

MANAGEMENT & BUSINESS STUDIES

Khulna University Studies 2(1): 213-226

PRACTICE OF EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN THE PRIVATE INDUSTRIES IN KHULNA REGION – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Manuscript received: July 13, 2000; Accepted: October 15, 2000

Abstract: This paper investigates various aspects related to practice of performance appraisal in the private industries situated in Khulna region. All the data and information that have been used in this extensive survey based study were collected from various primary sources. It is found that though both management and employees have positive attitude towards performance appraisal, organizations do not practice it in a systematic manner. It is also found that organizations hardly follow any structured method of performance appraisal and they use it mainly for taking punitive measures. It is concluded that organizations should develop a structured system of performance appraisal that should have implication on all the related aspects of human resources management.

Key words: Employee; Job; Performance

Introduction

Performance appraisal is the periodic evaluation of an employee's job performance measured against the stated or presumed job requirements (Terry *et al.*, 1988). There is a mission or objective of every organization. Among all the component of management e.g. man, machine, money, material, method and market, man i.e. human resource is the most important component for attaining organizational objective. Therefore it is essential for every organization to assess whether its employees are contributing to the achievement of organizational objective at expected level. Performance appraisal is the only device that can provide management with the information in this regard. Moreover performance appraisal also identifies strengths and weaknesses of the employees, which helps the organizations to determine whether development efforts of the organizations are aimed in the right direction. For these reasons any business, government agency, charitable organization or even a university wanting to reach its goal effectively and efficiently, must find and implement the way of accurately measuring performance of the human resources working in the organizations (Wehrich, *et al.*, 1993).

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.2000.2.1.213-226-mb>

Performance appraisal is the major human resource concern for the managers in the organization (Gehrman, 1984). This practice has been given a variety of titles such as ACR (Annual Confidential Report), Merit Rating, Personnel Rating, Performance Evaluation, etc. (Huq, 1981). The primary goal of an appraisal system is to improve performance. A properly designed and well-communicated performance appraisal system helps achieve organizational objectives and motivates employee performances (Sahl, 1990). But if it is badly handled, there may arise unwanted turn of things. In those cases morale reaches low ebb. Confidence in the fairness of the process being shattered, the link between performance and evaluation is broken (Arafunnesa *et al.* 1994). Performance measurement may have as many as twenty different purposes (Fomburn *et al.*, 1983), but the most basic is to provide information about work behaviors. Work behavior related information could be used as the basis of feedback, reward allocation, training and development and human resources placing (Moorhead *et al.*, 1995). HRM department in the organization is primarily responsible to design and oversee the performance appraisal program. Responsibility for actually conducting performance appraisal varies from company to company. But, line management must directly participate in the performance appraisal program if it is to succeed (Mondy *et al.*, 1993). An employee's immediate supervisor is the most common choice for evaluating performance (*Ibid*). Appraisal by the immediate supervisor some time acts negatively also. For this reason peers, subordinates and groups might also act as appraiser. In many cases employees themselves might be used as appraiser. Although they may not actually do so, most employees can evaluate themselves in an unbiased manner (Mabe *et al.*, 1982). Combination of appraisers from different categories of people might be appropriate in many cases. Organizations usually conduct performance appraisal regularly, typically once in a year. Some organizations conduct semiannually. Recently some concern has risen that rigidly established intervals may be inappropriate to all organizations (Moorhead *et al.*, 1995). Several systems for appraising employee performance on an "as-needed" basis have been proposed as an alternative to the traditional annual system (Fedor *et al.*, 1988).

Performance appraisal has bearing on many other aspects like training, promotion, pay decisions and establishment of selection procedure. (Arafunnesa *et al.*, 1994). Performance appraisal is used in making these decisions for two purposes. One is to recognize and reward the more productive employees and assign them with more important responsibilities. Another is to motivate all the employees to improve their performance.

