

**FACTORS INFLUENCING MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERFORMANCE
APPRAISAL**

by

Elizabeth Susan Catherina Tanya du Plessis

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SUPERVISOR: MRS ANNELIZE VAN NIEKERK

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DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth Susan Catherina Tanya du Plessis, student number 36528943, declare that “Factors influencing managers’ attitudes towards performance appraisal” is my own original work, and that all the sources that I have utilised or cited have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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SUMMARY

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

By

ESCT Du Plessis

Degree: MCom (Industrial & Organisational Psychology)

Supervisor: Mrs A van Niekerk

An increasing number of reports indicate that managers are opposed to performance appraisal. It is important to understand why managers have favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards performance appraisal and it is necessary to investigate the causing factors of these attitudes. The aim of this research was therefore to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. This study was conducted within the interpretive research paradigm and situated in a medium-sized organisation within the financial services industry. The sample was purposefully selected and the data were collected through in-depth interviews and naïve sketches. The data were analysed applying Tesch's descriptive analysis method.

The main findings indicated that managers who needed to conduct performance appraisals perceived and experienced performance appraisal as an uncomfortable and emotional process that might cause them to become defensive. Moreover, it was revealed that the managers experienced uncertainties about aspects of performance appraisal, such as the purpose of performance appraisal, what must be measured and frequency of performance appraisal. As a result of such uncertainties, managers might not always have the ability or readiness to conduct performance appraisals, especially when the performance appraisal contains negative performance feedback. Furthermore, the organisational context might put managers in an undesirable situation to distort performance ratings of employees in order to achieve organisational goals or the manager's personal goals, which in turn

influence the attitude of the manager. The findings of the study can assist organisations in influencing managers' attitudes more positively and in enhancing the overall performance appraisal process.

Keywords: organisational psychology; attitude; performance appraisal; qualitative research; interpretive paradigm; in-depth interviews; naïve sketch; Tesch's descriptive analysis method

CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. In this chapter the background and motivation of the study are presented, followed by an outline of the problem statement, research objectives, paradigm perspective, and research design and research method. The chapter concludes with the layout of the chapters and chapter summary.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Widespread dilemmas relating to performance management have captivated researchers, encouraging them to want to explore the organisational behaviours associated with these dilemmas (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008). These dilemmas seem to relate to the subjectivity in performance management and ethical dilemmas in performance management (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). Performance appraisal, the description of strengths and developmental areas of employees during performance management, is one of the most delicate issues explored in human resources management (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

Performance management, which encourages employees to achieve their goals, is situated in the broader context of the organisation's strategy (Jones & Culbertson, 2011). In addition, performance management reveals the aspects that are important to the organisation since ineffective performance management could result in organisations not achieving their goals, weaken employee confidence and ultimately damage relationships (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). Therefore, the management of employee performance is unavoidable for organisations and if performance management is not executed properly, it can be disastrous for organisations (Brumback, 2011).

Performance management is used as a collective term for the process where an employee's performance is identified, measured, appraised, developed and linked with the

strategic goals of the organisation (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Performance management is a continuous process, which includes performance appraisal, the methodical description of the strengths and weaknesses within and between employees (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Performance appraisal differs from performance management in that it does not have a strategic focus as performance management has, and it is usually conducted annually (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008).

Performance appraisal is a critical component in performance management and is advantageous to the organisation (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Grote, 2011). Through performance appraisals organisation is able to describe different employees' strengths and weaknesses and it contributes to the facilitation of manager-subordinate dialogue (Fletcher, 2008). Performance appraisal refers to the exchange of information in order to build a relationship between the employee and the manager (Pichler, 2012). In general, performance appraisal is important and enables managers in the organisation to make decisions pertaining to salary increases, recruitment and succession planning (Grote, 2011).

Despite these above-mentioned positive views, performance appraisals are associated with widespread dissatisfaction and labelled as the weak spot of performance management (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Gordon & Stewart, 2009). Contrasting opinions regarding this prominent issue exist, but there is agreement among scholars that the challenging part of performance appraisal is associated with the accuracy of the performance ratings of employees (Fletcher, 2008). In a range of qualitative studies, Longenecker and his colleagues have placed emphasis on the political motives of managers during performance appraisal (Gioia & Longenecker, 1994; Longenecker, 1987; Longenecker & Gioia, 1988; Longenecker, Liverpool & Wilson, 1988; Longenecker & Ludwig, 1990). These studies revealed the following negative aspects of performance appraisal:

- Managers would inflate employee ratings to increase employee motivation.
- Managers would want to give salary increases to employees and would inflate the ratings accordingly.
- Managers would want to hide departmental problems.

- Managers want to protect employees who suffered through personal problems.
- Managers would prefer to recognise employee performance although the employee is a poor performer to avoid confrontational situations with employees.

A decade later Longenecker and Gioia (2003) once again drew attention to these findings and confirmed that managers will distort the performance ratings for their own personal reasons even if an organisation has an effective training programme on the accuracy of performance ratings. Other related studies expanded these findings and confirmed the following:

- Performance appraisal requires the commitment of the manager and the manager's perception of the organisation can influence the performance appraisal (Tziner, Murphy & Cleveland, 2002).
- Performance appraisal could be experienced as a challenging task which managers and employees might fear (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2009).
- Managers dread the possibility of damaging relationships with employees (Pulakos, 2009).
- Managers would prefer to hide away from emotional uneasiness and conflict, fail to provide constructive feedback and give their employees higher performance ratings (Marreli, 2011).

Thomas and Bretz (1994) recommend that more research attention should be given to the context in which performance appraisal is done, such as the environment of the rating and the social context. Aspects such as organisational climate, culture, goals, human resources strategy, economic factors, workforce compensation and technology were confirmed as factors that influence the manner in which the managers rate their employees (Brown & Lim, 2010; Gordon & Stewart, 2009; Levy & Williams, 2004). The organisational culture and norms, goals of management and the managers' attitude can influence the success of the performance appraisal (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Recent research has drawn attention to the contextual aspect of performance appraisal as a response to previous recommendations from research (Pichler, 2012). Other factors related to social context, such as relationship quality, managerial trust, managerial support and relationship satisfaction, were found to be factors that influence performance appraisal (Pichler, 2012).

It is believed that the performance appraisal predicament can be better understood by focussing on improving the interpersonal and attitudinal components of performance appraisal (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Understanding managers' attitudes and beliefs about performance appraisal is integral to understand rating behaviour, because managers' attitudes and their beliefs influence how employee ratings are done and feedback is handled, as well as the overall accuracy of the ratings (Tziner, Murphy & Cleveland, 1998). Generally, managers are ill disposed towards performance appraisal; they hesitate to provide feedback that reflects unfavourably on them and they find it unpleasant to give negative performance feedback to employees (Kondrasuk, 2012; Thomas & Bretz, 1994). The underlying attitude of the manager towards performance appraisal has a direct influence on the performance appraisal process and may cause managers to engage in unethical behaviour and treat employees unfairly when they fail to provide them with honest feedback (Shore & Strauss, 2008).

There is no consensus about a working solution to the prevalent problem surrounding performance appraisal and therefore displeasure with performance appraisal continues (Gordon & Stewart, 2009). It is important to note that factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal have not yet been fully explored; therefore it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding thereof, in order to change managers' attitudes positively.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Performance appraisal is known to be a complex process (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). The outcomes of performance appraisals are used for critical decisions made in the organisation, such as salary increases, employee development and important personnel decisions, with the aim of improving employee performance (MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009). Not surprisingly, much research has been conducted with the aim of finding ways to ensure that performance appraisal ratings are accurate (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). The challenge with performance appraisal emanates from the negative attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004). Managers seem to be opposed to performance appraisal and this attitude has an impact on the employees as well as the

organisation (Shah & Murphy, 1995). Furthermore, these prevalent attitudes of managers have a direct impact on the performance appraisal results (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Should these negative attitudes be left untreated and unresolved, it will result in biased or inaccurate performance appraisal ratings and negative employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process, which is counterproductive to the purpose of performance appraisal (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Shore & Strauss, 2008; Tziner et al., 1998).

Therefore, in order to change managers' attitudes positively it is important to understand which contributing factors shape managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. Consequently, it is necessary to investigate which factors influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. Therefore, in order to bring about a more positive attitude towards performance appraisal among managers, and based on the foregoing literature, this study aimed to create a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

In order to respond to the above problem statement, the research question that underlies this study is:

What are the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal?

This research was conducted to answer the questions:

- What is an attitude and its related dimensions?
- What is performance appraisal and its related dimensions?
- What are the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal?

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The general aim of the study, as well as the specific literature aims, is discussed in the following section.

1.3.1 General aim

The aim of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

1.3.2 Specific literature aims

The specific literature aims were to:

- conceptualise attitude and its related constructs;
- evaluate attitude formation theories;
- conceptualise performance appraisal and its related constructs; and
- consider previous research findings relating to the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

1.3.3 Specific empirical aims

The specific empirical aims of this study were to:

- gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisals; and
- make recommendations that will positively influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisals.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

1.4.1 Disciplinary relationship

This research was conducted within the field of industrial and organisational psychology and the specific domain of organisational psychology. Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2005) describe organisational psychology as a discipline that is concerned with studies to understand people and their attitudes, perceptions, learning capacities, feelings and goals. This study was situated within the organisation psychology discipline as it aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

1.4.2 The research paradigm

Since this research was concerned with the studying of managers' own encounters of the outside world, it was perceived that an intersubjective stance towards that reality could be adopted (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The study did not focus on understanding applicable laws and rules and was therefore situated in the interpretive research paradigm with specific focus on people's experience and the interpretation thereof (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2012).

The study required the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm as it aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the attitudes of a specific group of managers. More specifically, the research focussed on understanding the factors that influence these managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal from the point of view of each manager's unique context and background. Since the participants in an interpretive study bring their own personal experience to the study the aim of the researcher was to develop an understanding of the participants' subjective experiences and to create an interpretation thereof (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The interpretive paradigm and its derived assumptions support the general aim of this study, namely to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be defined as a plan that describes how the researcher intends to conduct a research project (Mouton, 2001). In this section, the research design used during this study is discussed. A description of the research approach that was used is discussed and the details of the research strategy, research setting and the entrée and establishing researcher roles are given. The information regarding sampling, data collection methods and the researcher as instrument during the research is clarified. Thereafter, the methods of recording of data, data analysis and strategies that were be employed to ensure data quality are explained. Finally, the ethical considerations and reporting formats are discussed.

1.5.1 Research approach

In view of the fact that this interpretive study was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, it was appropriate to use a qualitative research methodology (Henning et al., 2012; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Qualitative research provides a complex and detailed understanding and its purpose is to empower the participants to share their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Another characteristic of qualitative research is that it is flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the information is captured and it purposefully aims to produce rich and detailed data (Mason, 2012).

1.5.2 Research method

The research methods that were used in this study are discussed in this section. The details about the research strategy, research setting and entrée and establishing research roles are given. The sampling method, data collection strategies, data recording, data analysis methods, the strategies that were employed to ensure quality data and the reporting style follow thereafter.

1.5.2.1 *Research strategy*

This interpretive study was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. This study required an approach that was open, adaptable and inductive (Kelly, 2006). Therefore, an in-depth interviewing method was required to collect data based on the participants' perceptions, attitudes and interpretations (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005; Mason, 2012). The in-depth interviews commenced with two in-depth interview questions that covered the topic of the study and further probing enabled deeper understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Therefore, the two main questions laid a basis for the in-depth interview and provided structure.

The ontological nature of the study explored the internal subjective reality of the managers in the workplace. The epistemological relationship between the participants and the researcher was empathetic, since the researcher was aware of subjective experiences while being in the role of an observer (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Babbie (2010) explains that the unit of analysis points to the object or person that is researched; therefore, the individuals within the organisation with the job category of manager were selected as the unit of analysis for this study.

1.5.2.2 *Research setting*

This study involved a medium-sized organisation in the financial services sector. Managers are responsible for managing their departments and employees, together with demanding work schedules. Part of managers' responsibilities is to conduct performance appraisals with employees. Therefore, managers have experience with performance appraisal, but might hold positive or negative attitudes towards the process. In light of the managers' busy schedules, it was important for the researcher to use a research setting that was comfortable and free from disturbances from employees and other individuals.

1.5.2.3 *Entrée and establishing researcher roles*

The researcher qualified herself in the methods of qualitative research, specifically in conducting in-depth interviews and applying the data analysis techniques of Tesch, prior to the research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The participants identified for the study were approached individually and the aims of the study were discussed with them. Each participant was also provided with the background information (see Annexure A) of the study as well as the aims of the study. The participants who were willing to participate in the study signed a consent form (see Annexure B) to confirm their willingness to contribute to the study. The researcher had the roles of both employee and researcher.

1.5.2.4 *Sampling*

In line with a qualitative research strategy, this study used purposive sampling to identify the participants (Henning et al., 2012). Purposive sampling in the interpretive paradigm can be conducted through the inclusion and exclusion of certain criteria in order to target the appropriate number of potential participants for a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The purposive sampling was useful, because purposive sampling is based on the researcher's subjective decision-making in order to ensure that the potential participants could be targeted (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2012; Durrheim & Painter, 2006). The population consisted of 30 managers who had experience with performance appraisal. The sample was purposively selected based on willingness to participate and the researcher aimed at selecting a sample that would be representative of age, gender, ethnic groups and years of experience with performance appraisal.

A total of eight participants from the population of potential participants showed willingness to participate in the study. Table 1.1 below depicts the demographic profile of the eight participants that participated in this study.

Table 1.1: Participants' demographic profile

Age	Gender M= Male F= Female	Racial groups	Years' experience with performance appraisal
30-40	F	White	6
40-50	F	White	4
60-70	M	White	35
50-60	F	White	1
30-40	F	White	11
30-40	M	African	1
30-40	F	White	5
50-60	M	Indian	15

1.5.2.5 Data collection

The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews as well as naïve sketches to obtain data triangulation. The primary method for data collection was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are used when the researcher aims to obtain data relating to individual's experiences and perceptions (Mack et al., 2005; Mason, 2012). A total of eight in-depth interviews were conducted and the following two main questions were asked to the managers:

- 'Tell me about your overall experience with performance appraisal.'
- 'What are the positive and negative factors that influenced your attitude towards performance appraisal?'

As suggested by Henning et al. (2012), the researcher followed the following procedure to collect the data for this study:

- An in-depth interview was conducted first with the first participant to gain an understanding of the theory as it emerged and the researcher.

- The researcher analysed the information and proceeded with theoretical sampling whereby a second in-depth interview was conducted to perfect the themes and subthemes.

This process was followed until the researcher believed that data saturation was reached. Data saturation occurs when the themes as well as the sub-themes are repeated and when no new themes emerge when more in-depth interviews are conducted (Schurink, Fouche & De Vos, 2012). The researcher acknowledged the participants' contribution after the in-depth interview. The participants were debriefed, misperceptions were rectified with sensitivity and participants were informed that they would receive a copy of the findings of the study (Greef, 2012).

Naïve sketches, a second data collection tool, were used to ensure data triangulation and to enhance the overall credibility of the study (Creswell, 2009). Giorgi (1985) defines a naïve sketch as a description of the phenomenon in the form of an essay or a picture. The managers who participated in this research were requested to draw a picture or write an essay about their experience with performance appraisal as well as the positive or negative factors that influenced their attitudes towards performance appraisal. One participant drew a picture (see Annexure C) while the remaining participants submitted written essays (see Annexure D) of between half a page to three pages.

1.5.2.6 Recording of data

The naïve sketches of each participant were submitted and transcribed at the same time as the in-depth interview data. The participants gave their consent to make use of an audio recorder. The in-depth interview recordings were then transcribed into a text format. The researcher was required to make field notes during and after the in-depth interview to ensure that the context of the in-depth interview and the aspects that the researcher observed, experienced and perceived were captured (Greef, 2012). The researcher ensured that access to the recordings and recorded information was limited and all electronic documents were password protected (Strydom, 2012).

