STAFF PERFORMANCE AND SUPERVISION

*Being a Paper Presented by*

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# PLEASANTRIES

It is my pleasure to have this rare opportunity to address this all important gathering of learned gentlemen, the Heads of Courts. Permit me to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Almighty Allah for making it possible for all of us to witness another Round Table for Heads of Court with the theme “Strengthening the Legal and Judicial System in Nigeria”.

May I crave your indulgence to appreciate my Lord, The Honourable, The Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute (NJI) Abuja, Hon. Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, CFR for graciously approving my nomination to present this paper at this auspicious and memorable gathering. In the same vein, I wish to express my appreciation to the Administrator of this great Institute, Hon. Justice Salisu Garba Abdullahi and the Internal Education Committee for finding me worthy of this opportunity to present this paper.

# INTRODUCTION

The judiciary is a cornerstone of any society, entrusted with upholding justice, ensuring the rule of law, promoting and protecting the rights of citizens. The efficiency, credibility, and effectiveness of the judiciary are paramount for maintaining social stability. However, the effectiveness of the judiciary is heavily reliant on the performance of its staff. In the contemporary landscape of organizational management, the performance of staff is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of overall institutional effectiveness. This is particularly true within judicial systems, where the efficiency and effectiveness of court operations hinge on the capabilities and motivation of personnel.

Supervision practice plays a pivotal role in shaping employee performance, influencing not only individual productivity

but also the collective output of court systems.

Recent research, such as the study conducted by Hakim and Afriany1, underscores the significance of effective supervision in enhancing employee performance. Effective supervision, characterized by consistent monitoring, guidance and support, is essential in fostering an environment where employees can thrive and meet performance expectations.

There is plethora of literature which reveals that supervisory practices significantly influence staff performance. Tsetim et al.2 opined that supervision boosts productivity, enhances morale and promotes teamwork and collective problem-solving.

Effective supervision is also crucial for skill development. Glickman et al.3 argue that supervision helps identify employee strengths and weaknesses, facilitating targeted professional growth. Esia- Donkoh and Ofosu-Dwamena4 emphasize that supervision enhances employees' skills and knowledge, crucial for achieving organizational goals.

Employee engagement is another critical aspect, with Ladany5 noting that supportive supervisors increase motivation and engagement, leading to higher productivity. Conversely, ineffective supervision can result in disengagement and reduced performance.

The broader impact of supervision extends to overall organizational effectiveness. Bouheni6 highlights that effective supervision improves employee performance, which enhances metrics like efficiency and profitability.

1 Hakim, A., & Afriany, J. (2023). THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SUPERVISION ON EMPLOYEE

PERFORMANCE. *Jurnal Ekonomi*, *12*(01), 443–450. Retrieved from https://[www.ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/Ekonomi/article/view/1201](http://www.ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/Ekonomi/article/view/1201)

2 Tsetim, James Tersoo, Timothy Terkimbir Asue, and Emmanuel Lubem Asenge. "Effect of Supervision on Employee Productivity in the Transport Industry in Benue State, Nigeria." *Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies* 4.12 (2019): 912-918.

3 Glickman, Victor. *What counts: Education knowledge management practices*. Diss. University of British Columbia, 2004.

4 Obeng-Afari, E. V. E. L. Y. N. *Supervision practices and support systems in public basic schools in Effutu*

*Municipality*. Diss. University of Education, Winneba, 2022.

5 Ladany, Nicholas. "The ingredients of supervisor failure." *Journal of clinical psychology* 70.11 (2014): 1094-1103.

6 Ben Bouheni, Faten. "Banking regulation and supervision: can it enhance stability in Europe?." *Journal of Financial Economic Policy* 6.3 (2014): 244-269.

As heads of courts, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms through which supervision impact staff performance. By implementing strategic and robust supervisory practices, court leaders can cultivate a motivated and capable workforce that is better equipped to navigate the complexities of judicial responsibilities. This paper explores these themes, offering insights and strategies that can enhance staff performance within our courts, ultimately improving access to justice and strengthening public trust in the judicial system.