Managers may choose from among several appraisal methods e.g. Work standard, Ranking, Paired Comparison, Forced Distribution, Forced Choice, Weighted Checklist, Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) and Management by Objective (MBO). The type of performance appraisal system utilized depends on its purpose. If the major emphasis is on selecting people for promotion, training, and merit pay increases, a traditional method such as rating scales may be most appropriate (Mondy *et al.*, 1993). Collaborative methods, such as MBO, are designed to assist in developing and becoming more effective (Taylor *et al.*, 1984).

Khulna is the third largest city of Bangladesh. It is traditionally known as an industrial city. Different industries like jute, frozen foods, packaging, and salt refinery have been intensively localized in this region in both private and public sector. Government organizations in Bangladesh have an established practice of performance appraisal system and in most of the cases in the form of 'Annual Confidential Report' (Huq, 1981). Now in this era of globalization and free market, private sector should come up at the helm of economic activities. In order to come in this position, private sector must have well-structured and established management practices. Existence of a well-structured and sincerely practiced performance appraisal system is certainly one of the signs of good management. This paper is an attempt to focus on the performance appraisal practices of the indigenous private business concerns in Bangladesh with particular emphasis to Khulna region. In this light, this current paper has immense empirical value in the development of private sector. Existence and proper practice of a well-structured performance appraisal system depend on both the management attitude toward performance appraisal system and level of awareness of the employees toward the benefits and other functional aspects of performance appraisal. Besides this, employee positive attitude toward performance appraisal system is another critical factor to the success of performance appraisal system. This paper has also focused upon attitude and state of awareness of the managers and employees toward performance appraisal system. This aspect of the current study can have a great contribution to the organizational development in the private sector.

This study has been undertaken with a view to investigate the following aspects of the organizations selected for the study:

- Attitude of management and employees toward performance appraisal
- Scope of performance appraisal i.e. number of employees and areas of their performance covered by the perform appraisal system
- Method used for appraising performance
- Implication of performance appraisal in various employees related decision

Methodology

This is a survey-based descriptive research. Data and information used in this paper were collected from primary source.

Ten medium and large-scale private manufacturing organizations representing different industries in Khulna region have been selected as the field of study (Table 1). Management and employees of these organizations were interviewed with two separate questionnaires. Questionnaire for management was designed with a view to exploring the objective information about how performance appraisal is administered and used in the organizations. Also there were some questions for measuring management attitude toward performance appraisal. Generally the top executive or his nominated person from each organization was interviewed from the management. On the other hand, questionnaire for the employees were designed only to measure their attitude towards performance appraisal. 10% of total employees randomly selected were interviewed from each

organization (Table 1). Both the questionnaires were finalized after testing them by a pilot run.

Likert Scale of attitude measurement was used for measuring attitude of both management and employees. Management and sample employees were provided with three different positive statements on which they have been asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement. Mean score for the statements given to the management was calculated by simply dividing the total score by the number of organizations. On the other hand, mean score of the employees of an organization was calculated by dividing the total score by the total number of employees of that organization. Total mean score of all the selected organizations was divided by the total number of organizations to calculate the mean score of all the organizations. Score above 3 indicates favorable or positive attitude.

Most of the analysis and discussion of this paper have been made on the basis of the information obtained from the interview with the questionnaires. Besides, observation of the researchers has also been an important component of analysis and discussions.

Results and Discussion

Obtained information and observed issues are presented and discussed under separate heads each representing a constituent part of the objectives of the study.

Attitude of the Management: Attitude of management toward performance appraisal was found favorable. Mean score is 4 on the statement "performance appraisal is an important indicator of efficient management" (Table 2). More specifically it is to be noted that management of 30% organizations strongly agrees and 40% organization agrees to this statement. There is no strong disagreement or even disagreement with this statement.

Mean score is 3.3 on the statement "performance of all the employees should regularly be measured" (Table 3). With this statement management of 10% organizations strongly agrees. Opinion of the other organizations is more or less equally divided on the other four levels of agreement of the scale. Researchers observed that organizations that disagree or strongly disagree with this statement don't feel that performance of the white-collar employees and the office staffs needs to be evaluated formally. Nevertheless from the mean it is revealed that as a whole management attitude on this issue is not at least negative.