1.5.2.7 Data analysis

This section describes the data analysis process that the researcher followed with the data after they were collected and transcribed (Henning et al., 2012). The verbatim transcripts of the interviews and the naïve sketches were analysed by employing Tesch's descriptive analysis technique that refers to the following steps (Creswell, 2009):

- The researcher read the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews, naïve sketches and the researcher's observational notes. A holistic view of the data was obtained and the researcher wrote ideas that came to mind in the margin of the transcriptions.
- The first transcription was read for a second time and the researcher wrote the ideas that came to mind in the margin. The researcher focussed on the most interesting data and the meaning of the content and reflected on key concepts and underlying meanings. These ideas were jotted down as sub-themes.
- After all of the transcriptions were read and ideas that came to mind were jotted down, the researcher grouped the similar sub-themes into major sub-themes, unique sub-themes and left over sub-themes.
- A list was compiled of the sub-themes in an Excel spreadsheet, which was used to code the data to determine whether new sub-themes emerged. The most descriptive wording was used to create main themes and the data were further organised to ensure grouping of similar sub-themes.
- Interrelationships among the different sub-themes were revealed and codes were generated accordingly.
- The data that belonged to the same main theme were marked in the same colour and assembled.
- The researcher recoded the data to ensure that she did not ignore any sub-themes.
-

1.5.2.8 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

An assessment of the quality of the data and rigour was needed in this study to ensure that the generated findings are credible, transferable, dependable and conformable (Schurink et al., 2012; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

a. Credibility

Research will be credible if it produces believable findings (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). In this study the researcher adopted the approach that validity in qualitative research is based on the credibility of the research findings as the researcher and the participants of the study describe it (Creswell, 2007). The credibility of the study was obtained through applying the following methods:

- The in-depth interview lasted approximately one hour and therefore extended engagement with the participants was achieved (Shah & Corley, 2006).
- Triangulation, using two data collection methods, ensured that discrepancies (if any) between findings could be identified (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

The researcher made use of member checking, which is a method whereby the researcher presents the findings of the study to the participants in order to confirm whether they regard the findings as a credible account of their experiences during the in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2009).

b. Transferability

It is argued that interpretive studies should be transferable, because it aims to provide explanations of people's experiences (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The researcher ensured transferability by employing the following methods:

- The researcher gave detailed descriptions of the research process that was followed (Babbie, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).
- All of the in-depth interviews were conducted within the same period to ensure that participants were interviewed while they were in the same stage of the performance appraisal process and therefore longitudinal effects could be eliminated (Babbie, 2010).
- Detailed descriptions were given of the themes (Shah & Corley, 2006).

c. Dependability

A study is reliable if it can be repeated (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The dependability of a study refers to the detail of changes that occurred during the study with emphasis on the process of data collection (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). The researcher did not expect to obtain the same results repeatedly, but rather anticipated differences in behaviour and opinions that were expressed (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The researcher ensured dependability by maintaining consistency during the data collection process, referring to the interviews and naïve sketches. The dependability of the study was ensured by using the purposive sampling method and the confidentiality of the participants was protected (Shah & Corley, 2006).

d. Confirmability

Confirmability was obtained through rigorous data management of the verbatim transcriptions, careful taking of field notes of observations during the in-depth interviews and accurate record-keeping (Shah & Corley, 2006). Confirmability was achieved through data triangulation by using two types of data collection methods, which eliminated possible researcher bias and enabled appropriate findings (Visagie & Maritz, 2009).

1.5.2.9 Ethical considerations

Creswell (2009) notes that researchers must anticipate ethical dilemmas as ethics have a role to play in the research process. The ethical dilemmas that were considered during the research are discussed in the following section.

a. Beneficence and non-maleficence

Ethical research requires that the researcher must ensure that the study causes no harm to the participants (Strydom, 2012). The participants of the study were all managers and were interviewed by an employee of the organisation, namely the researcher, who made every effort to avoid bias at all cost. The researcher kept notes of her personal

experiences, biases, prejudices and orientations that might have influenced her interpretation of the information (Creswell, 2007).

b. Confidentiality

Confidentiality can be defined as an agreement to limit access to private information (Strydom, 2012). The information derived from this study was only available to the research team at the University of South Africa. No internal member of the organisation had access to the data, which were stored electronically with password protection by the researcher.

c. Informed consent

After each participant had confirmed their willingness to participate (see Annexure B), the researcher acquired their informed consent in a written format (Henning et al., 2012). The informed consent document (see Annexure A) included clear and detailed information regarding the study: background information, the confirmation that participation was voluntary and the assurance that participants may withdraw from the study at any time (Wassenaar, 2006). The participants were assured that their information would remain anonymous, personal information would be kept confidential and information would be safely stored (Creswell, 2007).

d. Action and competence of the researcher

Since the researcher had an ethical obligation to ensure her own competence and adequate skill in undertaking a study, she embarked on training in qualitative research specifically referring to data collection and data analysis that were required for this study (Strydom, 2012). Henning et al. (2012) argue that the researcher is ultimately responsible for the ethical considerations of the study and they point out that if the researcher is unsure about an aspect, he or she must ask for advice. The researcher had to deal with her own bias and thus she ensured that the data were verified more than once. The researcher was

allocated a supervisor whom she approached when she was unsure about an ethical issue.

1.5.2.10 Reporting

The findings of this study relating to the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal are reported in Chapter 3. In writing up the findings of the study, the researcher used a qualitative, narrative reporting style (Visagie & Maritz, 2009). Verbatim quotes from the interview data as well as the participants' naïve sketches were used to confirm the derived themes. The researcher ensured that each participant's anonymity was protected and this required that no person should be able to identify the participant after the study (Strydom, 2012). The researcher therefore used codes to refer to the participants in the study; for example, P122 refers to the transcription of participant 1, and numbered line 22 in the interview data. The quotations from the naïve sketches are referenced in code as well; for example, PN122 refers to the naïve sketch of participant 1, and numbered line 22 in the naïve sketches data. The findings were integrated with the literature to explain the data and to indicate the relevance of the findings in relation to the current body of literature (Henning et al., 2012).

Conclusions were drawn from the literature review and from the empirical study. The conclusions of the study were reported to explain the findings of the study and to examine if the problem statement and research aims had been achieved. The formulated themes and subthemes have been presented in diagrams (see Figure 3.1) and are discussed in Chapter 3. Recommendations have been made with regard to the performance appraisal process, the organisation and future research. The afore-mentioned aspects enable a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

1.5.2.11 Limitations

The limitations of the literature study and the empirical study are discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

1.6 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The layout of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation to the study

In this chapter the background and motivation to the study was discussed. The problem statement was presented and literature and empirical aims were formulated. The paradigm perspective, research design and research method applied in the study, as well as the chapter layout of the dissertation, were presented.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In Chapter 2 the construct of attitude and its related dimensions as well as the concept of performance appraisal and its related dimensions are conceptualised. In conclusion, attitude formation theories are evaluated and the previous findings regarding factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal are finally examined.

Chapter 3: Article

This chapter is presented within the framework given for authors who write for academic publications. The introduction of the study, key focus, and background to the study, the research purpose and trends obtained from research literature are presented. The details regarding the research problem, aims and the potential value added by the study follow. Details regarding the design of the research and research methodology are provided and reference is made to the research approach, research method, research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection, recording of data, data

analysis and reporting. The chapter concludes with a report on the findings of the study and integration thereof with literature. In this chapter, factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal are reported.

Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations, contributions and recommendations

This chapter provides the conclusions, limitations, contributions and recommendations of the research. An evaluation is given of the research aims in relation to the derived conclusions. Lastly, the limitations of the research, its contribution to performance appraisal, the organisation and recommendations for future research are presented.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided information regarding the scientific orientation to the research and the background and motivation of this study. The research problem, literature and empirical aims, the details of the paradigm perspective, the research design and method used in the study were clarified. The chapter concluded with the layout of the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focusses on the core concepts of the study. This section discusses the literature on attitudes, performance appraisal and their related dimensions. Attitude formation theories are evaluated and previous research relating to factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal is examined.

2.1 ATTITUDE

The topic of attitudes has received wide attention in research in the last century (Fazio & Petty, 2008). People's attitudes are fundamental to how they behave; therefore, it might be challenging to change people's attitudes (Rix, 2007). For this reason there is a need to understand attitudes, to understand the important role that preferences play in people's behaviour and to understand why there is inconsistency between what people say and their associated behaviour (De Houwer, Thomas & Baeyens, 2001; Kaiser, Byrka & Hartig, 2010). It is therefore important to define attitude to gain a deeper understanding of the construct.

2.1.1 Defining attitude

Various definitions of attitude exist, but it seems that most of the definitions agree that an attitude can be acquired. In defining attitudes, authors generally appear to regard people's likes and dislikes as key aspects. Thurstone, an early theorist, defined an attitude as an affective response that a person has towards a psychological object (Thurstone, 1931). This definition indicates that attitudes can be understood through a person's favourability towards an object (Ajzen, 2001).

Ten years after Thurstone coined his definition, Gordon Allport, a social psychologist, provided a broad definition of an attitude as a mental state of readiness, which can be organised through experience by applying a ruling on the person's reaction to all related

situations or objects (Allport, 1935). Eagly and Chaiken (2007) claim that although Allport's definition is still part of social psychology study books and important on a historical basis, it is not widely used, because the notion of evaluation is absent within this definition.

One of the classical theorists in attitudinal research is Martin Fishbein, who is well known for his research in understanding attitudes (Ajzen, 2010). Fishbein (1963) who was the first scholar to add the concept of belief to the definition of attitude defined attitude as a one-dimensional disposition to evaluate the psychological object as favourable or unfavourable. Ajzen (2012) explains that Fishbein elaborated on Thurstone's idea by adding belief as a causal factor of an attitude, which provided more certainty and agreement regarding the definition of an attitude.

During the subsequent decades, Fishbein's definition was reduced significantly to its evaluative component. Fishbein's (1963) original definition of attitude changed with time, until Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) redefined an attitude as an implicit evaluation type of response towards the object. In response to their comments on Allport's definition, Zanna and Rempel (1988) defined an attitude as the categorisation of a stimulus object along an evaluative dimension.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.1) formulated a comprehensive definition and defined an attitude as a "psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". Eagly and Chaiken (2007) further explain this definition as follows:

- The evaluation describes all types of evaluation, which include responding evaluatively towards the object, overtly or covertly, with affection or behaviour.
- The evaluation includes the concept of belief, judgements, affections, emotional aspects and secret intentions.
- The person who is holding an attitude towards the object should not always consciously experience the above stated reactions towards the object.
- Attitudes can be short-term or long-term; they may not be specifically enduring.

Eagly and Chaiken's definition might seem outdated, but Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) claim that although there is a long history of research on the definition of attitudes with no perfect agreement upon this matter, the most widely used definition of attitude is that of Eagly and Chaiken. Therefore, this definition of attitude was adopted for the present study. To understand the construct of attitude properly, it is also important to consider the nature of an attitude.

2.1.2 The characteristics of attitudes

The literature review revealed that there is not only a variety of definitions of attitude between authors, but also differing views of the nature of an attitude. The nature of attitudes can be explored through looking at different views such as the classic three-component model as well as attitudes as evaluative associations with objects.

2.1.2.1 The classic three-component model

The assumptions of the tripartite model are that the attitudinal objects have affective, cognitive and behavioural components (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Haddock & Maio, 2007; Luthans, 2008; Uță & Popescu, 2013). These authors agree on the following aspects:

- The cognitive component involves the information or beliefs that the person has towards the object, with no indication whether the information or belief is right or wrong
- The behavioural component refers to the inclination that the person will react towards the object.
- The affective component refers to the positive or negative feelings that the person has towards the object

It is important to understand that the tripartite model believes that the attitude cannot be observed, but it will rather manifest itself through one of the three components (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The tripartite model of attitudes is one of the well-known models in attitude formation research, but researchers are continuously attempting to prove its validity specifically relating to the behaviour component (Bagozzi, Tybout, Craig & Sternthal,

1979). However, Bagozzi and Burnkrant (1980) pointed out that it is a complex issue to make a distinction between multi-component models and single-component models and it was suggested that both models have advantages depending on the nature of the formation of the attitude and the object. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) pointed out that this model has given the roadmap for the understanding of attitude formation and change. Although the tripartite model describes the characteristics of the attitude, it is not the preferred model in the modern understanding of attitudes, and researchers prefer a one- or two-component model (Fazio & Petty, 2008; Maio & Haddock, 2012).

2.1.2.2 The one- or two-component model

Zanna and Rempel (1988) explain that this model indicates that one can hold different evaluations towards an object and that attitudes originate from beliefs. Huskinson and Haddock (2004) reported findings in their study by using this model which holds that people base their attitudes on different information. Maio & Haddock (2012) confirm that these models are preferred by researchers who seek to understand the nature of the attitude.

2.1.2.3 Attitudes as object evaluative associations with objects

Attitudes as object evaluative associations refer to a more recent view of the attitude. According to this view, the attitude is hypothetical in nature and is described as a form of knowledge; the attitudes are represented in the memory of the person, they vary in strength and are evaluative along a continuum (Fazio, 2007; Fazio & Petty, 2008). In this study this view of the characteristics of attitudes was adopted.

2.1.3 Functions of attitudes

Thurstone (1931) explains that an attitude should be explored to give an account of the favourable or unfavourable possible action that the person will have towards the object. Katz (1960) formulated the following categories of attitude functions.

- The knowledge function refers to the organisation and processing of information.

- The adjustment function enables people to increase rewards and decrease punishment through behaviour.
- The ego-defensive function refers to the guarding of oneself by displaying the attitude.
- The value-expressive function enables people to display their own values by holding an attitude.

This view of the functions of attitudes is still valid (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Petty, 2008). Furthermore, attitudes have functions for the people who hold them; these functions include the guidance of their behaviour, and enabling the person to process information and decision-making (Baron & Byrne, 1991). Attitudes also assist in the prediction of behaviour and enable people to adapt to new environments (Fazio & Petty, 2008; Luthans, 2008). Yet, understanding how attitudes are formed was important for this study.

2.2. ATTITUDE FORMATION THEORIES

The second aim of the literature review was to evaluate attitude formation theories, because it is important to understand how attitudes are formed towards objects to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. Researchers have different views of attitude formation: there are theories that focus on multi-dimensional models and components (affective, cognitive and behavioural) and the underlying process view according to which attitudes are summarised evaluations that are formed through cognitive processes such as memory and stimuli (Salinas, 2005; Smith, Brief & Stevens, 2008). The attitude formation theories that will subsequently be discussed are the cognitive dissonance theory, learning theories and the expectancy-value model.

2.2.1 Cognitive dissonance theory

Sometimes a person needs to express a view or show an attitude that is not congruent to their beliefs or evaluations (Wegener & Carlston, 2005). Cognitive dissonance refers to an

unpleasant condition where people realise that there are inconsistencies between their attitudes towards objects and between their attitudes and behaviour (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Luthans, 2008). Baron and Byrne (1991) also noted that this ambivalent situation and consequently negative attitude formation might arise out of taking personal responsibility specifically when the action produces negative consequences. Fazio and Petty (2008) explain that the individual is mostly aware of this ambivalence, which can result in negative attitudes towards the object, and the inconsistency needs to be resolved. It is assumed that people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour should function in a harmonious environment, and if there is no harmony it is necessary to bring about changes in the cognitive structure to re-harmonise (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

2.2.2 Learning theories in attitude formation

Attitudes can be formed through different learning methods such as operant conditioning, classical conditioning, evaluative conditioning and modelling (Baron & Byrne, 1991).

2.2.2.1 Operant conditioning

Operant conditioning, also known as instrumental conditioning, refers to an attitude formation theory that involves the use of reinforcements such as positive encouragement to form or change a person's attitude of (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Miserandino, 2007). Therefore, actions that are followed by positive outcomes are reinforced and will then reoccur while actions associated with negative outcomes will be repressed (Baron & Byrne, 1991). Luthans (2008) explains that this theory is based on cognitive concepts and it is important to reinforce behaviour, but it does not include behaviouristic concepts and principles, which are important in forming an attitude.

2.2.2.2 Classical conditioning

The term 'classical conditioning' refers to a process where an attitude is formed through the consistent pairing of two stimuli until a situation is reached where the first stimulus transforms into a signal for the second stimulus (Baron & Byrne, 1991).

