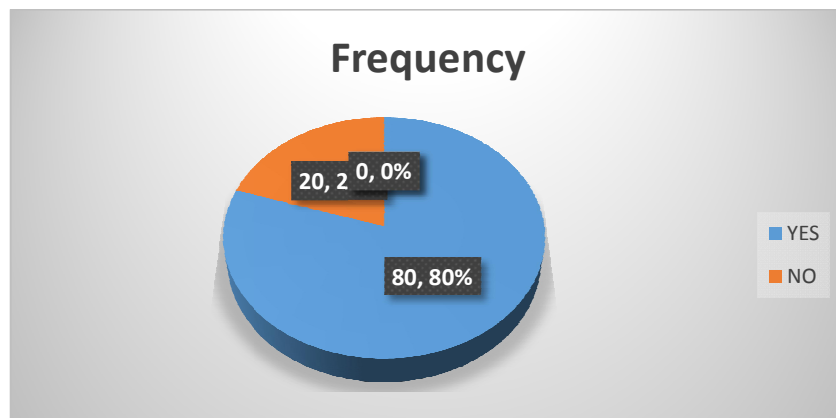
Fig. 6. Research question 2

Fig. 7. Research question 3

4.3.3 Research question 3. Does your organization appraise your performance?

80% of the respondents indicated that, their various organizations appraise them for either promotion, reward, discipline amongst others. This appraisal serve as a booster to them as every worker want to get a good report/record for onward promotion or reward, as such they put in their best in executing their task timely and professionally.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The following were the finding of this research:

1. Results from the assessment are not shared publicly but treated as confidential

2. Self -Assessment Tool (SAT) developed by Bureau for Public Service Reforms (BPSR) is developed and model to suit the public sector without due diligent to the private sector

3. It was also revealed that Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) is alien to several other Ministries, Departments and Agencies and some MDAs don't know how to use it properly.

5. CONCLUSION

The importance of Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) as one of the basic tools for performance management cannot be overemphasized as this help in the development of a professional skill set, appraisal and the alignment of individual goals with the strategic objectives of the

organization. It is also a platform for sharing understanding and work expectations and goals to get adequate feedback for necessary adjustment cum improvement. The research finding reveals that some of the MDAs in Nigeria are not aware of the Self –Assessment Tool and how to make use it, assessment to an average civil servant in Nigeria is mainly for promotion or reward and not for service improvement. As such they put in their best within the period under assessment to get promotion or reward. It is further revealed that, Self- Assessment Tool is typical designed for the public sector without due consideration of the private sector who at the moment, are the highest employer of labour in Nigeria.

Lastly, it is observed that if SAT is properly applied by MDAs, it can serve as 'health check' as the employees get to know their strengths and weaknesses. This become necessary as employees seek to improve on his/her weaknesses while keeping up with areas of strengths.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the study proposes the following

1. The need for the results of the assessment from MDAs to be shared publicly or externally for the populate to hold any erring MDAs accountable, as this will promote transparency and professionalism
2. There is need for SAT to be remodel to accommodate the private sector as they account for about 94% of the GDP
3. BPSR should carry out more campaigns to enlighten the general public about the usage of SAT, stressing it urgency and importance; noting it is not to discredit any MDAs but a way of introducing needed change to MDAs.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Ngozi O. Fighting corruption is dangerous: The story behind the Headlines. The MIT Press; 2018.
2. Robert A. Tybout M. Performance management in the public sector: Fact or fiction? International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management. 2007; 53(3);245-260.
3. Roberts GE. Employee performance appraisal system participation: A technique that works. Public Personnel Management. 2003;32(1):89-98.
4. Bureau of public service reforms handbook how to manage and Reform Agencies and Parastatals; 2015.
5. Lester D, Parnell J, Carraher S. Organizational life cycle: A five-stage empirical scale. International Journal of Organizational Analysis; 200311(4):339-354.
6. Aguinis H. Performance management. 2nd ed. India, Dorling Kindersley Ltd; 2009.
7. Latham G, Sulsky LM, Macdonald H. Performance management. Oxford, Oxford Printing Press; 2007.
8. Okechukwu FC. Public Financial Management. Enugu, His Glory Publications; 2015.
9. Julnes P. International handbook of practice-based performance management. London, Sage Publication; 2007.
10. Donovan JJ, Williams KJ. Missing the mark: Effects of time and causal attributions on goal revision in response to goal-performance discrepancies. The Journal of Applied Psychology. 2003; 88(3):379-390.
11. Doren W, Van A, Bouckaert G, Halligan J. Performance Management in the Public Sector. London. Routledge; 2010
12. Salaman G, Graeme B, Storey A, John L, Sbery C, John O, Strategy human resource management: Theory and practice. London, Sage Publication Ltd. F; 2005.