Mean score is 3.6 on the statement "Decisions regarding reward and punishment should be based on the outcome of performance appraisal" (Table 4). 10% of the organizations strongly agree, and 50% of the organizations agree to this statement. Only 10% of the organizations expressed their disagreement with this statement, while rest of the organizations have an indifferent attitude on this statement.

From this discussion on management attitude, it is inferred that management of the selected organizations strongly believe in the importance of performance appraisal in efficiently managing the organization. As a whole they also hold a positive attitude toward the idea that all the employees of the organizations should be subject to the appraisal system. Their attitude toward using performance appraisal as the basis of rewarding, taking punitive measures and employees' development is also significantly positive.

Attitude of the Employees: Attitude of the employees towards performance appraisal is also found very favorable. Mean score is 4.04 (approximately) on the statement “regular appraisal of your performance will motivate you to work harder” (Table 5). It indicates that the employees not only appreciate evaluation of their performance but also feel it as a source of motivation to work better.

Most of the employees strongly hold that they should receive higher payment if their performance is better than others. At the same time they acknowledge that other employees should also receive more payment if they perform better than them. This attitude is revealed by the mean score 4.22 on the statement “if you perform better than others, you should be paid higher than the others” (Table 6) and mean score 3.66 on the statement “if other employees perform better than you they should be paid higher than you” (Table 7).

From the discussion in this section, it can be inferred that as a whole employees' attitude toward performance appraisal is very positive. They not only feel performance appraisal as an acceptable practice but also view it as a source motivation for better performance. They want better payment when they perform better than others. They also accept others receiving better payment when the others are performing better. Therefore it can be said that employees from the selected organizations hold positive attitude to regular practice of performance appraisal and performance based reward system in the organization.

Scope of Performance Appraisal: Though both management and employees were found to have positive attitude toward performance appraisal, surprisingly it has very little reflection on the practice of performance appraisal in the organizations. Twenty per cent of the selected organizations do not practice performance appraisal in any form (Table 8). Even in the organizations where performance appraisal is practiced, only a fraction of the total employees are subject to the appraisal system. 12.5% of the organizations where performance appraisal is done were found to appraise performance of all the employees in the organization. Another 12.5% organizations appraise performance of all the permanent and casual blue collar employees, 41.7% of the organizations appraise performance of only the permanent blue collar employees and the remaining 12.5% of the organizations appraise performance of only casual blue collar employees (Table 9). Therefore it is clear that even those organizations administering performance appraisal, exempt a large portion of the employees from the appraisal system.

Performance appraisal is a periodic system and theoretically there must be a time frame within which performance should be measured. 25% of the organizations appraise performance weekly or monthly, 50% of the organizations appraise employees'

performance yearly, while the remaining 25% of the organizations do not have any specific time period for performance appraisal (Table 10). It has been observed that organizations of the last category appraise performance of the employees at the time of any contingency. When it is required to fill up any vacant post from the internal pool or any decision is taken regarding downsizing or lay off, members of the top management evaluate the past performance of the prospective employees for these purposes.

Method of Performance Appraisal: It has been found that in most organizations no specific and structured method of performance appraisal is applied. Regular recording of employees' performance is the foundation work for developing any method. Only 50% of the organizations were found to maintain performance record on a regular basis. 37.5% of the organization irregularly keeps performance record and 12.5% of the organizations do not keep any record of employees' performance (Table 11). No organization specifically records any outstanding performance of the employee that might have a significant impact on the organization or might indicate the employee's potential to take higher responsibility (Table 12).

It is found that in most of the organizations (50%), immediate supervisor appraises the employees working under him. Departmental heads do the appraisal in 37.5% of the organizations. No specific person is assigned for this job in 12.5% of the organizations (Table 13). It is observed that organizations belonging to the last category are those where there is no specific period of performance appraisal.