Miserandino (2007) explains that classical conditioning occurs when the first stimulus causes an emotional reaction because it is associated with the second stimulus. Olson and Fazio (2001) proved that attitudes could be formed through classical conditioning. When developing an attitude the individual will evaluate the information available in his or her memory and this will then form the attitude (Olson & Fazio, 2002). Although some researchers value the theory, other researchers believe that the classical conditioning theory fails to explain the formation of attitudes, because it only focusses on a prediction of an action and not necessarily on the affective or cognitive meaning of the attitude (Cacioppo, Marshall-Goodell, Tassinari & Petty, 1992; Walther, 2002; Walther, Nagengast & Trasselli, 2005).

2.2.2.3 Evaluative conditioning

Evaluative conditioning is an attitude formation procedure where a neutral target stimulus (conditioned stimulus) is repeatedly paired with another stimulus (unconditioned stimulus) with either a positive or negative valence which can then change the person's attitude in line with the direction of the unconditioned stimulus (De Houwer et al., 2001; Walther et al., 2005). De Houwer, Baeyens and Field (2005) confirm that evaluative conditioning is a useful theory to understand attitude formation, but point out that the evaluative conditioning theory is an emerging theory and needs further research.

2.2.2.4 Modelling

Baron and Byrne (1991) argue that an attitude can form or change through the observation of the behaviour of other people. Luthans (2008) explains that modelling is mostly used in attitudinal change theories.

2.2.3 Expectancy-value model

Fishbein (2008) postulated an attitude theory that is based on the following assumptions:

- A person can have more than one belief (positive or negative) towards an object.
- Each object is accompanied by an attitude that refers to an intervened evaluation.

- A collection of the evaluations forms a summation.
- The intervened evaluative responses that are accompanied by the object have a mediating effect through the formation of an attitude.
- Any further contact with the object that the attitude is formed towards will prompt the evaluative response, which then refers to the attitude.

The concept belief within the theory refers to subjective probability (Sparks, Hedderley & Shepherd, 1991). The expectancy-value framework assumes that the attitude towards the object is based on the sum of the values of all of the attributes that the attitude object is thought to have, and is based on cognitive attitude formation (Ajzen, 2001; Zhang, Xie, Wee, Thumboo & Li, 2008). Authors agree that this framework is a useful and a popular model to explain how a collection of beliefs about objects forms attitudes (Ajzen, 2012; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Zhang et al., 2008). This view of attitude formation was adopted in the study. Having elucidated the concept of an attitude, its impact in the workplace needs to be examined.

2.2.4 Attitudes in the workplace

Attitudes have a number of functions in the workplace. Relationships between employees and managers within the workplace are based on trust, and work attitudes can have an impact on the trust relationship between individuals in the organisation (Bagraim & Hime, 2007). It is important to note that attitudes can be formed in the workplace and they can help people to function; furthermore, through studying employees' attitudes, their behaviour can be predicted (Luthans, 2008). Employee attitudes can serve as a reflection of the employees' feelings towards their work and the overall environment (Govender, Moodley & Parumasur, 2005). Because people display emotional behaviour in the workplace, attitudes can be formed through positive and negative experiences in the workplace (Jonker & Van der Merwe, 2013).

2.3 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The third aim of the literature review was to conceptualise performance appraisal and its dimensions. To begin with, it was necessary to conceptualise performance management, because performance appraisal is an important component of performance management (Gordon & Stewart, 2009). It was also important to look at the process of performance management to gain a better understanding of where performance appraisal fits into this process. After the discussion on performance management in the following sections (2.3.1. and 2.3.2), performance appraisal is conceptualised.

2.3.1 Defining performance management

Performance management was traditionally described as the managing of people, which includes planning and reviewing the performance of employees, and facilitation to enable employees to achieve the set goals for the employee as well as the organisation (Spangenberg, 1994). Fletcher (2008) explains that the concept of performance management evolved to a process that not only links with human resources, but with the overall organisation. The interest in understanding performance management has increased during the last decade (Hood, 2012). Although there appears to be a variety of definitions of performance management, there is agreement that performance management refers to continuity in the form of a process, it has a strategic nature and it is integrated with other business processes. The following definitions support this statement:

Armstrong and Baron (1994) define performance management as a process driven by line managers where employee, team and organisational performance are improved.

Similarly, performance management refers to managing the performance of the organisation and the employee and the integration thereof (Fletcher, 2008).

A more descriptive and conceptual definition explains performance management as a continuous activity where the performance of individuals and groups is identified,

measured and developed (Aguinis, 2009; Aguinis & Pierce, 2008). This definition of performance management was adopted for the present study.

2.3.2 The performance management process

Experts contend that it is important to agree to the steps of a performance management process, because this process can influence the results of performance management and the performance appraisal (Grote, 1996, Fletcher, 2008). In this section, the ideal steps for a successful performance management process are discussed.

Spangenberg (1994) identified a four-phase process to understand performance management, as described below:

- The first phase entails performance planning, when the strategic goals (the mission) and the job responsibilities of each position in the organisation are described.
- The next phase involves the structure design, which includes any processes or goals that will contribute to the attainment of individual and team-oriented goals.
- In the third phase, performance must be managed. It involves the management of the goals, performance, resources and interface.
- Finally, the cyclical process is completed when the annual performance is reviewed.

Similarly, Grote (1996) created a five-phase model that varies only slightly from the process described above. Grote (1996) described the phases as performance planning, execution of performance, assessment of performance, performance review and performance renewal and updating goals for the next period.

There seems to be agreement that performance management generally involves performance planning, implementation and assessment (Spangenberg, 1994; Grote, 1996; Aguinis, 2009; Botha & Bussin, 2010). Each of these steps is discussed next.

2.3.2.1 Performance planning

'Performance planning' refers to the description of the strategic mission and goals of the organisation and the alignment of employee performance with these two aspects (Aguinis, 2009; Botha & Bussin, 2010; Grote, 1996; Spangenberg, 1994). Aguinis (2009) explains that it is during this phase that the employee's key responsibilities and outcomes are set for the performance management period.

2.3.2.2 Implementation

The implementation phase, according to Botha and Bussin (2010), seems to be the same phase as described by Grote (1996). In this phase the employee's performance is managed through regular feedback, coaching and mentoring. Aguinis (2009) refers to this part of the process as performance execution; in this phase the employees' main aim is to ensure that they she meet the set key responsibilities and align their behaviour with the required outcomes.

2.3.2.3 Results assessment

The results assessment phase refers to the evaluation of the employee's performance to determine if the employee has achieved the set outcomes and tasks. This process also involves rewarding the employee for good performance or establishing a performance improvement plan for non-performance (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Grote, 1996). Both the manager and the employee normally carry out this performance assessment phase through the completion of a performance appraisal form (Aguinis, 2009).

Cascio and Aguinis (2011) argue that a performance management system will be effective when it can serve a strategic purpose and a developmental purpose, has a purpose for communicating expectations to the employee, provides feedback to the employee and that information derived from the process can be used for employee decision-making. Since the information derived from performance feedback is important to ensure an efficient

performance management process and system, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of performance appraisal.

2.3.3 Defining performance appraisal

The first known recorded performance appraisal dates back to the third century when a Chinese philosopher criticised one of his raters that he was biased and did not judge the men by the merit of their work, but rather by his own preferences (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). The definitions provided below demonstrate that the concept of performance appraisal has not changed significantly and that it still involves a type of judgement by the manager of an employee's work:

Glen (2001) defines performance appraisal as an activity where the employee's current performance is measured, performance developmental areas are identified, strengths are reinforced and overall feedback is given to the individual employee. Fletcher (2008) gives a broader view and defines performance appraisal as a channel for the interpretation of organisational goals into individual goals.

Aguinis (2009) defines performance appraisal as a situation where the manager provides feedback to the employee about his or her performance. Similarly, Grote (2011) defines performance appraisal as a formal process in which a manager provides an opinion of an employee's quality of work.

Cascio and Aguinis (2011) give a more descriptive definition: they define this process as the collection of employee performance information based on observation and the evaluation of the employee's performance through an act of judgement. This definition of performance appraisal was adopted for this study.

2.3.4 The performance appraisal process

From the above discussion, it is clear that the performance appraisal is cyclical and involves a certain number of steps (Botha & Bussin, 2010). In this section, the identification of performance standards is discussed and a brief outline of the sources of information used to base performance appraisal is given. A discussion on performance measurement and performance feedback follows next.

2.3.4.1 Identification of job performance standards

This activity is the responsibility of the direct manager and involves the establishment of the job performance standards as well as the performance levels that are acceptable (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

2.3.4.2 Sources of information used to base performance appraisal on

There is strong agreement among scholars that the use of a single rater for a performance appraisal may be seen as one of the common sources of problems in this process, because the information might be subjective (Fletcher, 2008; Grote, 1996). Multi-appraisal, which refers to the use of multiple sources of appraisal information, seems to be popular and is viewed in a positive light as it eliminates the above-mentioned problems encountered with single-rater methods in performance appraisal (Fletcher, 2008). In support of this view, Aguinis (2009) explains that there are alternative sources of performance appraisal. Different role players might be involved in the collection of performance, and depending on the company's requirements the appraisal process may require performance ratings from the manager, self-ratings of the employee, peer ratings of fellow colleagues and ratings received from clients (Aguinis, 2009; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). These role players might rate the employee's performance from a different perspective and such an approach increases objectivity (Rudman, 2003). Each of the relevant role players is discussed below.

i. Managerial appraisal

Even if the appraisal makes use of different sources of performance appraisal, the direct manager remains responsible for managing the overall employee appraisal (Aguinis, 2009). Fletcher (2008) points out that managerial appraisal can be beneficial if the employee works on projects and therefore appraisal sources might include a team of managers in order to facilitate the performance appraisal discussion.

ii. Self-appraisal

Self-appraisal, which refers to employees rating their own performance, is beneficial to uplift the perception of fairness and aspects where there are disagreements between the manager and the employee (Aguinis, 2009; Grote, 1996). Cascio and Aguinis (2011) claim that self-appraisal, combined with other sources, could increase the motivation of the employee and minimise defensive employee attitudes during performance appraisal. Their view concurs largely with that of Fletcher (2008), who further explains that self-appraisal is recommended to be used in the following situations:

- when the direct manager is not frequently in contact with the employee and the employee is left as the only source for appraisal information;
- when the performance appraisal is not linked to rewarding decisions; or
- when the self-appraisal involves an assessment of the employee's performance against his or her own previous performance and not against other employees' performance.

iii. Peer appraisal

Performance ratings from peers might be included in the overall appraisal (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Fletcher (2008) suggests that appraisal information from peers should be used to assess team player-related competencies and within the context of a multi-source appraisal. Aguinis (2009) points out that problems using peer evaluation in isolation could arise as a result of possible subjectivity based on the relationships among staff, peers

evaluating in a way that is less discriminating between the different dimensions of the appraisal and peers being ignorant of the context wherein the performance should be rated.

iv. Clients

It has been suggested that information from clients regarding their experiences of service delivery can be included in performance appraisal (Aguinis, 2009; Grote, 1996). Grote (1996) argues that although the overall feedback from clients may be objective, it can add to the manager's administrative load and requires a skilful manager to integrate the received information with the appraisal. Performance appraisal information can be collected from external clients or internal clients, such as departments within the organisation (Aguinis, 2009; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

2.3.4.3 Performance measurement

After the performance measurement criteria have been gathered from the role players, the employee's performance needs to be measured (Aguinis, 2009). Such performance is usually measured by using a type of rating scale (Fletcher, 2008). The most frequently used rating scales, namely the forced-choice scales, behaviourally anchored rating scale and management by objectives (MBO) are discussed below. A discussion of the appraisal form, a form that is used to record performance measurements, concludes this section.

a. Forced-choice scales

The term 'forced-choice scales' refers to an appraisal checklist that is used with the aim of obtaining an overall rating of the employee's performance by selecting statements that are most and least like the employee (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). These ratings are then scored in line with predetermined weightings (Rudman, 2003). Forced-choice scales are suitable for managers who do not rate their employees effectively. However, because this technique involves predetermined criteria it might be viewed as unfair; therefore, it is not used often nowadays (Fletcher, 2008). Some researchers view this method as objective

(Fletcher, 2008; Grote, 1996), while others feel that using this type of rating scale can still open a door for bias (Botha & Bussin, 2010).

b. Behaviourally anchored rating scale (BARS)

The behaviourally anchored rating scale (BARS) technique aims to enable the manager to be an objective assessor of the employee's performance (Rudman, 2003). Authors agree on the steps for developing BARS (Aguinis, 2009; Fletcher, 2008), namely:

- Firstly, critical incidents or examples are collected from people who understand the position in order to describe poor, good and excellent behaviour and then these incidents or examples are grouped into a range of performance dimensions.
- Secondly, another round of critical incidents that describes certain job criteria is collected.
- Thirdly, another group that is also familiar with the position is then assigned to rate the relevance of the critical incidents according to a certain scale and during this stage there must be a high level of agreement among the group members.
- Lastly, the agreed performance dimensions are used for the rating scale, which is anchored by the behavioural descriptions.

BARS has been described as a rating scale that is more detailed than the forced-choice scale, where it focusses on specific dimensions for each job activity that relates to one position (Grote, 1996). Rudman (2003) mentions that it could be time-consuming to implement BARS, and Fletcher (2008) elaborates on some of the challenges encountered with this rating method as follows:

- Since BARS focusses specifically on the behaviours of the position managers are sometimes uncertain of where they should place the employee's behaviour on the rating scale when they have to rate the employee.
- The manager will first have to obtain information of the good and bad behaviours of each position and this will be stated in the form of dimensions.

c. Management by objectives (MBO)

This rating method involves the collection of information about the position, setting clear and understandable goals for each position and determining the standards in terms of performance in relation to quality, quantity and time (Aguinis, 2009). This view concurs with that of Grote (1996), who further argues that MBO is not only an appraisal method, but also encompasses the organisational culture such as beliefs and ideas, as well as the planning, evaluating and controlling of an employee's performance. Aguinis (2009) suggests that when an organisation makes use of the MBO rating method, they should not only focus on the outcome or key responsibilities, but also on how well the outcome was achieved, i.e. the performance standards. Rudman (2003) points out that the MBO method is objective as it decreases the focus on the employee's personal characteristics, therefore it can minimise bias. This method has a result-oriented approach and consequently attempts to minimise rater bias, therefore it seems to be the most often used rating method in organisations (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Grote, 1996). The performance appraisal form, which is used to record the performance measurements (Grote, 2011), is discussed next.

d. The appraisal form

An ideal appraisal form includes information about the desired behaviour that the employee should display and this should be integrated with the organisation's most important competencies (Fletcher, 2008). It is agreed that an appraisal form should at least include information of the employee, responsibilities and goals related to the position, competencies needed for the position with behavioural indicators, contributions of the employee, information regarding development of the employee, information from stakeholders such as clients, feedback from the manager and comments of the employee and final signatures of all parties involved (Aguinis, 2009; Grote, 2011).

2.3.4.4 Employee feedback

After the performance ratings have been obtained, performance feedback should be given to employees (Aguinis, 2009). Since performance appraisal aims to develop and enhance employee performance, employees should receive feedback regarding their performance

(Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Rudman, 2003). Spangenberg (1994) confirms that the responsibility of giving employee feedback rests on the manager's shoulders. Two types of employee feedback will subsequently be discussed, namely positive employee feedback and negative employee feedback. This section concludes with a discussion on 360-degree feedback.

a. Positive employee feedback

Positive employee feedback is given when the employee's performance meets the expectation criteria (Aguinis, 2009). Murphy and Cleveland (1995) claim that employees prefer positive feedback above negative feedback, because positive feedback enhances the employee's self-efficacy. Positive feedback should be sincere and specific, because the employee may choose to focus on the positive feedback only and ignore the negative performance feedback (Aguinis, 2009).

b. Negative feedback

Negative feedback is feedback that is given regarding the aspect of the employee's performance that is not according to the expectation or set standard (Aguinis, 2009). Rudman (2003) explains that negative feedback given with an attitude of criticism might cause employees to assume defensive attitudes where they blame situations and other people for their performance. Aguinis (2009) states that managers find it uncomfortable to deliver negative feedback for various reasons:

- They might be fearful that employees will become emotional.
- They themselves could have had negative performance appraisals previously.
- They do not like to be the judge over the employee's performance.
- They do not feel prepared for performance appraisals in terms of gathering the required information.

c. 360-degree feedback

360-degree feedback is described as performance feedback in which data is included from self-appraisal, managerial appraisal, peer appraisal, clients and subordinates (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Fletcher, 2008; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). It is required that trust relationships be evident in the organisation when using 360-degree feedback and information must be kept confidential, therefore organisations will have to prepare for a 360-degree feedback process (Fletcher, 2008). Murphy and Cleveland (1995) point out that the organisation should balance the weighting of the importance of each source's information to the final appraisal. However, if done correctly, 360-degree employee feedback can reduce bias and improve the performance of employees, because the employees perceive the ratings received from their colleagues as accurate and fair and would probably change their behaviour in order to be perceived as good performers through the eyes of their peers (Rudman, 2003).