# THE NEED FOR HIGH STAFF PERFORMANCE IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

The word "performance" is generally defined as a means and results achieved by a person or a group or an organization in carrying out its work. Employee performance in this context, refers to the process, procedure, and the results of work undertaken by the employee.7 Hunt and Osborn define performance as the quantity and quality of the task achievement, either committed by individuals, groups or organizations. Further it is said that the performance can be measured by individuals, groups or organizations. High or low performance can be seen from the quantity and quality of its work achievement. The quantity aspect refers to the workload that has been set, while the quality of the work can be seen from the manageability and standards of the work performed.8

Judicial staff are often the first point of contact for litigants, lawyers, and the public. Their professionalism, courtesy, and knowledge therefore greatly influence public perception of the judiciary. These staff, including clerks, registrars, administrative personnel, and other supporting staff play a vital role in the day-to- day operations of courts.

7Dr (Cand) NovianitaRulandari, S, AP, M,Si,The Effect of Supervision and Professionalism on Staff Performance at the Office of Social Affairs in East Jakarta Administrative City(February 2017)International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 7, No. 2

8 ibid

Their performance directly impacts the efficiency of judicial processes, the timely delivery of justice, and public trust in the legal system. That perhaps is why Chapter 4 Sections 1-3 of the Public Service Rules provides for the annual staff performance evaluation and certificates for junior and senior staffs.

Some of the key areas where staff performance is critical include efficient handling of case files, accurate documentation, and effective management of court schedules in order to ensure that cases progress smoothly without unnecessary delays.

in light of the foregoing, staff performance in the Nigerian courts is of paramount importance as it directly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system. Given the critical role that courts play in upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice, the performance of court personnel—ranging from judges and registrars to clerks and support staff can significantly impact case management, timely adjudication, and overall public trust in the judiciary.

High performance of staff is essential for reducing case backlogs, improving the quality of legal proceedings, and enhancing the accessibility of justice for all citizens. Furthermore, as the Nigerian legal landscape continues to evolve, with increasing demands for transparency and accountability, the ability of court staff to perform their duties competently and professionally becomes even more crucial.

By fostering a culture of excellence through robust supervision mechanisms and providing adequate training and support, Nigerian courts can ensure that their personnel are well-equipped to meet these challenges, ultimately contributing to a more effective and credible judicial system.

# WHAT IS SUPERVISION?

Supervision comprises two words, namely **‘super’,** that is, superior or extra, and **‘vision’,** that is, sight or perspective. The literal meaning of the term ‘supervision’ is to ‘oversee’ or ‘to inspect the work of other persons’. Thus, ‘supervision’ refers to an act by which any person inspects or supervises the work of other people, that is, whether they are working properly or not. According to M. S. Vitoles, supervision refers to the direct, immediate guidance and control of subordinates in the performance of their jobs. Thus, the activity of supervision is concerned with the direction, guidance, control and superintendence of the subordinates. In an organization or company, supervision is frequently done by a leader to his subordinates in the delegation of authority, duties and responsibilities. Supervision in the context of management is to oversee all of the tasks done by the subordinates in order to avoid mistakes, both technical and procedural errors.9

Supervision therefore is the process of overseeing, supporting and guiding the activities, performance, and development of individuals or groups within an organization. It involves monitoring work, providing feedback, and ensuring that tasks are completed according to established standards and objectives. The primary goal of supervision is to enhance productivity, improve skills, and ensure that organizational goals are met efficiently and effectively.

# TYPES OF SUPERVISION

Understanding the different types of supervision is essential for selecting the most appropriate approach to managing and guiding a team. Each type of supervision offers distinct methods for overseeing employees, from autocratic styles that centralize decision-making to democratic approaches that encourage collaboration. By exploring these different supervisory styles, organizations can tailor their leadership strategies to match the needs of their workforce, enhance productivity, and foster a positive and supportive

9 ibid

work environment. The different types of supervision are outlined below:

1. **Autocratic Supervision:** In this type, the supervisor makes all decisions unilaterally without consulting subordinates. The supervisor dictates what needs to be done, how it should be done, and when it should be done. This approach can lead to quick decision-making but may also cause resentment or reduce employee morale.
2. **Democratic Supervision:** Also known as participative supervision, this type involves the supervisor consulting with employees and considering their opinions before making decisions. This approach encourages teamwork, boosts morale, and often leads to better decision-making.
3. **Laissez-Faire Supervision:** In laissez-faire supervision, the supervisor provides minimal direction and allows employees to take responsibility for their work. Employees have the freedom to make decisions and carry out tasks as they see fit. This style can be effective with highly skilled and motivated workers but may lead to a lack of coordination or oversight in other cases.
4. **Bureaucratic Supervision:** Bureaucratic supervision involves strict adherence to rules, regulations, and procedures. Supervisors focus on ensuring that employees follow established guidelines and protocols. While this approach can ensure consistency and compliance, it may stifle creativity and adaptability.
5. **Supportive Supervision:** This type emphasizes providing support and guidance to employees rather than just monitoring their work. The supervisor acts as a mentor or

coach, helping employees develop their skills, resolve

problems, and improve their performance. This approach is

beneficial in building strong relationships and fostering a positive work environment.

1. **Transformational Supervision:** Transformational supervision focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve their full potential. The supervisor leads by example, encourages innovation, and fosters a sense of ownership among employees. This type is associated with high levels of engagement, creativity, and job satisfaction.
2. **Task-Oriented Supervision:** In task-oriented supervision, the focus is on the completion of specific tasks and meeting deadlines. The supervisor closely monitors progress and ensures that tasks are carried out efficiently. This type is effective in situations where meeting targets and deadlines is critical.
3. **Relationship-Oriented Supervision:** This type emphasizes building strong interpersonal relationships between the supervisor and subordinates. The supervisor prioritizes communication, trust, and collaboration, which can lead to a supportive and harmonious work environment.

Each type of supervision has its advantages and is suitable for different contexts, depending on the nature of the work, the characteristics of the team, and the goals of the organization. According to R. Likert- *“There is no one best way to supervise. Supervisory practices that are effective in some situations yield unsatisfactory results in others.”10*

Indeed supervision is inherently shaped by individual’s trait and wisdom. Techniques are developed by the supervisor based on the specific situation. The techniques differ depending on the situation, the nature of work, the individual involved, the dynamics of the group and the organisation.

10 Likert, Rensis. "Effective supervision: An adaptive and relative process 1." *Personnel Psychology* 11.3 (1958): 317-

332.

Given these variations, it is difficult to adjudge one types of supervision as the ‘best’ in all context.

# SIGNIFICANCE OF SUPERVISION

Supervision is primarily concerned with overseeing or watching the performance of workers. It plays an important role in the management set up. It is directly connected with the workers and acts as a vital link between the management and workers. The significance of supervision can be explained as follows:

1. **Issue of Orders and Instructions:** The workers require guidance of supervisor at every step. He clears their doubts and tells them the proper method of doing a job. A sub- ordinate can give better performance when he knows the work he is supposed to do.
2. **Planning and Organizing the Work:** A superior acts as a planner and a guide for his sub-ordinates. A schedule of work is prepared so as to ensure an even and steady flow of work. The supervisor lays down production targets for the workers and determines the methods and procedures for doing the work.
3. **It is Important at All Levels:** Supervision means overseeing and watching sub-ordinates. Top management supervises managers whereas supervisor supervises workers. The supervision at the front line or firing line is most important since actual work is done at that level.
4. **Vital Link between Workers and Management:** A supervisor is a representative of the management and a very important figure from workers point of view. He communicates the policies of the management to workers (downward communication) and also provides feed back to the management as to what is happening at the lowest level (upward communication).
5. **Motivating Subordinates:** A supervisor is a leader at the lowest rung of management ladder. He serves as a friend, philosopher and guide to workers. He inspires team work and secures maximum co-operation from the employees. It is he who can help in getting optimum utilization of manpower.
6. **Feedback to Workers:** A supervisor compares the actual performance of workers against the standards laid down and identifies weaknesses of workers and suggests corrective measures to overcome them. In this way, workers can improve their performance in future.
7. **Proper Assignment of Work:** A supervisor makes systematic arrangement of activities and resources for his group. He assigns work to each worker and delegate’s authority to workers. Workers feel frustrated when the work being done by them is not properly arranged. Some workers may sit idle whereas others may be overburdened if work is not properly assigned.

# IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF SUPERVISION

Effective supervision is vital for the smooth functioning and success of any organization. It not only ensures that tasks are completed efficiently but also fosters a positive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated. The principles of supervision outlined by psychologist Blum emphasize the importance of leadership that is considerate, thoughtful, and fair. The Psychologist Blum has suggested the following principles of supervision:

1. **Never Be An Autocrat:** While doing supervision work, never behave like an autocrat because this is self-defeating.
2. **Listen Carefully to Your Subordinates:** Supervisor must be a

good listener. He must listen carefully to everything told to

him by his subordinates. He must accord full opportunity to the workers to present their case.

1. **Never Decide Anything in a Hurried Way:** It is a very rash approach to form an opinion about anybody hurriedly after a casual glance or a brief hearing, as most of the complaints may not be genuine. But some may be so and if they are not removed the morale of the workers in the organisation may suffer.
2. **Do Not Enter into Arguments with Subordinates:** Under no circumstances should the superior indulge in argument with his subordinates, because, if he fails to persuade or convince them by his arguments, he is liable to issue orders to vindicate his point of view. This will create frustration and sense of insecurity among the workers. A good leader should not argue but listen carefully and issue orders only after careful listening.

# THE ROLE OF SUPERVISION IN ENHANCING STAFF PERFORMANCE

The role of supervision in enhancing staff performance has been extensively explored in organizational behavior and management literature. Supervision is often defined as the process of overseeing and guiding employees to ensure that their work aligns with organizational goals and standards. Effective supervision is crucial for fostering a productive work environment, as it directly influences employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

Research indicates that supervision serves multiple functions, including providing direction, facilitating communication, and offering support. According to Toding11, supervision is essential for ensuring that employees adhere to established plans and policies, which in turn helps prevent waste and inefficiency. Direct supervision, characterized by close oversight and interaction, has

11 Toding, Martin. "Conceptions of Entrepreneurial Learning held by University Teachers within Engineering Education."

been shown to enhance employee accountability and performance by providing immediate feedback and guidance. Conversely, indirect supervision, which may involve less direct interaction, can still be effective if it includes clear communication of expectations and performance metrics.

Moreover, studies have highlighted the importance of leadership styles in shaping supervisory practices. For instance, transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiration and motivation, has been linked to higher levels of employee performance. Leaders who engage in supportive supervision create an environment where employees feel valued and empowered, leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment (Robbins, 2016). This is particularly relevant in high-stakes environments, such as the judicial system, where the quality of supervision can significantly impact the performance of court staff.

In addition, the literature suggests that effective supervision is associated with improved employee performance indicators, such as quality, quantity, punctuality, and effectiveness. By establishing clear performance expectations and providing regular feedback, supervisors can help employees understand their roles and responsibilities, thereby enhancing their performance outcomes.

Effective supervisory practices not only enhance individual employee performance but also contribute to the overall success of the organization. As such, organizations, including those within the judicial system, must prioritize the development of robust supervisory frameworks to optimize staff performance and achieve their strategic objectives.

# KEY ASPECTS OF EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

Effective supervision is crucial for maintaining high standards of

performance in the judiciary. Supervisors, including court administrators, judges, and senior staff, have a responsibility to

ensure that their teams are performing optimally. Key aspects of effective supervision include:

1. **Clear Communication:** Supervisors must clearly communicate expectations, goals, and responsibilities to their staff. Open lines of communication foster a collaborative work environment.
2. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Supervisors should regularly monitor staff performance, provide constructive feedback, and address any issues promptly. This helps in identifying areas for improvement and ensuring accountability.
3. **Support and Mentorship:** Supervisors should provide guidance and support to their staff, helping them navigate challenges and develop their skills. Mentorship programs can be particularly effective in nurturing talent and fostering professional growth.
4. **Conflict Resolution:** Effective supervision also involves managing conflicts within the team. Supervisors should be skilled in conflict resolution techniques to maintain a harmonious and productive work environment.
5. **Incentives and Motivation:** Supervisors should recognize and reward excellent performance. Incentives, such as promotions, bonuses, and public recognition, can motivate staff to strive for excellence.

# STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING SUPERVISION IN THE JUDICIARY

To improve supervision within the judiciary, the following strategies can be implemented:

1. **Leadership Training:** Supervisors should undergo regular

leadership training to enhance their management skills,

including conflict resolution, communication, and team building.

1. **Delegation of Authority:** Supervisors should delegate authority appropriately, empowering staff to take ownership of their responsibilities. This not only improves efficiency but also fosters a sense of accountability among staff.
2. **Use of Technology:** Supervisors can leverage technology to monitor staff performance, track progress on tasks, and provide real-time feedback. Digital tools can also assist in managing workload and improving communication within teams.
3. **Establishment of Supervision Frameworks:** Clear supervision frameworks and protocols should be established to guide supervisors in their roles. This includes setting out responsibilities, performance expectations, and reporting lines.
4. **Encouraging a Culture of Continuous Improvement:** Supervisors should foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement within their teams. This can be achieved by encouraging staff to pursue further education, attend workshops, and participate in professional development programs.

# CHALLENGES AFFECTING STAFF PERFORMANCE

Despite the critical role of staff in the judiciary, several challenges hinder their optimal performance, these include:

1. **Inadequate Training:** Many judicial staff lack the necessary training and skills development opportunities to perform their duties effectively.
2. **Resource Constraints:** Insufficient funding and resources

lead to poor working conditions, lack of modern equipment,

and inadequate facilities, all of which negatively impact staff morale and productivity.

1. **Corruption and Unethical Behavior:** In some instances, staff may engage in corrupt practices, which undermines the integrity of the judiciary and erodes public trust.
2. **Lack of Clear Performance Metrics:** The absence of clear and measurable performance standards makes it difficult to assess and improve staff performance.
3. **Poor Supervision:** Ineffective supervision leads to a lack of accountability, with staff not being held responsible for their actions or inactions.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING STAFF PERFORMANCE

To enhance staff performance in the judiciary, several best practices can be adopted:

1. **Comprehensive Training Programs:** Regular training and capacity-building initiatives should be implemented to equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge. This includes both technical training and soft skills development.
2. **Performance Evaluation Systems:** Establishing clear performance metrics and evaluation systems will help in assessing staff performance objectively. Regular appraisals, feedback mechanisms, and recognition of excellence can motivate staff to perform better.
3. **Resource Allocation:** Adequate funding should be allocated to improve working conditions, provide modern equipment, and ensure that judicial staff have the resources they need to

perform their duties effectively.

1. **Ethics and Integrity Programs:** Implementing strict codes of conduct and ethics training can help combat corruption and promote ethical behavior among judicial staff.
2. **Technology Integration:** The adoption of modern technology, such as case management systems and digital records, can streamline judicial processes and enhance staff efficiency.

# Conclusion

The effectiveness of Nigeria’s judiciary is closely tied to the performance and supervision of its staff. Investing in the development of supervisory skills, strengthening organizational structures, and fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment are essential steps toward improving the supervision of judicial personnel.

By addressing the challenges that hinder staff performance and implementing best practices for supervision, the judiciary can significantly enhance its efficiency, credibility, and public trust. These efforts will in turn contribute to a stronger judicial system in Nigeria, ensuring that justice is delivered promptly, effectively and fairly to all citizens.

By prioritizing staff performance and supervision, Nigeria can take significant steps toward strengthening its judicial systems for the benefit of the entire nation. The implementation of the strategies outlined in this paper will require the commitment of judicial leaders, adequate resource allocation, and a concerted effort to foster a culture of excellence within the judiciary.

By taking these steps, the Nigerian judiciary can further strengthen its judicial systems, ultimately contributing to a more just and equitable society.

Thank you all for listening.