Most of the organizations ignore the personal factors and consider only the job factor for performance appraisal. 75% of the organizations consider only job factors and 25% of the organizations consider both personal and job factor in evaluating employees' performance (Table 14). It is observed that the organizations where white-collar employees and office staffs are appraised use personal factors along side job factors. On the other hand, organizations that appraise performance of only the manufacturing workers use only the job factors. In general, unit produced by a worker is considered as the only measuring rod of his performance. Where employees work in an integrated production system and performance of an employee can't be distinctly measured, subjective assessment of the supervisors or departmental heads is used as the only basis.

Most of the organizations have no written criterion or grading scale for measuring employees' performance. Only 25% of the organizations have written format, which includes criteria on which performance is measured and scale to indicate employees' performance (Table 15).

Organizations where there is where there is no written criterion or standard for evaluating performance (75%), final rating of the employees depends solely on the satisfaction of the rater (Table 16). Since there is neither any established base on which performance can be measured nor any scale to indicate the exact level of employees' performance, the rater in his own point of view make an overall comment like satisfactory or dissatisfactory or good or bad. In the organizations where there is a written format (25%), employees are evaluated on the basis of the factors and standard set in the format.

From the information obtained through questionnaire and observations in this section, it can be inferred that the organizations under the study to some extent follow the Rating Scale Method. Though most of the organizations (75%) don't have any established rating factor or rating criterion, employees of these organizations are somehow rated by their supervisors or departmental heads on their overall performance. On the other hand, though there are some checklist item and some essay type questions in the performance appraisal form of the other organizations (25%), employees are ultimately rated on basis of the rating factors and rating criteria of the form.

Use of Performance Appraisal: It is found that 50% of the organizations don't give any sort of reward to highly rated employees. 37% of the organizations give financial reward like bonus or incentive. It is observed that this type reward is given to the manufacturing workers on the basis of the unit produced in addition to the given target. Organizations give this reward both individually and group wise depending on the production process. On the other hand, organizations where both blue and white-collar employees are appraised (12.5%) use all of the financial incentives, promotion and recognition to reward the highly rated employees (Table 17).

Though half of the selected organizations don't reward the highly rated employees, all the organizations are found to take some sort of punitive measures against the employees who perform poorly. 12.5% of the organizations warn these employees, asking them to improve their performance within a stipulated time. This type of warning is given in both written and oral form. In 75% organizations poorly rated employees are discarded first when there is layoff in the organizations. 12.5% of the organizations that rate only the casual employees, out rightly sack the casual employees who are rated poorly (Table 18).

Virtually no organization is found to take any measure to improve the performance of the employees who don't perform up to the mark. Only 12.5% of the organizations help the weaker employees overcome their weaknesses by counseling them. Generally the supervisor or the departmental heads listen to their problems that cause their poor performance and make necessary suggestions to help them improve their performance. No other organization have any training or any other program to improve performance of the employees who don't perform up to satisfactory level (Table 19).

It can be inferred from the above discussions in this section that the organizations selected for the study use performance appraisal mostly for the purpose of taking punitive measures against the weaker employees. Its significance in taking other personnel related decisions like salary administration, promotion and employees development is far less than it should actually be.

Conclusion

From the study it can be concluded that though both management and employees have positive attitude towards performance appraisal, it is not practiced and used in a systematic manner in most of the private organizations in Khulna.

Performance of a large portion of the workers is not evaluated. As a result management is unaware about the employees' level of efficiency and their development need. As there is no structured factors and criterion of measuring employees' performance, the same performance may be rated differently by different raters. As a result the validity of the appraisal can be called in question. Moreover, this may cause bias and corruption in rating. Performance appraisal is used in a very limited scale in most of the organizations. This may cause the employees to perceive performance as an insignificant factor in their job and as a result they can lose their motivation to improve their performance. Organizations should develop a well-structured performance appraisal system and use them appropriately in all the employee related aspects in order to improve labor productivity, management efficiency and the organizational productivity as a whole.