From the above discussion, it is clear that there are many factors that influence performance appraisal ratings, which in turn might affect the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal. These influences are discussed in the next section.

2.3.5 Factors influencing performance appraisal ratings

During performance appraisals, various factors, such as the organisational context, disagreement between role players, the manager-employee relationship, the rater, and rating errors, that influence performance appraisal ratings.

2.3.5.1 The organisational context

In order to understand and implement a successful performance appraisal process, the organisation must assess the organisational context wherein the appraisal is conducted (Levy & Williams, 2004).

The performance ratings must be understood within the boundaries of the organisational context as well as against the background of the beliefs or attitudes that managers hold towards the organisation and the appraisal system (Tziner et al., 2002). Gordon and Stewart (2009) argue that this organisational context includes the culture of the organisation, the climate, communication policies, accountability of managers and the appraisal system of the organisation. According to Botha and Bussin (2010), the organisational context defines what type of performance is suitable or acceptable and therefore it influences the performance appraisal.

2.3.5.2 Disagreement between the role players

Various authors have pointed out that there could be disagreement between the various role players in the process of performance appraisal rating. Fletcher (2008) argues that performance appraisal ratings are subject to distortions such as subjectivity and leniency. Aguinis (2009) states that using multi-appraisal might result in disagreement between the ratings across different role players. According to Grote (1996), employees are less critical about their own performance and might rate themselves either more favourably – or less favourably if they want to avoid conflict with their manager. The relationship between peers can also influence the rating subjectively, because if the relationship is positive, the peers might rate the employee's performance more favourably than it deserves (Aguinis, 2009). One solution to resolve this issue is to draft a comparison matrix to compare the different ratings against the sources from which the information was derived (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

2.3.5.3 Relationship between manager and employee.

The employee-manager relationship may be a factor that influences performance ratings, because if a manager is prejudiced against an employee, it may affect the manager's subjective judgement of the employee's performance during appraisal (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Furthermore, the type of interaction between the manager and the employee can influence the appraisal because face-to-face feedback might generate a different performance appraisal rating than where feedback is handled in an indirect context (Pichler, 2012).

2.3.5.4 Rater and rating errors

Another influence on performance appraisal refers to the person who does the performance rating (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Stakeholders such as the manager, the employee, the reviewers, the human resources department, senior management and the organisation influence the performance appraisal because they might have different expectations of the performance appraisal process (Dhiman & Singh, 2007).

Such different expectations have a direct influence on the ratings given to employees as well as on the overall appraisal, because if the expectation from senior management involves retention of employees, for example, more favourable performance ratings will be given to employees and the rating of the employees will then be inflated (Botha & Bussin, 2010). This performance rating error is called leniency errors. Jawahar (2001) contends that leniency errors occur because managers fail to give critical evaluations of their employees' performance. Leniency errors occur frequently and can result in a performance appraisal that can be of no value (Curtis, Harvey & Ravden, 2005).

The halo error and horns effect is caused by the political motives of the manager (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). The halo error occurs when the manager gives the employee a favourable rating and the horns effect refers to a situation where a manager provides an employee with an unfavourable rating (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Another error that influences performance appraisal is the central tendency, which refers to a situation where the manager gives an employee an average rating, which then causes a tendency where the manager clusters all of the performance ratings around the middle of the rating scale (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Managers should use performance appraisal information for the entire period under review to avoid the occurrence of the recency error where managers focus only on recent events of the employee's performance (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). Cascio and Aguinis (2011) mention that raters could be trained to eliminate or minimise errors during performance appraisal.

2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The previous discussion confirms the complexity of attitudes and performance appraisal alike. In line with this aim, it is needed to examine literature to search for factors affecting managers' attitudes or behaviour towards performance appraisal.

During their interviews with a few executives, Longenecker et al. (1987) surprisingly discovered that managers' appraisal attitudes, their political motivations, the trust relationship between employees and managers and the avoidance of difficult employees could influence the accuracy of performance appraisals.

The first known recorded study of factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal is a study conducted in 1992 to determine how performance appraisal was practised in the workplace. Thomas and Bretz (1994) explain that this study was conducted in the Fortune 100 companies and that it revealed the following factors, which affect managerial attitudes towards performance appraisal:

- **Ownership:** Managers do not have a sense of ownership in performance appraisal, because they are not included in the design of the performance appraisal system and their grievances regarding the performance appraisal system are not acted upon.
- **Negative feedback:** Managers are opposed to giving negative employee feedback, because employees dislike receiving negative feedback and managers' fear that it could result in defensive and hostile employee attitudes.
- **Adverse impact:** The adverse impact of negative employee feedback might affect the employee's career and managers do not want to be responsible for the negative consequences.
- **Scarce availability of rewards:** Managers feel that they are not rewarded for delivering negative feedback and taking the processes more seriously.
- **Personal reflection:** Managers do not like to give negative feedback to employees, because it might reflect on their own ability to recruit and train the employees.

The findings from the above-mentioned study are still valid and used among researchers (Aguinis, 2009; Grote, 2004). Subsequent research that contributed to the further understanding of factors which influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal and the associated behaviours are briefly indicated below:

- The motivation of the manager can influence the behaviour of the manager towards performance appraisal (Harris, 1994).
- Managers believe that the accuracy of performance ratings is unimportant, because they regard performance appraisal as a tool to encourage employees and not a process to improve performance (Tziner, Latham, Price & Haccoun, 1996).
- Factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal were found to be the organisational climate, the commitment of the manager and the role of affect towards the employee (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Tziner et al., 1998).
- The manager's attitude towards the organisation can influence his or her attitude towards performance appraisal (Tziner & Murphy, 1999).
- Managers who have favourable attitudes towards performance appraisal will provide accurate performance appraisals (Jawahar, 2001).
- Managers' own personality, their level of self-efficacy and confidence in the performance appraisal system of the organisation can influence their attitudes towards performance appraisal (Tziner et al., 2002).
- The avoidance of conflict with employees and the managers' feelings towards employees can influence managers' attitudes (Longenecker & Gioia, 2003).
- Manager's agendas and the expectations of employees can encourage the manager to distort performance ratings to avoid conflict with employees (Curtis et al., 2005).
- Managers' confidence in the performance appraisal system influences their rating behaviour (Yun, Donahue, Dudley & McFarland, 2005).
- Managers' perceptions of organisational politics and employee-manager relationships can influence rating behaviour (Shore & Strauss, 2008).
- Political motives of managers during performance appraisal and training in performance appraisal can influence managers' attitudes positively or negatively (MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009).

- Managers' perceptions of the organisation can influence their attitudes towards performance appraisal, because managers who have favourable attitudes towards the organisation would put in more effort to ensure that performance ratings of employees are accurate, which could prevent the motive of the manager to distort performance ratings (Jawahar, 2001; Tziner et al, 1998).
- Another factor that might influence the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal seems to relate to performance feedback. Overall, managers find it difficult to give performance feedback to employees (Billikopf, 2010).
- Some managers do not like the idea of playing the role of a judge over another person (Aguinis, 2009).
- Managers' conflicting roles of being both a judge and a coach during performance appraisal, the timing of performance appraisal and the managers' available time to conduct performance appraisal have an influence on the attitudes of managers (Kondrasuk, 2012).
- The employee-manager relationship can affect managers' perceptions towards performance appraisal (Pichler, 2012).
- Confusing terminology used in performance appraisal leads to dissatisfaction among managers (Van De Mierop & Vrolix, 2014).

Managers' attitudes and beliefs are important with regard to the responsibility of evaluating employees' performance (Tziner et al., 1998). Furthermore, performance appraisal is still perceived as one of the most important processes that affect the career of the employee (Grote, 2011). This study sought to answer the following questions:

- Are the above-mentioned factors the only factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal?
- What additional factors possibly exist that influence the attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal?

Therefore, in order to change managers' attitudes more positively and based on the foregoing literature, through this study the researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review revealed prominent trends regarding attitudes, performance appraisal and managers' experiences with performance appraisal. In line with the research aims, this chapter highlighted that there are a variety of definitions of attitude and different views on this topic. An analysis was done of how an attitude is created. Performance appraisal was conceptualised within the broader framework of performance management, performance appraisal was discussed in terms of the performance appraisal process and emphasis was placed on the factors that influence performance appraisal. Lastly, a literature review was conducted to establish patterns and trends in literature that relate to factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

The literature pertaining to attitude shows that the definition of attitude has evolved from one that states that attitude is based on a mental state of readiness to a more comprehensive definition that indicates that an attitude is based on a collection of evaluations towards an object. The latest understanding is therefore that attitudes can be measured. It was also found that most authors agree that attitude involves likes and dislikes towards an object. A variety of attitude formation theories were analysed in order to gain a deeper understanding of how attitudes are formed. The attitude formation theory used for this study is based on the principles that a person can have more than one belief towards an object and that by creating an attitude the person is implementing an intervention to mediate the feelings associated with the object. Performance appraisal was conceptualised and it was concluded that performance appraisal involves a process where a manager provides a subjective judgement about an employee's performance. The literature review indicated that performance appraisal involves the setting of standards, evaluating the employee's performance against the standards and providing performance

feedback to the employee. Lastly, a literature review was conducted to understand what do we know about factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal and it seems that although a substantial number of factors have been identified, recent research (over the last five years) on this topic is lacking.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation the research design and methodology applied in this study are discussed. This covers the research approach, method, research setting, sampling information, methods used for data collection, recording of data and analysis and details of the reporting method will be given. In Chapter 3 the findings of this study are presented and discussed with the literature.

CHAPTER 3

ARTICLE

FACTORS INFLUENCING MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

TANYA DU PLESSIS

Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Mrs A van Niekerk

ABSTRACT

Orientation: Managers often have negative attitudes towards performance appraisal due to its problematic nature influenced by political and social contextual factors. These negative attitudes lead to a lack of support to staff, inaccurate performance appraisal ratings and consequently negative employee perceptions towards the performance appraisal process. This state of affairs necessitates a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Research purpose: The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Motivation for the study: Previous research into performance appraisal confirms its importance and managers' dislike of performance appraisal. Several factors have been identified that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. The study on which this article is based sought to investigate whether these factors are the only factors that influence managerial attitudes or whether there are additional factors. The overall aim of this study was to provide a better understanding of what managers experience during

performance appraisal in order to provide support to managers and empower them to experience the performance appraisal process more positively.

Research design, approach and method: This qualitative study was conducted within the interpretive research paradigm. A purposive sample consisting of eight managers with performance appraisal experience were utilised. In-depth interviews were conducted and naïve sketches were done by the participants. The data were analysed using Tesch's descriptive data analysis technique.

Main findings: This study revealed that performance appraisal is fundamentally an uncomfortable and even sometimes emotional process for managers that could cause them to adopt a defensive attitude. Since managers have many uncertainties about performance appraisal and related components, they do not always have the ability or readiness to conduct performance appraisals. The organisational context might place the manager in a position to distort employee ratings, which in turn influences the manager's attitude.

Practical/managerial implications: This study can provide insight into managerial experiences of performance appraisal as well as possible explanations of the factors that influence the attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal.

Contribution/value-add: The findings of the study can assist organisations in changing managers' attitudes positively; consequently it can make performance appraisal more manageable for both the manager and the employee. This study can also assist with the effective implementation of performance appraisal processes.

Key words: organisational psychology; attitude; performance appraisal; qualitative research; interpretive paradigm; in-depth interviews; naïve sketch; Tesch's descriptive analysis method

INTRODUCTION

Key focus of the study

Performance appraisal is a critical process that is aimed at improving employee performance (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). The major concerns have been whether performance ratings are accurate and whether the measures used are valid (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Reports that managers are opposed to performance appraisal are on the rise (Aguinis, 2009; Kondrasuk, 2012; MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009). These challenges affect the results of the performance appraisals and the organisation and seem to originate from negative attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004; Shah & Murphy, 1995). Furthermore, negative attitudes of managers may prompt them to engage in unethical behaviour and cause them to treat employees unfairly by failing to provide them with honest performance feedback (Shore & Strauss, 2008). Should these negative attitudes be ignored, the result may be inaccurate performance ratings, dishonest performance feedback to employees and negative employee perceptions towards the performance appraisal process (Botha & Bussin, 2010). This study focussed on gaining a deeper understanding of the factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Background to the study

Performance appraisal is known to be a critical but complex component in performance management and it has many advantages (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Grote, 2011). Performance appraisal not only enables the organisation to describe the strengths and developmental areas of employees, but it also facilitates the relationship between the employee and the manager (Fletcher, 2008; Pichler, 2012). Performance appraisal is used in making decisions about employees, such as salary increases and succession planning (Grote, 2011). Some authors are of the opinion that performance appraisal is associated with negativity and dissatisfaction among managers (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Gordon & Stewart, 2009). Different views exist on this issue, but it seems that the challenges with performance appraisal emanate from the accuracy of employee performance ratings

(Botha & Bussin, 2010; Fletcher, 2008; Shore & Strauss, 2008). Reasons for inaccurate performance ratings include the following:

- Managers will distort the performance ratings for their own personal reasons, even if an organisation has an effective training programme on the accuracy of performance ratings (Longenecker & Gioia, 2003).
- Performance appraisal requires the commitment of the manager. The manager's perception of the organisation can influence the performance appraisal (Tziner et al., 2002).
- Performance appraisal can be experienced as a challenging task which managers and employees might fear (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2009).
- Managers dread the possibility of damaging relationships with employees (Pulakos, 2009).
- Managers have long-standing relationships with employees and these might bring political motives in performance appraisal into play (Shore & Strauss, 2008).
- Managers find it difficult to conduct performance appraisal and are fearful of this process (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2009).
- The organisational culture, norms and goals of management and the attitude of managers can influence the success of the performance appraisal (Botha & Bussin, 2010).
- Managers would prefer to hide from emotional uneasiness and conflict, they fail to provide constructive feedback and often give their employees higher performance ratings (Marreli, 2011).
- Some managers might feel that inaccuracies in performance ratings are not errors, but enablers to motivate and retain staff and this can introduce political motives (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

The above-mentioned studies, among others, confirm that the accuracy in performance appraisal ratings is connected with managers' perceptions and attitudes (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Tziner & Murphy, 1999). Managers' attitudes influence the way in which performance feedback is given as well as the general authenticity of the ratings (Tziner et al., 2002).

Furthermore, negative attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal can influence the degree of support that will be provided to employees (Botha & Bussin, 2010). It is therefore believed that the performance appraisal predicament can be better understood by focussing on improving the attitudinal components of performance appraisal (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). In view of the above, it can be confirmed that managers dislike performance appraisal. Coupled with the inflation of performance ratings and unethical conduct, performance appraisal has proved to be a prevalent problem. Gaining a better understanding of the factors that influence the managers' experiences and attitudes – both positively and negatively – towards performance appraisal may enable organisations and managers to find solutions to this problem. As such, the main research objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Research purpose

Although several studies previously focussed on factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, managers still approach performance appraisal with trepidation (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Botha & Bussin, 2010). There seems to be a gap in recent research on this topic, because recent performance appraisal research has focussed on employees' perception of fairness of performance appraisal (Dusterhoff, Cunningham & MacGregor, 2014; Jacobs, Belschak & Den Hartog, 2014).

The prevailing attitudes of managers have a severe impact on the entire performance appraisal including the accuracy of performance appraisal ratings (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Pulakos, 2009). There is no consensus on a working solution to the problem with performance appraisal and therefore displeasure with performance appraisal persists (Gordon & Stewart, 2009). It is important to note that managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal have not yet been fully explored; thus, it is necessary to gain a better understanding thereof in order to influence this attitude positively.

Therefore, this study was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

TRENDS FROM RESEARCH LITERATURE

Although there seems to be scant literature relating to the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, the available literature revealed a variety of other trends. In the section below, performance appraisal, attitude and literature highlighting factors, that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal are discussed.

Performance appraisal

Over the years, performance appraisal, a component of performance management, has become a vital subject of research and investigation (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Harris, 1994; Shore & Strauss, 2008). Performance management refers to an ongoing process where the performance of individuals and teams are identified, measured and developed (Aguinis, 2009; Aguinis & Pierce, 2008). The link between performance management and performance appraisal is that performance appraisal serves as a channel for the interpretation of organisational goals into individual goals (Fletcher, 2008).

Performance appraisal can be defined as the collection of employee performance information based on observation and the evaluation of the employee's performance through an act of judgement (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Performance appraisal is an activity where the employee's current performance is measured, performance developmental areas are identified, strengths are reinforced and overall feedback is given to the individual employee (Aguinis, 2009; Glen, 2001). Researchers are interested in studying the attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal (Curtis, Harvey & Ravden, 2005; Jawahar, 2001; Longenecker, Sims & Gioia, 1987; Thomas & Bretz, 1994; Tziner et al., 1998; Shore & Strauss, 2008).

Attitude

Attitudes serve as functions to process information, to adjust behaviour, to protect and to display individual values (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Petty, 2008; Katz, 1960). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) define an attitude as a psychological tendency (an internal state) that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. Allport (1935) defines an attitude as a psychological type of readiness that is formed by applying a judgement towards an object through experience. Therefore, an attitude relates to an individual's preferences towards an object (Thurstone, 1931).

Attitudes can form in different ways (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Petty, 2008; Luthans, 2008). Firstly, attitudes can form through situations where people's behaviour is not consistent with their attitudes towards the object (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Luthans, 2008). A negative attitude towards the object can form to balance this inconsistency towards the object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Petty, 2008).

Secondly, attitudes can form through learning, for example with reinforcements such as positive encouragement (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Miserandino, 2007). Another method requires the pairing of two stimuli until a situation is reached where the first stimulus transforms into a signal for the second stimulus (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Miserandino, 2007; Olson & Fazio, 2001). An attitude can be created where a neutral target stimulus (conditioned stimulus) is repeatedly paired with another stimulus (unconditioned stimulus) with either a positive or negative valence which can then in turn change the person's attitude in line with the direction of the unconditioned stimulus (De Houwer, Thomas & Baeyens, 2001).

Thirdly, attitudes can form through the expectancy-value framework, a theory that assumes that the attitude towards the object is based on the sum of the values of all of the attributes that the attitude object is thought to have, which is based on the mental formation of attitudes (Ajzen, 2001; Zhang, Xie, Wee, Thumboo & Li, 2008). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) explain that this framework is a useful and popular model to explain how a collection of beliefs about objects forms attitudes. The expectancy-value framework attitude formation

theory was adopted for this study.

Factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal

In line with the aims of this study, it was necessary to examine the literature to search for factors affecting managers' attitudes or behaviour towards performance appraisal.

Longenecker et al. (1987) discovered that managers' appraisal attitudes influence performance appraisals. The originating factors that were discovered were the following:

- Managers were politically motivated.
- The degree of trust in the relationship between employees and managers played a role.
- Managers would assign inaccurate performance ratings to employees in order to avoid confrontation with difficult employees.

Similarly, the following was revealed in a study by Bretz and Milkovich conducted in 1992, which aimed to investigate how performance appraisal was practised in the workplace (Thomas & Bretz, 1994):

- Managers do not feel that they ought to take ownership in performance appraisal, because they are left behind when the organisation makes decisions in implementing performance appraisal systems and their grievances are ignored.
- Managers dislike giving negative performance feedback and they stated that they would rather avoid defensive and hostile employee reactions by giving higher performance appraisal ratings.
- Managers do not like the idea of influencing the employees' careers and feel that they do not have to take performance appraisal seriously if they are not rewarded.
- Managers would avoid giving negative feedback, because it might have a personal reflection on the manner in which they recruit and develop their employees.

The above-mentioned studies might seem to be outdated, but they are currently used in performance appraisal research (Aguinis, 2009; Grote, 2011). Other factors found in similar studies included the following:

- The manager's motivation can influence the performance appraisal ratings that he or she gives to employees (Harris, 1994).
- The manager's view of the purpose of performance appraisal can influence the performance appraisal (Tziner, Lathan, Price & Haccoun, 1996).
- The manager's attitude and perception about the organisational context can cause inaccurate performance ratings. The factors that can influence the manager's attitude include the commitment of the manager and the affection of the manager towards the employee (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Tziner et al., 1998).
- The manager's attitude towards the organisation can influence his or her attitude towards performance appraisal (Tziner & Murphy, 1999).
- Managers who have positive attitudes towards performance appraisal will give accurate performance appraisal ratings (Jawahar, 2001).
- The manager's personality and confidence in the performance appraisal system can influence his or her attitude towards performance appraisal (Tziner et al., 2002).
- The avoidance of conflict or having affective feelings towards employees can influence the manager's attitudes towards performance appraisal (Longenecker & Gioia, 2003).
- The employees' expectations can influence the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal (Curtis et al., 2005; Yun, Donahue, Dudley & McFarland, 2005).
- Employee-manager relationships and managers' perceptions of the organisational context can influence the managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal (Shore & Strauss, 2008).
- Skills in performance appraisal and managers' motives can influence the attitudes of managers towards performance appraisal (MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009).
- The managers' beliefs about the organisation can influence their attitudes towards performance appraisal (Jawahar, 2001; Tziner et al., 1998).
- Negative employee performance feedback influences managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal (Billikopf, 2010).

- Conflicting roles, such as playing both a judge and a coach during performance appraisal, can influence the managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal (Aguinis, 2009).
- Time and frequency of performance appraisal can influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal (Kondrasuk, 2012).
- Terminology in performance appraisal that is confusing can influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal (Van de Mieroop & Vrolix, 2014).

The above-mentioned attitudes and beliefs as well as the causing factors have an impact on performance appraisal (Tziner et al., 1998). However, performance appraisal is a critical process and is viewed as one of the processes that have the greatest effect on the employee's career (Grote, 2011). Therefore, in order to change managers' attitudes more positively and based on the foregoing literature, the study reported in this article was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to a blueprint of the research on which the researcher intends to embark (Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2007). In the following section the research design and methods that were used for the study are discussed.

Research approach

Since this study was aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, it was deemed suitable to make use of qualitative research (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2012; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The aim in using a qualitative research methodology is to empower the research participants to share their experiences and consequently to generate a complex and detailed understanding of these experiences (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, qualitative research is aimed at producing rich, nuanced and detailed data (Mason, 2012).

The aim of this study was to provide believable and adequate insights; therefore an interpretive paradigm was applied in this study (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). The researcher further aimed to gain insight into the personal experience that the participants bring into a study (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2012).

Research method

The techniques and procedures that were used in this research are discussed in the next section. The research strategy, research settings, sampling method, data collection and analysis methodologies and the strategies employed to ensure data quality and reporting are described.

Research strategy

Since this study was interpretive and aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the research topic, it was appropriate to use an in-depth interviewing technique to ensure that the collected data was based on people's interpretation and perceptions (Mason, 2012). In-depth interviews generate information about the participant's experiences, perceptions and feelings (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). The in-depth interviews moved from a general nature to the specific. They were conducted through four phases, namely opening, questioning, probing and closing the in-depth interview (Kolb, 2008). The in-depth interviews consisted of two main questions, which covered the research topic, follow-up questions to build better understanding and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These two non-leading questions laid the foundation of the in-depth interview without restriction. They were aimed at providing the direction for the interview and naïve sketches.

The unit of analysis of a study refers to the object or individual that is being studied (Babbie, 2010). The managers in the organisation were selected as the unit of analysis in this study.

Research setting

This research was conducted in the private sector at a medium-sized financial services organisation. In this organisation, managers need to manage their departmental staff and processes and they have demanding schedules. The in-depth interviews were conducted at a venue that was comfortable for the manager to prevent disturbances from their employees and other parties.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The Executive Director of Human Capital at the organisation gave consent for the study to be conducted in the organisation. The participants selected for the study were approached individually and the background to the study (Annexure A) and aims of the study were discussed with them. Once the participants agreed to participate in the study, they signed an informed consent form (see Annexure B) outlining the parameters of the study and confirming their willingness to participate. The aspect of confidentiality was reiterated to the participants prior to and during the in-depth interviews. The researcher had the role of both researcher and employee of the company. The researcher qualified herself in the specific qualitative research methods of in-depth interviewing, naïve sketches and Tesch's descriptive data analysis techniques before the in-depth interview stage of the study.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this qualitative study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Purposive sampling is a method that is based on the researcher's subjective decision-making (De Vos et al., 2012). As insider in the organisation, the researcher selected 30 participants who had an understanding of the research problem and experience of performance appraisals (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Babbie and Mouton (2001) recommend an appropriate sample size for a South African master's level qualitative study of between five and twenty-five participants.

The sample was furthermore purposefully selected to represent all ethnic groups, ages and genders. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted based on the participants' availability and willingness to participate. The description of the research participants is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Participants' demographic profile

Age	Gender M= Male F= Female	Racial group	Years' experience with performance appraisal
30-40	F	White	6
40-50	F	White	4
60-70	M	White	35
50-60	F	White	1
30-40	F	White	11
30-40	M	African	1
30-40	F	White	5
50-60	M	Indian	15

Data collection methods

The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were utilised to obtain information about the managers' experiences, interpretations and perceptions (Mason, 2012). Eight in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal by asking each participant the following questions: 'Tell me about your overall experience with performance appraisal' and 'What are the positive and negative factors that influenced your attitude towards performance appraisal?' to each participant.

The secondary method of data collection was naïve sketches, which refers to a description of certain phenomena in the form of a short story (Giorgi, 1985). The naïve sketches were utilised by requesting each manager to draw a picture or write about their experiences with performance appraisal as well as the positive and negative factors that influenced their attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Recording of data

Eight naïve sketches were received. One naïve sketch contained a picture and the remaining naïve sketches were narratives. The naïve sketches were collected and stored. The in-depth interviews were recorded after the participants gave their permission to use an audio recorder. Field notes were taken during the in-depth interview to ensure that the researcher captures the context of the in-depth interview as well as relevant information, such as the researcher's observations, perceptions and experiences (Greef, 2012). The data were stored securely, access to the information was limited to the researcher and electronic information was safely stored with password protection (Strydom, 2012).

Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the manner in which the understanding of the data is captured (Henning et al., 2012). The techniques utilised for the analysis of the data derived from the in-depth interviews and the naïve sketches are discussed in the next section.

The recorded in-depth interviews were transcribed and then analysed together with the naïve sketches through the eight prescribed steps of Tesch's descriptive analysis technique (Creswell, 2007):

- All of the transcriptions were read once to get a holistic sense and then ideas that came to mind were written down.
- The first transcription was read again and ideas that came to mind were written

down as sub-themes.

- The researcher then grouped the sub-themes into major sub-themes, unique sub-themes and leftovers.
- The list of sub-themes was used to code the data and to ensure that no new sub-themes emerged.
- The researcher took the most descriptive wording for each sub-theme, converted it into main themes, and organised the data so that similar sub-themes were grouped.
- Interrelationships between the sub-themes were found and codes were generated.
- All of the data that related to one main theme were highlighted in a certain colour and assembled together.
- The researcher afterwards recoded the data to ensure that no sub-themes had been ignored.

Strategies ensuring quality data and ethics

An interpretive study requires skill of the researcher to use the self as an instrument to collect and analyse the information (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). To ensure that bias would be avoided, the researcher kept field notes of her own personal experiences, biases, prejudices and orientations, which might have influenced the recording, and interpretation of the information (Creswell, 2007). The researcher regularly referred to and reflected on these notes to reduce bias during the data analysis and interpretation processes. Bias was avoided by not being too inquisitive during the in-depth interview (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The researcher assessed the quality of the data and the rigour of the process to ensure that the generated findings are credible, transferable, dependable and conformable (Schurink, Fouche & De Vos, 2012; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Each of these strategies is discussed in this section.

Credibility

Within qualitative research, validity refers to findings that are credible as described by the researcher and the participants of the study (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it was necessary that the participants of the study confirm that the findings are credible (Rossmann & Rallis, 2011). The researcher made use of member checking by presenting the findings of the study to the participants to confirm whether they regarded the findings as a credible account of their views during the in-depth interviews (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2007). Triangulation, which entails using two methods of data collection, namely in-depth interviews and naïve sketches, was obtained and this enhanced the credibility or trustworthiness of the study (Shah & Corley, 2006).

Transferability

Transferability, methods used by the researcher to enable readers of the research to draw conclusions from the research that relates to their own situation, contributes to the quality of the research (Delpont & Fouche, 2012). The transferability of the study was ensured through providing detailed descriptions of the both the research methodology followed as well as the findings obtained (Babbie, 2010; Shah & Corley, 2006). Transferability was enhanced by ensuring that all of the in-depth interviews were conducted and naïve sketches were collected within the same period to eliminate possible influences (Babbie, 2010).

Dependability

Research can be considered dependable when the researcher provides particulars of the context of change during the research process with specific reference to data collection (Rossmann & Rallis, 2011). Therefore, as a novice researcher, the researcher was aware that the research involved a study of variability and did not expect to obtain repetitive findings (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The researcher was aware of her obligation and ensured consistency when she conducted the in-depth interviews.

The researcher read the naïve sketches, then transcribed the interviews manually and listened to the recordings a number of times to ensure that the transcriptions were reliable. The dependability of the study was also ensured by employing the purposive sampling method (Shah & Corley, 2006).

Confirmability

The confirmability of a study can be obtained through employing a process of assessing the data that was collected (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). Confirmability was obtained through rigorous data management of the verbatim transcriptions, collected naïve sketches, field notes taken of observations during the in-depth interviews and accurate record-keeping (Shah & Corley, 2006).

Reporting

The findings of the study were reported by utilising a qualitative, narrative reporting style in writing them up (Visagie & Maritz, 2009). Four main themes emerged as shown in Table 3.2. Each theme and sub-theme was discussed and supported with evidence from the verbatim transcripts. The researcher made use of the most descriptive quotations to support the findings of the study. The verbatim evidence was written up in such a way as to ensure proper reference to each participant and that the data could be traced, for example, P122 would be traced as the transcription of participant 1, and numbered line 22 in the interview data. The naïve sketches were coded, for example, as PN122, which would be traced as participant 1, and numbered line 22 in the naïve sketch data. The findings were integrated with the literature to explain the data and to indicate the relevance of the findings in relation to the current body of literature (Henning et al., 2012).

FINDINGS

The purpose of this interpretive study was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. The researcher is of the opinion that a deeper understanding of these factors can assist organisations towards

positively influencing managers' attitudes to performance appraisals. This section depicts the overall findings obtained from the eight in-depth interviews and naïve sketches. The main themes and sub-themes that were found in the data are discussed in this section (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Grouping findings into main themes and sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-themes
Employee-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee behaviour and attitudes - Role of the employee in performance appraisal
Manager-related factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous experience as a ratee - Previous experience as a rater
Factors related to senior management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of senior management - Frameworks from senior management
Factors related to performance appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of performance appraisal - What should be measured and how? - Frequency of performance appraisal - Type of feedback

Theme 1: Employee-related factors

The first theme that emerged from the data was employee-related factors that consisted of two sub-themes. These sub-themes were employee behaviour and attitudes, and the role of employees in performance appraisal.

Employee behaviour and attitudes

Three aspects emerged from the data, categorised under the sub-theme of employee behaviour and attitudes, namely emotional employees, defensive employees and performance of employees.