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Appendices

Table 1. Total number of employees and number employees surveyed in the selected organizations

Organization	Total Number of employees	Number Respondents (N)
Daulatpur Jute Mills Ltd.	561	56
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	324	32
Desh Bangla Fashion	136	14
Modern Sea foods Ltd.	103	10
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	649	65
Dhaka Match Industries Ltd.	818	82
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	98	10
Mitali Foods Ltd.	92	9
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	73	7
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	231	23

Table 2. Statement: performance appraisal is an important factor in managing the organization.

Organization	Level of agreement	Points
Daulatpur Jute Mills Ltd.	Agreed	4
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	Agreed	4
Desh Bangla Fashion	Strongly agreed	5
Modern Sea foods	Agreed	4
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	Strongly agreed	5
Dhaka Match Industries Ltd.	Indifferent	3
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	Agreed	4
Mitali Foods Ltd.	Indifferent	3
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	Strongly agreed	5
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	Indifferent	3
Number of organizations (N _o)=10	Total Points (P)	40
Mean Score (P/ N _o)		4

Table 3. Statement: performance all the employees' should regularly be appraised.

Organization	Level of agreement	Points
Daulatpur Jute Mills	Agreed	4
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	Agreed	4
Desh Bangla Fashion	Disagreed	2
Modern Sea foods	Indifferent	3
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	Strongly agreed	5
Dhaka Match Industries Ltd.	Disagreed	2
International Shrimp Export ltd.	Agreed	4
Mitali Foods Ltd.	Agreed	4
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	Indifferent	3
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	Disagreed	2
Number of organizations (N _o)=10	Total Points (P)	33
Mean Score (P/ N _o)		3.3

Table 4: Statement: decisions regarding reward and punishment should be based on the outcome of performance appraisal.

Organization	Level of agreement	Points
Daulatpur Jute Mills Ltd.	Agreed	4
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	Agreed	4
Desh Bangla Fashion	Agreed	4
Modern Sea foods	Indifferent	3
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	Strongly agreed	5
Dhaka Match Industries	Disagreed	2
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	Indifferent	3
Mitali Foods Ltd.	Disagreed	2
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	Disagreed	2
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	Agreed	4
Number of organizations (N _o)=10	Total Points (P)	33
Mean Score (P/N _o)		3.3

Table 5: Statement: regular appraisal of your performance will motivate you work harder.

Organization	Number of Respondents (N)	Strongly Agreed (5)	Agreed (4)	Indifferent (3)	Disagreed (2)	Strongly Disagreed (1)	Total Points (TP)	Mean score (TP/N)
Daulatpur Jute Mills	56	16	22	16	2	0	220	3.93
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	32	10	13	7	2	0	127	3.97
Desh Bangla Fashion	14	5	6	3	0	0	58	4.14
Modern Sea foods	10	4	5	1	0	0	43	4.30
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	65	23	27	12	3	0	265	4.08
Dhaka Match Industries	82	26	37	18	1	0	334	4.07
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	10	3	4	2	0	1	38	3.80
Mitali Foods Ltd.	9	4	3	2	0	0	38	4.22
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	7	2	3	1	1	1	28	4.00
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	23	8	7	5	3	0	89	3.87
Number of organizations (N _o)=10	Mean Score: 40.38							
	Average Mean Score (Mean Score / N _o): 4.04							

Table 6. Statement: if you perform better than others, you should be paid higher than the others.

Organization	Number Respondents (N)	Strongly Agreed (5)	Agreed (4)	Indifferent (3)	Disagreed (2)	Strongly Disagreed (1)	Total Points (TP)	Mean score (TP/N)
Daulatpur Jute Mills Ltd.	56	19	26	6	5	0	227	4.05
Madhumati Salt Industries (Pvt.) Ltd.	32	17	11	4	0	0	141	4.41
Desh Bangla Fashion	14	4	6	3	1	0	55	3.92
Modern Sea foods	10	4	6	0	0	0	44	4.40
Mohseen Jute Mills (Pvt.) Ltd.	65	29	33	3	0	0	286	4.40
Dhaka Match Industries	82	48	27	4	3	0	366	4.46
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	10	5	5	0	0	0	45	4.50
Mitali Foods Ltd.	9	2	4	3	0	0	35	3.89
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	7	2	3	1	1	0	27	3.89
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	23	10	9	4	0	0	98	4.26
Number of organizations (N _o)=10							Mean Score	42.16
							Average Mean Score (Mean Score/N _o)	4.21

Table 7. Statement: if other employees perform better than you they should be paid higher than you.

Organization	Number Respondents (N)	Strongly Agreed (5)	Agreed (4)	Indifferent (3)	Disagreed (2)	Strongly Disagreed (1)	Total Points (TP)	Mean score (TP/N)
Daulatpur Jute Mills	56	11	20	15	7	3	197	3.52
Madhumati Salt Industries Pvt.	32	7	8	12	5	0	113	3.53
Desh Bangla Fashion	14	4	2	5	3	0	49	3.50
Modern Sea foods	10	3	5	2	0	0	41	4.10
Mohseen Jute Mills Pvt. Ltd.	65	19	14	27	4	1	241	3.71
Dhaka Match Industries	82	11	14	37	13	7	255	3.11
International Shrimp Export Ltd.	10	5	3	2	0	0	43	4.30
Mitali Foods Ltd.	9	3	2	3	1	0	34	3.78
Ideal Printing & Packaging Ltd.	7	0	3	3	1	0	23	3.28
Bangladesh Sea Foods Ltd.	23	9	6	5	1	0	86	3.74
Number of organizations (N _o)=10							Mean Score	36.57
							Average Mean Score (Mean Score / N _o)	3.66

Table 8. Level of importance placed on performance appraisal in managing the organization by selected organization.

Level of importance	Number	Percentage
Very important	6	60
Important	3	30
Not important	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 9. Whether performance appraisal is practiced.

Whether performance is appraised	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	80
No	2	20
Total	10	100

Table 10. Types of employees subject to appraisal.

Type of employees	Number	Percentage
Both Blue & White collar employees	1	12.5
Only Blue collar employees	1	12.5
Only Casual		
Only Permanent	5	62.5
Both	1	12.5
Total	8	100

Table 11. Frequency of conducting Performance appraisal.

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Weekly or monthly	2	25
Quarterly or half yearly	0	0
Yearly	4	50
No specific period	2	25
Total	8	100

Table 12. Regularity of preserving record of employees' performance.

Regularity of maintaining record	Number	Percentage
Regularly	4	50
Irregularly	3	37.5
No official record is kept	1	12.5
Total	8	100

Table 13. Person responsible for performance appraisal.

Person responsible appraisal	Number	Percentage
Immediate supervisor	3	50
Departmental head	3	37.5
No such specific person	2	25
Total	8	100

Table 14. Recording of employees' crucial performance.

Whether recorded	Number	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	8	100
Total	8	100

Table 15. Factors considered in appraising performance.

Factor	Number	Percentage
Only Personal factors	0	0
Only Job factors	6	75
Both	2	25
Total	8	100

Table 16. Existence of any written format.

Where there is any written format	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	25
No	6	75
Total	8	100

Table 17. Ranking or rating of the employee after the appraisal process.

Basis of rating or ranking	Number	Percentage
On the basis of predetermined standard	2	25
On the basis of Rater's satisfaction	6	75
By comparing with others performance	0	0
Total	8	100

Table 18. Types of reward given to the employees who are rated high.

Type of reward	Number	Percentage
Bonus or incentive	3	37.5
Recognition	0	0
Promotion or additional responsibility	0	0
More than one of the above	1	12.5
No reward is given	4	50
Total	8	100

Table 19. Punitive measures taken against the employees performing below the satisfactory level?

Type of action	Number	Percentage
Warning	1	12.5
Salary cut	0	0
Layoff	3	37.5
Sack	1	12.5
No mentionable action is taken	3	37.5
Total	8	100

Table 20. Corrective actions for the employees not performing up to the mark.

Type of reward	Number	Percentage
Counseling	1	12.5
Special training	0	0
No corrective action is taken	7	87.5
Total	8	100