It was interesting to note that three of the managers were of the opinion that it is more challenging and less enjoyable to conduct performance appraisals with employees who are emotional. One of the managers pointed out that performance appraisals with less emotional employees are more comfortable even if the performance appraisal contains negative feedback. Another manager specifically explained that managers dislike performance appraisals when employees are crying. The overall message was that performance appraisal is an emotional process.

... it depends on the staff member, because some of them I can deal with and even if it is a negative one, you can deal with it. But there are those individuals that are emotional. It is an emotional process ... (P278)

... as a manager, it [performance appraisal] is not a moment that you can enjoy, because people come with different emotions and it [performance appraisal] becomes very difficult ... (P369)

... it [performance appraisal] is difficult and you end up with people having tears in front of you. So it [performance appraisal] is emotional ... (P4207)

Some of the managers confirmed that their attitudes are influenced by the defensive attitude of employees. It seems that these managers were of the opinion that employees acquire defensive attitudes prior to or during the performance appraisal feedback meeting and that managers dislike handling defensive employees.

One manager made a comment that it seems as if certain employees enjoy being defensive during performance appraisals.

... but the guy who is already on the back foot. He is already defensive because he knows walking in there what he has done that year ... he does not want to face the music. (P4132)

... but then [during a negative performance appraisal] that person [poor performing employee] can become very defensive ... (P5110)

... the particular person who was being appraised thoroughly enjoyed it [being defensive in performance appraisal]. He enjoyed that sort of thing, but it wasn't a pleasant experience for the manager ... (P6127)

The managers revealed that they find it less challenging to conduct performance appraisals with employees who meet the required performance expectations. It seems that it may require effort or even an attitude adjustment from the manager to conduct a performance appraisal with an employee that did not meet the set performance expectations.

... an appraisal with the staff members who have really worked hard and exceeded expectations is much easier than obviously, the appraisal of the staff member who underperformed ... (P2379)

... that difficult guy who is not a top performer is walking in there, you have to on a personal level set your attitude ... it [the attitude of the manager towards performance appraisal] is something that is determined by the performance of the staff member ... (P4273)

... they [employees] are very precious about themselves and work and they don't like to hear that they are not doing [performing] as well as they thought ... (P585)

... appraisal with the staff members who have really worked hard and exceeded expectations is much easier than obviously, the appraisal of the staff member who underperformed. (PN22)

... staff approaches the appraisal process very antagonistic and defensive which creates an environment even before the discussions are entered into. (PN45)

The role of employees in performance appraisal

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data related to the role of employees in performance appraisal. The three most important aspects relating to the role of the employees in performance appraisal was revealed as employee ownership, employees that inflate ratings and the employee-manager relationship.

Two of the managers pointed out that employees should have ownership of the performance appraisal process or the employees should at least be informed of the process and feel valued. When the employee has a sense of belonging to the performance appraisal process, it can be a more comfortable experience for the manager as well.

... the interviewee [the employee during appraisal] must feel comfortable about the process. They need to know, they need to understand why you go through the process. If they are not part of the ownership of the process, they must understand that they belong to that process. (P1229)

... you give them [employees] that responsibility and the ownership of the process [the appraisal process] ... (P388)

Quite a few of the managers were of the opinion that they find performance appraisal unpleasant or difficult when they need to rate employees lower than the more favourable self-rating to reflect the actual performance of the employee.

One of the managers pointed out that this process can be difficult, because some employees are not able to substantiate their own inflated ratings. This might give a message to the manager that the employee is unrealistic or even sometimes dishonest in the performance appraisal.

... you have to bring them [the performance rating that the employee assigned to themselves] with what their true performance is when they have rated themselves very highly. That kind of thing is not easy ... (P5100)

... they [employees who conduct the self-appraisal] must do it [the self-appraisal] honestly and fairly. They must not go and inflate what they think about themselves and hope that I will beat them down, because that is then going to make it a very unpleasant performance appraisal ... (P628)

... they [employees] marked themselves higher and you say to them [the employees] but where do you exceed that, you must show me or substantiate with reasons. They [employees] get upset ... (P764)

... staff lives with the idyllic idea that they are much better performers than what they actually are ... even constant feedback and critic are disregarded and set aside. (PN43)

The managers indicated that the employee-manager relationship might be a factor that influences their attitudes towards performance appraisal. The managers had different views of the characteristics of this relationship. One manager was of the opinion that the relationship between the employee and the manager should be characterised by continuous, open communication and another manager highlighted the importance of trust. Another felt that in the relationship there should be a balance between executing the managerial tasks and having a relationship with the employee. These aspects seem to make the performance appraisal experience more manageable.

... communication is very important and with the workload we're sitting with it is not always possible to communicate with your staff all the time and that is an influence ... (P214)

... what you've got to have is an attitude of trust between the manager and the employee because that makes it simple ... (P6132)

... you try to keep a balance between being a manager to the person and having a relationship with them ... (P399)

... it is very important to communicate with the staff on a regular basis to ensure that there is a good understanding of what is expected ... (PN227)

Theme 2: Manager-related factors

Another prominent theme that emerged from the data was factors relating to the manager. This theme consisted of previous experience as a ratee (the employee whose performance is appraised) and previous experience as a rater (the manager who does the performance appraisal with an employee).

Experience as ratee

Managers confirmed that as ratees they mostly received positive performance feedback; therefore it seems that they had positive past performance appraisal experiences and limited experience with negative performance feedback. However, from the data it is evident that this state of affairs influenced their readiness and ability to deal with negative performance appraisals in the role of rater. One manager commented on never having the opportunity of experiencing or observing how a manager should handle a negative performance appraisal.

... I've never had a negative appraisal. I've always had a positive and fairly positive appraisal. I've never been in a situation where I could see how the other person handles a negative appraisal ... (P287)

... my vast experience has been as an employee and it was always positive. Something I look forward to and enjoy. It has always been a good experience for me ... (P527)

... I believe that I have a positive attitude towards it, because it has been a positive experience for me both ways where I have been on the receiving end and when I have been appraising other people. (P675)

... my experience as an employee, in many different settings ... it has always been a positive experience for me. (PN51)

... I have always rated myself quite high but fairly in my view ... never have any of my appraisal forms been questioned or changed. (PN65)

Experience as rater

Quite a few of the managers indicated their initial experience in the role of a rater conducting a performance appraisal as being uncomfortable. This was mainly due to having had no previous experience or guidelines on how to conduct a performance appraisal that contained negative performance feedback. This ultimately leads to an unpleasant experience for the manager. The data suggest that experienced managers sympathise with new managers who have to deal with this uncertainty.

... I feel very sorry for a young manager, because there is no reference point, there is no guidance. It is with experience how you learn to deal with people and how to allow people to vent. Sometimes you just have to allow that. That is why currently for the last two or three years I actually got involved with my supervisors when they were doing their

performance appraisals, simply to guide them through the process, which is a luxury I did not have ... (P175)

... The first one [performance appraisal with an employee] obviously was the most, it was horrendous but you get used to it and get to learn it. Obviously as you get to learn to deal with people, it becomes easier ... (P260)

... that [the negative side of performance appraisals] was a complete surprise. I did not know that anybody view this as a terrible time. I know it was very naïve ... (P534)

Theme 3: Factors related to senior management

Another theme that emerged from the data related to senior management factors. The most represented sub-themes that relate to senior management are the role of senior management in performance appraisal and performance appraisal frameworks.

Role of senior management

The first sub-theme that is discussed below is the role of senior management, which refers to the executive directors or the individuals that control the activities of an organisation. Two of the managers were of the opinion that the role of senior management in performance appraisal should be strategic and senior management must ensure that performance appraisals are implemented following a top-down approach.

... when performance appraisal is driven and led by senior management, it works for the company ... (P142)

... because the approach is that it [performance appraisal] filters from the top to the bottom. As you get it from the top and you need to take it down ... (P4326)

... performance appraisals must be driven by company [senior management] ... (PN121)

Performance appraisal frameworks

A substantial number of the managers were of the opinion that the frameworks for performance appraisals provided by senior management can influence their attitudes. These frameworks might require the manager to inflate or deflate the employees' performance ratings. Subsequently, managers struggle to execute unethical frameworks and it affects them emotionally. This in turn influences the managers' attitudes negatively towards performance appraisals.

... you are told that you have to make sure that your appraisal falls within the scale [frameworks that were set by management], which then makes it [performance appraisal] difficult for me to manage ... (P2232)

... it [an experience where the manager was forced to deflate or inflate ratings of staff] is difficult because that influence your attitude towards the process. Is it really fair? And you are the one who has to sit with that employee and there is nothing worst. And I mean you don't want to lie to that staff member who sits in front of you, because that is not your purpose that's not what you are there for. That makes it a yucky process and a difficult process and it starts making it in an emotional process ... (P4304)

Theme 4: Factors related to performance appraisal

The most prominent theme that emerged from the data related to performance appraisal factors. Four sub-themes emerged, namely clear purpose of performance appraisal, problems relating to what is measured, the frequency of the performance appraisal and the type of performance feedback.

Clear purpose of performance appraisal

The first sub-theme that emerged from the data was that performance appraisals should have a clear purpose. A substantial number of the managers reported that performance appraisal should have a clear purpose but they had different views on what the purpose

should be. One manager reported that performance appraisals are used for administrative purposes such as to make decisions on salary increases. The other two managers were of the opinion that performance appraisals should be used as a tool to assess employee performance objectively in order to develop employees' skills and enhance productivity.

... it's [performance appraisal] a tool to get to a result in a very objective way, because as a manager I can say that person is excellent because that is my perception ... (P156)

... I realise the need for them but they are for the benefit of the company, not for the individual. It is just to help the company with its administrative processes to calculate increases ... (P635)

... the positive factors. I definitely feel there is space for it [performance appraisal] as a management tool. Alright and I think that is the whole point behind performance appraisal to see where your staff is currently, what factors can help them to do their job better, faster more accurate and to get them there. That is exactly what performance appraisal should do ... (P8156)

... the objectives of PA [performance appraisal] must be reinforced as often as performance appraisals are conducted ... (PN122)

I accept that a formal appraisal form is necessary for administrative purposes ... (PN619)

What is measured?

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data was problems relating to what are measured. A substantial number of the managers divulged that they are uncertain as to what employee information they should use for performance appraisal measurement. A few managers indicated a preference to use objective or factual information and indicated that they find it challenging to rate employees on subjective data because it is open for interpretation and may create conflict situations between the manager and employee.

We have two parts to the appraisal. One is factual ... how you deliver, are you punctual on delivery times, it [the appraisal] is all about what you deliver. Then there is the second part which is airy fairy ... And you know when something is not clear and to the point it leads to a lot of debate unnecessary. (P1236)

My understanding of performance appraisal is that it only focus on tasks that an employee has been allocated. It [performance appraisal] got its negatives mostly here ... (P333)

I believe in factual and statistical information and as long as you have that, it cannot be left questioned, open for interpretation and it cannot be left open for a personal attack. (P4144)

I am able to just present facts and my style goes with no fighting, tempers ... (P558)

It is very grey at the moment as well. I like things black and white with yes or no ... (P8263)

... statistical and factual based information set as the measurements for ratings on the performance appraisal is according to me the most accurate and fair process to determine the overall score. (PN413)

Frequency of performance appraisals

The third sub-theme that related to performance appraisal factors was the frequency of conducting performance appraisals. Half of the managers revealed they would prefer quarterly performance appraisals, because they find the annual performance appraisal to be time consuming due to the large amount of data that needs to be worked through. The managers were of the opinion that frequent performance appraisals would increase the objectivity and fairness of the performance appraisal process.

... if you do performance appraisal, if you actually have to review them all through the year and that takes away the emotions ... (P1157)

... if you do it quarterly when you come to the annual (performance appraisal) it will be so much easier ... I would like that and it will work for me. (P2218)

I think doing it more often, not just annually. I think it should be every six months; there is a shorter time in between and everyone's knowledge is a little fresher. (P734).

Okay the negative part is that it [performance appraisal] is very time consuming ... So that is why I said the frequency of it so that you can just add it up. It is a small portion of the work and you discuss it. (P8226)

... if done on a quarterly basis, the staff member should be able to set more goals and get the feedback on how they are achieving these goals. (PN237)

... performance appraisals should be done more frequently... (PN880)

Type of feedback

Relatively often throughout the in-depth interviews, the participants mentioned the type of feedback. Managers shared that they like giving positive feedback (the final rating is higher or the same as the rating that the employee expected) because it is rewarding. In contrast, managers find giving negative feedback (the final rating is lower than the rating that the employee expected) unpleasant and emotional. The data suggest that the managers with personalities that prefer to handle performance feedback without emotional involvement might experience giving negative feedback more positively. One of the managers shared that the employee's personality determines whether negative feedback can be received in a positive light. The data suggest that negative feedback attracts too much attention in performance appraisal while neglecting positive feedback because of time constraints.

... positive feedback is always nice. If there is negative feedback ... it is those interviews or those discussions that are more difficult. I think it is also part of my personality where you need to learn to cut off and handle it professionally ... (P267)

... they [employees] are precious about themselves and work and they don't like to hear that they are not doing as well as they thought. So it all has to do with the negative side of things. (P584)

I must say that I have over the years have graded people up where they put themselves in the middle and I said no you can go up a step. No, it [giving positive feedback] is nice to do that ... but I have never had to beat people down. (P664)

... It [giving negative feedback] would influence me. I would not like to sit and just hammer a person ... (P7144)

... you don't have time to give positive feedback. You always have time to give negative feedback because you have to ... (P877)

... negative feedback must be given through as positive criticism ... my personal challenge with this is that we have varied types of personalities and different personalities accept positive criticism in different ways. (PN223)

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study

The aim of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, in order to influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal more positively. To respond to this aim, the research question underlying this study was: What are the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal?

Main contribution of the study

Performance appraisal is associated with overall displeasure (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011; Gordon & Stewart, 2009). Improving the role players' attitudes towards performance appraisal might provide a solution to this prevalent problem (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Therefore, it is believed that through this study, a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal is gained and it can assist organisations in influencing managers' attitudes more positively. Managers with positive attitudes towards performance appraisal will ensure that performance ratings are accurate and will provide support to employees (Botha & Bussin, 2010).

Integrating the findings with the literature

The findings suggest that employees who are emotional and defensive during performance appraisal influence managers' attitudes. These findings are in accordance with those of Aguinis (2009) who explains that employees' attitudes and behaviour influence the managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. From the findings it is clear that managers believe that some employees become emotional when they receive negative performance feedback and this can result in hostile or defensive employee attitudes. Thomas and Bretz (1994) also confirmed that hostile and defensive attitudes affect the attitude of the manager towards performance appraisal.

The findings further show that ownership in performance appraisal could be a concern that influences managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. Neither managers nor employees have a feeling of ownership in performance appraisal, because they are not consulted during the design phase of the performance appraisal process, they are not properly trained to make use of performance appraisal and their grievances are usually not acted upon (Thomas & Bretz, 1994).

The findings highlight that managers have favourable attitudes toward performance appraisal when the performance of the ratee complies with the expected performance and when the employee's self-appraisal ratings are similar to the ratings assigned by the

managers. This assertion might be warranted, because the performance appraisal process is based on both the manager's and the employee's view of the employee's performance and in some cases an employee may have an inflated view of his or her performance, which makes performance appraisal uncomfortable (Botha & Bussin, 2010). The findings further indicate the possibility that the relationship between the manager and the employee can influence the manager's attitude. Pulakos and O'Leary (2011) emphasise that it is important for a relationship of continuous communication to exist between the employee and the manager. However, a long-term relationship between the employee and the manager might create an obstacle for the manager, because it can encourage him or her to deflate or inflate the performance ratings (Shore & Strauss, 2008). Managers have unfavourable attitudes towards performance appraisal because they are fearful of doing harm to the employee-manager relationship (Aguinis, 2009; Thomas & Bretz, 1994).

The findings revealed that the manager's experience as a ratee in performance appraisal could influence his or her attitude towards performance appraisal. Longenecker et al. (1987) pointed out that ratees learn performance appraisal attitudes from their managers. Managers would hold positive attitudes towards performance appraisal if the manager received a performance appraisal as a ratee, because it eliminates the uncertainty surrounding the performance appraisal process (Bernardin, Dahmus & Redmon, 1993). Managers who had negative experiences with performance appraisal in the past might not want to give negative feedback to their subordinates (Aguinis, 2009).

It appears as if managers' experience as a rater also affects their attitudes towards performance appraisal. Greguras (2005), who holds this view, explains that experienced managers will be less uncertain of performance appraisal because they will understand the organisational procedures. Ratees adopt performance appraisal attitudes from their previous managers (Longenecker, 1987). Managers who had favourable performance appraisal experiences in the past hold favourable attitudes towards this process (Bernardin et al., 1993), and managers who had unpleasant previous performance appraisals dislike giving negative feedback to their employees (Aguinis, 2009).

From the findings it is evident that the role that senior management plays in performance appraisal could influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. Managers feel that performance appraisal should be driven by senior management. Findings from other studies confirm that when performance appraisal is executed from the top level of the organisation it will show the employees that performance appraisal is important to the organisation (Kondrasuk, 2012; Longenecker, 1987).

The findings specifically highlight that performance appraisal frameworks may place managers in an ethical dilemma. Managers who perceive that it is acceptable in the organisation to distort performance ratings would make conscious decisions to misrepresent performance ratings either in order to reach their own personal goals or to achieve the goals of the organisation (Tziner et al., 2002). These frameworks originate from the organisational context and could instigate unethical behaviour on the part of the manager (Shore & Strauss, 2008).

It is suggested that some managers are uncertain of the purpose of performance appraisal. This assertion might be warranted, because there appears to be uncertainty whether performance appraisal should be used for administrative purposes or employee development purposes. Kondrasuk (2012) listed the lack of purpose of performance appraisal as one of the reasons managers and employees view performance appraisal negatively. The purpose of performance appraisal is listed as one of the prevalent problems in the performance appraisal domain (Curtis et al., 2005; Harris, Smith & Champagne, 1995).

Another apparent warranted uncertainty relates to what should be measured in performance appraisal. Managers are often challenged with measuring employees' tasks that are not properly defined and this state of affairs can create uncertainty (Keely, 1977; Kondrasuk, 2012). In some positions it is straightforward and trouble-free to determine whether the person is performing, but other positions might be complex and require time and effort to assess whether the person is delivering on the expectations (Lawler, Benson & McDermott, 2012). Jawahar (2001) claims that managers with positive attitudes towards

performance appraisal will ensure that employees receive accurate performance appraisal ratings.

The findings indicate that the frequency of performance appraisal will affect the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal. It is confirmed that frequency or the timing of the performance appraisal is a problematic area for managers and it is one of the reasons why performance appraisal is viewed negatively (Kondrasuk, 2012; Shah & Murphy, 1995).

According to the findings, managers seem to agree on the relevance of the type of feedback during appraisal. This statement might be meaningful, because the type of performance feedback given to employees can have an impact on managers' attitudes and emotions (Belschack & Den Hartog, 2008). Thomas and Bretz (1994) explain that managers dislike giving negative feedback to employees because negative feedback can affect the employee's career, cause defensive reactions and even promote employee hostility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for organisations and managers to be aware of the factors that negatively influence the managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal in order to make performance appraisal comfortable and consequently positively influence managers' attitudes. In light of all the above, the following recommendations are made.

The first recommendation relates to enhancing the nature of the performance appraisal experience. Each performance appraisal should be balanced and contain both positive and negative feedback. The feedback should be specifically related to the performance expectations and should contain detailed information of developmental guidelines. The findings confirmed that employees might become emotional or defensive when receiving appraisals that contain negative performance feedback. The manager might promote emotional or defensive employee behaviour when communicating negative performance feedback critically. It is recommended that in order to lessen emotional or defensive

employee behaviour managers should ensure frequent communication with employees and they should seek to encourage employees to prepare for the performance appraisal.

The second recommendation is that organisations should combine different sources (such as peer appraisals, information from customers, and subordinate appraisals) to obtain information about employee performance and not only the judgement made by the employee and manager. Such an approach will increase employee motivation and minimise the emotional and defensive behaviour of employees during performance appraisal.

The third recommendation relates to uncertainties regarding the technical aspects of performance appraisal. It is pivotal that raters be trained in the performance appraisal process to conduct performance appraisals in an effective and consistent manner. One recommendation is that organisations should ensure that managers who conduct performance appraisals participate in performance appraisal training. The training should cover aspects such as the purpose of performance appraisal, the frequency of performance appraisals, the objectivity of the manager, what should be measured and how, and criteria for evaluation.

It is also recommended that facilitation, where a facilitator enhances communication between the manager and the employee during the performance appraisal, might increase the manager's readiness to deal with performance appraisal even when it contains negative feedback.

The fourth recommendation pertains to the employee attitudes that cause performance appraisal to be challenging for managers. It is understood that organisations should encourage employee participation in performance appraisal, because employee participation can enhance employee commitment to the performance appraisal process. Organisations should ensure that new employees should be trained in performance appraisal, its elements and processes with the induction process of new employees. Furthermore, employee attitudes can be influenced through their participation in performance appraisal; therefore, organisations could consider modelling the expected

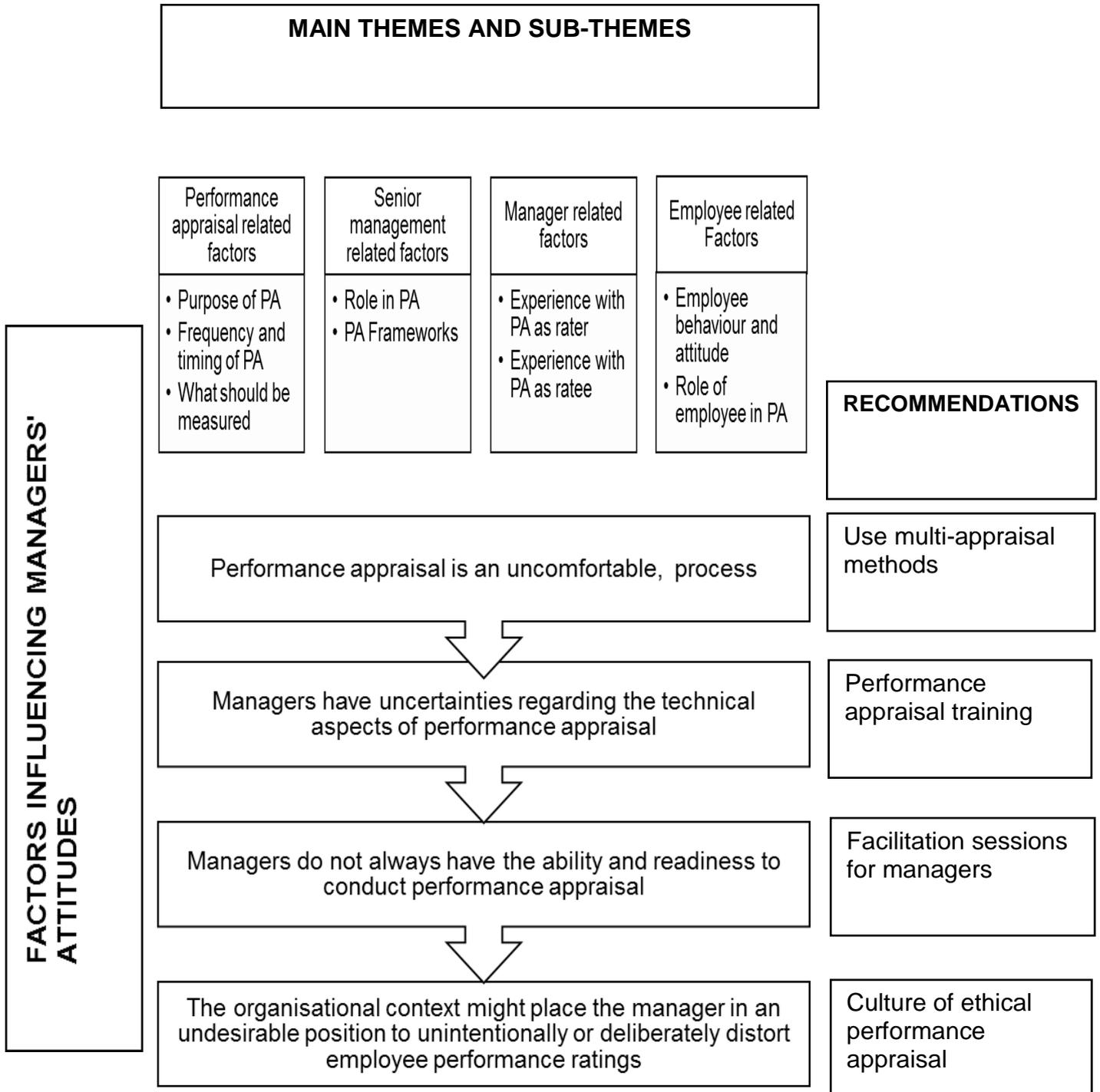
behaviour to employees, by offering behavioural rehearsals to demonstrate appropriate behaviour of employees. They could also provide social reinforcement by giving feedback to reinforce behaviour and transfer new skills in the workplace.

The last recommendation relates to the frameworks prescribed by senior management that might promote situations where managers are required to inflate or deflate the performance ratings of employees. Managers assign ratings in the provided organisational context and it is suggested that organisations should promote a culture of ethical performance appraisals where raters should be held accountable for the ratings assigned to employees.

CONCLUSION

It is crucial for organisations to be aware of factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. By taking cognisance of this fact, the organisation might be in a position to change managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal positively. From the findings as well as the literature it seems that an interrelationship exists between the defensive and emotional nature of performance appraisal, the technical uncertainties among managers, the readiness of the manager to conduct performance appraisal and the organisational context in which performance appraisal is conducted. The hypothesis of this study is depicted in Figure 3.1 and will be discussed in more detail.

Figure 3.1: Factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal



Performance appraisal appears to be a process during which both the manager and the employee feel uncomfortable, defensive and sometimes even emotional. Managers therefore tend to avoid employees with defensive and hostile attitudes and behaviour. It is recommended that organisations make use of multi-source appraisals to minimise emotional behaviour during performance appraisal.

However, if attention is not given to this state of affairs, it is exacerbated when managers experience uncertainties regarding the technical aspects of performance appraisal, such as the purpose of performance appraisal, timing and frequency of performance appraisal and what should be measured. It is recommended that managers should receive training regarding the technical aspects of performance appraisal.

Due to a lack of training, managers do not always have the ability and readiness to conduct performance appraisals, specifically when the performance appraisal contains negative performance feedback. Managers draw from their experiences with performance appraisal as both ratee and rater, and they need to be facilitated and trained in conducting a performance appraisal, specifically when the performance appraisal contains negative feedback.

Furthermore, the organisational context might place managers in an undesirable position that leads them to distort employee performance ratings – unintentionally or deliberately. Senior management need to drive performance appraisal and ensure that a culture of ethical performance appraisal is cultivated and that managers are held accountable for the performance ratings, which they assign to employees.

Limitations of the study

A deeper understanding of the managers' previous employers and performance appraisal systems could have provided a better view of their attitudes towards performance appraisal as well as the factors that influence it. Prior knowledge of the current organisation's performance appraisal process and practices could have influenced the researcher's objectivity when she interpreted the themes in the data, which could have led

to bias (Mouton, 2001). One researcher conducted this study, which could have led to bias, therefore the researcher acknowledges that her role as an insider in the organisation could have influenced the findings of the study (Finch & Lewis, 2005). This study's credibility could therefore have been enhanced by using more than one researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Future research

The findings of this study revealed the opinions and views of this sample of managers only. In future research, the sample could include participants from different organisations and business sectors to ensure a more representative sample. It is also suggested that the study could include the employees' and senior management's views regarding the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal to obtain their perspective of these factors and other related factors and to combine those findings with the findings of this study.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATION, CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter the conclusions, limitations, contributions and recommendations of the study are formulated. The conclusions drawn from the findings of the literature review and the interpretive study are assessed against the aims that were stipulated in Chapter 1. The limitations of the literature review and the interpretive research are discussed. The findings of the study and its contribution towards a deeper understanding of the factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal are evaluated. Finally, recommendations for future research are made and the practical application to the organisation is discussed.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is an attitude and its related dimensions?
- What is performance appraisal and its related dimensions?
- What are the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal?

4.1.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature review

In line with the above research questions, the specific aims relating to the literature review were to do the following:

- Conceptualise attitude and its related constructs.
- Critically evaluate literature on attitude formation theories.
- Conceptualise performance appraisal and its related constructs.
- Consider previous research relating to the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal.

4.1.1.1 Conceptualising attitude

The literature on attitude and how it is characterised has been discussed from both a classical viewpoint and a modern research approach. It was necessary to differentiate between the definition of attitudes and the characteristics to get a clear picture of the concept. The researcher did not expect to find such contradictory views among scholars as to how the construct of attitude should be conceptualised.

It seems that most of the authors agree that an attitude can be acquired and that attitude pertains to likes and dislikes regarding an object. An attitude can be described as an affective response that a person has towards a psychological object (Thurstone, 1931). Alternatively, a broad definition is that an attitude is a mental state of readiness, which can be organised through experience by applying a ruling on the person's reaction to all related situations or objects (Allport, 1935). From a modern research approach, an attitude can be broadly defined as a "psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). This definition of attitude was adopted for the present study.

The literature review also revealed different views of the characteristics of attitudes. These views can be divided into two main groups, namely the tripartite model and the one- or two-component model when it comes to explaining the characteristics of an attitude.

The tripartite model view, which is derived from Allport's above-mentioned definition of attitude, assumes that the object towards which the attitude is held has affective, cognitive and behavioural characteristics (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Haddock & Maio, 2007; Uță & Popescu, 2013). Contrary to the tripartite model, some researchers characterise an attitude as a one-component model that holds that attitude influences behaviour (Fazio & Petty, 2008). More researchers appear to agree with the view that the characteristics of an attitude are psychological depictions that are connected between the total number of beliefs about the object and the actual object towards which the attitude is held (Fazio & Petty, 2008). This view of the characteristics of an attitude was adopted for this study.

4.1.1.2 Attitude formation theories

The evaluation of the main attitude formation theories provided the necessary background to understand the ways in which attitude is formed. Again, it was unexpected to see that the attitudinal research view attitude formation differently.

Attitudes can be formed through situations where people's behaviour is not consistent in their attitudes towards the object (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Luthans, 2008). A negative attitude towards the object can form to balance this inconsistency towards the object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Petty, 2008).

Attitudes can be created through different types of learning. The use of reinforcement, such as positive encouragement, to form or change a person's attitude is suggested (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Miserandino, 2007). Two stimuli are paired until a situation is reached where the first stimulus transforms into a signal for the second stimulus (Baron & Byrne, 1991; Miserandino, 2007; Olson & Fazio, 2001). A neutral target stimulus (conditioned stimulus) is repeatedly paired with another stimulus (unconditioned stimulus) with either a positive or a negative valence, which can then change the person's attitude in line with the required direction (De Houwer et al., 2001; Walther et al., 2005).

The expectancy-value framework, a theory that assumes the attitude towards the object is based on the sum of the values of all of the attributes that the attitude object is thought to have, is based on cognitive attitude formation (Ajzen, 2001; Zhang et al., 2008). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) note that this framework is a useful and popular model that explains how a collection of beliefs about objects forms attitudes. This attitude formation theory was adopted for this study.

4.1.1.3 Conceptualising performance appraisal

In order to conceptualise performance appraisal, it was necessary to understand performance management, because performance appraisal forms part of performance management (Gordon & Stewart, 2009). It seems that there is an overlap and overall agreement between the various definitions of performance management. After reviewing the different definitions, it was decided to apply a conceptual definition for this study that explains performance management as a continuous activity where the performance of individuals and groups are identified, measured and developed (Aguinis, 2009; Aguinis & Pierce, 2008).

There was also an overlap between the different definitions of performance appraisal. Performance appraisal is largely related to the employee's own performance appraisal as it is described as an activity where the employee's current performance is measured, performance developmental areas are identified, strengths are reinforced and overall feedback is given to the individual employee (Aguinis, 2009; Glen, 2001). Fletcher (2008) provides a link between performance management and performance appraisal and explains performance appraisal as a channel for the interpretation of organisational goals into individual goals. It was decided to use a definition for performance appraisal, which covers the process as well as the activities involved in performance appraisal. Therefore, for this study performance appraisal is defined as the collection of employee performance information based on observation and the evaluation of the employee's performance through an act of judgement (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

During the literature review, it became clear that there was an overlap in the understanding of the performance appraisal process. There was an overlap in the descriptions of the performance appraisal process and it was concluded that performance appraisal occurs through three stages: (1) an activity where the expected job performance standards are identified, (2) the performance is measured and (3) feedback is given to the employee (Botha & Bussin, 2010; Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

Another important trend in the literature review that was revealed related to the person or group that rates the employee's performance. Different role players were discussed and it was concluded that there is strong agreement among scholars that the use of a single rater for a performance appraisal may be seen as one of the common sources of problems in performance appraisal, because the information might be subjective (Fletcher, 2008; Grote, 1996). Multi-appraisal, which refers to the use of multi-sources of performance appraisal information, seems to be popular and it is viewed in a positive light as it eliminates the above-mentioned problem with single-rater methods in performance appraisal (Aguinis, 2009; Rudman, 2003).

Performance measurement, which refers to the second stage of the process, is usually conducted by using a type of rating scale (Fletcher, 2008). After the performance ratings have been obtained, performance feedback should be given in the context of a performance review (Aguinis, 2009). Providing feedback to employees is an important objective of the performance appraisal process (Rudman, 2003). Since the aim of performance appraisal is to develop and enhance employees' performance, it is essential for employees to receive feedback regarding their performance (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Spangenberg (1994) argues that even though performance feedback is uncomfortable, the manager has a pivotal role in giving performance feedback to the employee.

A prominent trend discovered during the literature review related to the factors that influence the performance appraisal and performance ratings. It was concluded that the organisational context and managerial attitudes towards the organisation must be taken into account when performance ratings are interpreted (Tziner et al., 2002). Botha and Bussin (2010) explain that the organisational context defines what type of performance is suitable or acceptable and therefore it influences the performance appraisal.

Furthermore, during multi-appraisal there might be situations where role players disagree about the performance ratings; for example, from the manager's side (Fletcher, 2008). These disagreements can also arise from the employee (Grote, 1996), or even the employee's peers (Aguinis, 2009).

One way of resolving this issue is to draft a comparison matrix to compare the different ratings against the sources from which the information was derived (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

Furthermore, the employee-manager relationship can influence the performance appraisal. This can include the manager's prejudice towards the employee (Botha & Bussin, 2010) or even the type of interaction between the employee and the manager (Pichler, 2012).

Finally, the rater can influence the appraisal (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Stakeholders (manager, employee, reviewers, the human resources department, senior management and the organisation) influence the performance appraisal because they might have different expectations of the performance appraisal process (Dhiman & Singh, 2007). It was concluded that these different expectations have a direct influence on the ratings given to employees as well as on the overall performance appraisal (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Jawahar (2001) points out that errors in performance appraisal ratings occur (such as halo, leniency and severity errors) because managers fail to give critical evaluations of their employee's performance. Cascio and Aguinis (2011) suggest that raters should be trained to minimise errors during performance appraisal.

4.1.1.4 Previous findings on factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal

The interest in understanding why managers like or dislike performance appraisal emanates from a study that aimed to investigate how performance appraisal was applied in the organisation (Thomas & Bretz, 1994). The findings of the study revealed that ownership, negative feedback, adverse impact, scarce rewards and personal reflection influenced managers' attitudes and caused them to dislike performance appraisal. Further research confirmed additional factors might influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. These factors are the following:

- the motivation of the manager (Harris, 1994)
- the perception of the manager about the importance of accurate performance ratings (Tziner et al., 1996)
- the manager's perception about the context of the organisation (Murphy &

Cleveland, 1995; Tziner et al., 1998)

- the attitude that the manager holds towards the organisation (Tziner & Murphy, 1999)
- managers who like performance appraisal will provide accurate performance ratings (Jawahar, 2001)
- the amount of confidence that the manager has in the performance appraisal system (Tziner, 2002; Yun, 2005)
- managers' own feelings towards employees and their desire to avoid conflict (Longenecker & Gioia, 2003)
- expectations of employees (Curtis et al., 2005)
- managerial beliefs regarding politics in the organisation and the relationship between the manager and the employee (Shore & Strauss, 2008)
- managers' political motives in performance appraisal (MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009)
- giving performance feedback (Billikopf, 2010)
- managers' role of judging employees' performance (Aguinis, 2009; Kondrasuk, 2012)
- the relationship between the employee and the manager (Pichler, 2012)
- confusing terminology in performance appraisal (Van De Mieroop & Vrolix, 2014)

4.2.1 Conclusions drawn from the empirical study

The aim of the empirical study was to describe the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. This study achieved this aim. The conclusions drawn from this study relating to the aims of the research are discussed below.

4.2.1.1 Employee-related factors

The managers acknowledged that dealing with employees who are emotional, defensive and non-performing, or even inflate their performance ratings, has a definite negative effect on their attitude towards performance appraisals. However, once an employee takes up ownership of the performance appraisal, managers' attitudes become more positive. According to the managers, the employee-manager relationship plays a vital role and should be characterised by trust and frequent communication. Such a relationship enables

the manager to have more control over the performance appraisal process and subsequently influences the managers' attitudes positively.

4.2.1.2 Manager-related factors

The importance of managerial experience with performance appraisal in the role of a ratee and rater was emphasised. Managers draw from previous experience in the role of a ratee and it was suggested that managers who have never observed how negative performance feedback is conducted might face a dilemma when they need to conduct negative performance appraisals. Consequently, such a lack of experience and knowledge causes the manager to experience performance appraisal as unpleasant. Furthermore, managers shared that they often lack performance appraisal training in the role of a rater, which makes it uncomfortable to conduct their first performance appraisal with an employee. This unpleasant initial experience results in an unfavourable attitude towards performance appraisal.

4.2.1.3 Factors related to senior management

It was evident that senior management is an important contributor to performance appraisal. Managers were of the opinion that performance appraisal is more manageable when senior managers execute performance appraisal through following a top-down approach. Furthermore, the performance appraisal frameworks set by senior management can encourage the manager to give inaccurate performance ratings to employees. Consequently, these performance appraisal frameworks can instigate unethical conduct on the part of the manager and can subsequently affect the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal negatively.

4.2.1.4 Factors related to performance appraisal

A number of uncertainties towards performance appraisal that affect the manager's attitude towards performance appraisal were revealed.

Firstly, performance appraisal should have a clear purpose. However, the managers who were interviewed did not show agreement on whether performance appraisal should be used for training or salary increases. Secondly, the managers needed clarity on what should be measured during performance appraisal. The use of objective information is preferable, because it is based on facts and not negotiable for employees. The managers indicated that conflict arises due to differences in the interpretation of subjective information such as performance information that is not based on factual or statistical data. Thirdly, it was concluded that frequent performance appraisals could enhance objectivity and fairness in the performance appraisal itself. Finally, the most representative aspect related to performance appraisal was the type of feedback that is given. Managers experience giving positive performance feedback as rewarding and indicated that they are opposed to giving negative performance feedback. Therefore, giving negative performance feedback to employees can be experienced as emotional and unpleasant.

In conclusion, the hypothesis of this study is as follows: Performance appraisal is experienced as a process that both the manager and the employee experience as uncomfortable and emotional; one where they have to be defensive. Furthermore, this experience worsens when managers have uncertainties regarding the technical aspects of performance appraisal. Consequently, managers might not have the ability and readiness to conduct performance appraisals, specifically when the performance appraisal necessitates negative performance feedback. The organisational context might furthermore place the manager in a position to distort employee performance ratings either unintentionally or knowingly.

4.3 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the literature review and the empirical study are discussed below.

4.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

There is a significant amount of literature available on performance appraisal and its dimensions as well as the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. However, recent literature (within the last five years) that specifically relates to factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal is limited.

4.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study

There were a number of limitations to this study. The sample that was chosen by the researcher was homogenous. These similarities between participants meant that all of the participants had had experience of performance appraisal, but the participants had gained experience in performance appraisal at different organisations. A deeper understanding of the managers' previous employers and performance appraisal processes and systems could have provided a better understanding of their attitudes towards performance appraisal as well as the factors influencing it.

Prior knowledge of the organisation's performance appraisal process and practices could have affected the researcher's objectivity when she interpreted the themes that emerged from the data (Mouton, 2001). Therefore, this empirical study's credibility could have been improved by using more than one researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Representativeness of the sample was a limitation of this study. However, the aim of qualitative research was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon which refers to factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal, therefore the findings of this study is only applicable to the participants of this study and should not be used to generalise to other populations or samples (De Vos et al., 2012).

4.4 CONTRIBUTIONS

A discussion follows confirming the contributions of the research to the researcher, the managers who are involved in performance appraisal, the organisation and the process of performance appraisal itself.

4.4.1 Contributions to the researcher: A personal reflection

This research contributed to my own understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. As human resources professional and as a researcher, I have a deeper understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. When involved in implementing new performance appraisal processes or systems, I will be more mindful of the attitudes of the managers towards performance appraisal and the specific factors that influence the managers' attitude in future.

Because this study related to attitude and attitude formation theories, I am more mindful of my own perceptions and attitudes and how easily an attitude towards an object can be created. The feedback from my supervisor during the research process regarding my performance placed me in a position where I had to analyse my own motives and the factors that influence my attitudes. These factors included the avoidance of negative feedback, dealing with the reality that I will make mistakes, dealing with ambiguity and my sense of ownership in finishing my research project. I assessed my own performance and I had to deal with both positive and negative feedback, which resulted in emotional and defensive reactions. Through this journey of frustration, I have achieved personal growth not only as a researcher, but also as a person.

4.4.2 Contributions to managers involved in performance appraisal

The researcher is of the opinion that the hypothesis derived from this study might enable managers to be more aware of their own attitudes towards performance appraisal. This awareness enables managers to address the uncertainties of performance appraisal; it can enhance their ability and readiness to deal with performance appraisals, both positive and negative. The researcher hopes that managers who read the findings of this study will realise that they are not the only ones who find performance appraisal an emotional process during which they feel defensive, but that there are also other managers that feel the same way.

4.4.3 Contributions to the organisation

The study confirmed that the organisation is integral to the performance appraisal process. By implementing the recommendations derived from the study, managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal might be positively changed and this can assist not only in enhancing the organisation's performance management system, but also its delivery to stakeholders.

4.4.4 Contributions to the performance appraisal process

It is important for researchers to take cognisance of the role that attitudes have in the performance appraisal process as well as of the factors that influence the performance appraisal. The study contributed to the performance appraisal process, specifically to the stages of determining the purpose of performance appraisal, what should be measured, the frequency of performance appraisals and the nature of the feedback. The study emphasised the role of performance appraisal frameworks and contributed to an understanding of the dynamics and the importance of the organisational context and ethics in performance appraisal.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.5.1 Recommendations to the organisation

With consideration to the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations for application in the organisation:

The first recommendation refers to performance appraisal that seems to be an emotional and process for the manager and the employee alike, during which they could very well assume a defensive attitude. The organisation can attempt to enhance the performance appraisal experience by motivating managers to provide balanced performance appraisals that contain detailed positive performance feedback and negative or developmental feedback for all employees. It is also suggested that organisations should encourage the use of multi-source performance appraisals where the performance appraisal information that should be measured is gathered from peers, subordinates and customers, because in this way employees might enhance a perception of fairness among employees who are appraised. The multi-source performance appraisal feedback can be used to identify developmental areas for employees.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the organisation should make an effort to clear up uncertainties that managers have regarding performance appraisal. It is important that managers be adequately trained in the performance appraisal process and in appropriate ways to conduct performance appraisals. The organisation should appoint an experienced facilitator to ensure that managers observe how performance appraisals should be handled. Such an approach will ensure that managers are able and ready to conduct performance appraisals with specific emphasis on performance appraisals dealing with negative performance feedback.

Finally, senior managers should be mindful of the organisational culture when implementing frameworks relating to performance appraisal. Organisations should encourage an organisational context and culture of ethical performance appraisal practices

and managers should be held accountable for the performance ratings that they assign to employees.

4.5.2 Recommendations towards the IOP profession and recommendations for further research

This research was conducted within the field of industrial and organisational psychology, which is concerned with understanding people's attitudes and perceptions. It is recommended that further research in industrial psychology focus on understanding how attitudes in the workplace are created and which methods can be used to change these attitudes positively.

It is important to note that this empirical study focussed only on the viewpoints of the managers who participated in this study. It is recommended that future research focus on a more diversified sample. It is also suggested that opinions or views from employees and managers could be collected to gain a holistic understanding of the factors that influence managers' attitudes. It is further recommended that the findings of this study be applied as an initial investigation towards understanding managerial ethical conduct during performance appraisals (Shore & Strauss, 2008).

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on the conclusions that were drawn from the literature review as well as from the empirical findings of the interpretive study. The limitations of the study were discussed, the contributions made by the study were acknowledged and future recommendations for research were formulated.

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ANNEXURE A

INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Your willingness to participate in this research study is highly appreciated. This study focusses on the factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal. As this research involves a personal contribution from you as an individual, we want to give you an awareness of the likely content of the interview.

Purposes and function of this study request that you complete a naïve sketch (short essay) and participate in an interview on your experiences of performance management appraisals. This information will form the research portion of the MCom (Industrial and Organisational Psychology) degree, which I am completing at the University of South Africa (Unisa). However, this information may be used in further academic papers within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

Relevant background to information regarding Performance Appraisal

Performance management

Performance management can be used as a collective term for the process where employee's performance is identified, measured, appraised, developed and linked with the strategic goals of the organisation (Botha & Bussin, 2010). Performance management, which is therefore a continuous process, which includes performance appraisal, that refers to the methodical description of the strengths and weaknesses within and between employees (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011).

The difference between performance management and performance appraisal

The main differences between performance management and performance appraisal are that performance appraisal does not have a strategic focus such as performance

management; it does not require continuous feedback and is mainly a process that is done annually (Aguinis, 2009). Performance appraisal occur when an employee's manager provide a subjective judgement of the quality of the work done by the employee (Grote, 2011). Performance appraisals are used by organisations where managers provide employees with feedback about their performance (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). It also assists the organisation to identify potential employees and facilitate manager-subordinate dialogue (Fletcher, 2008).

You can expect the following questions for the naïve sketch and research interview

You will be given a task to write an essay to describe your views of performance appraisal, specifically referring to the questions below. We will also conduct a research interview, which will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a boardroom at the company or any venue that is convenient for you. The following questions will be addressed:

Tell me about your overall experience with performance appraisal?

What are the positive and negative factors that influenced your attitude towards performance appraisal?

ANNEXURE B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. Name of study project: Factors influencing managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal
2. Researcher: Tanya du Plessis
3. Purpose of the research: Refer to the information leaflet.
4. What you can expected during the research: You will be asked to write a short essay that is guided by two questions to express your views on performance appraisal. You will then be asked to answer those same questions relating to the factors that influence your attitude towards performance appraisal in an interview setting.
5. Risk and discomforts: I do not foresee any risks or discomforts in this study, but you are welcome to share any discomfort during the study.
6. Benefits of the research and benefits to you: You are contributing to research and therefore have an opportunity to voice your views and opinions regarding performance appraisal.
7. Voluntary participation: Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you may request to stop at any time. Your decision to withdraw from the study will not influence your position or role in the company.
8. Withdrawal from study: You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time and your decision to stop participating will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the company.

9. Audio-recording: The researcher is under an obligation to inform you of the use of audio-recording during the interview. This will assist her to focus on you as the participant of the study. Please let her know if you are not comfortable with this.

10. Confidentiality: All information that you share during the study will be protected in confidence and your name will not be published in any report or publication of the research. All recordings and recorded information will be safely stored in a locked facility and electronic records will be password protected.

11. Questions about the research: Please contact Tanya du Plessis for any questions regarding the research.

12. Informed consent:

I, _____, consent to participate in a study to gain a deeper understanding of factors that influence managers' attitudes towards performance appraisal that will be conducted in our company by Tanya du Plessis.

I understand the nature of this study and would like to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form and understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time. My signature below confirms my consent.

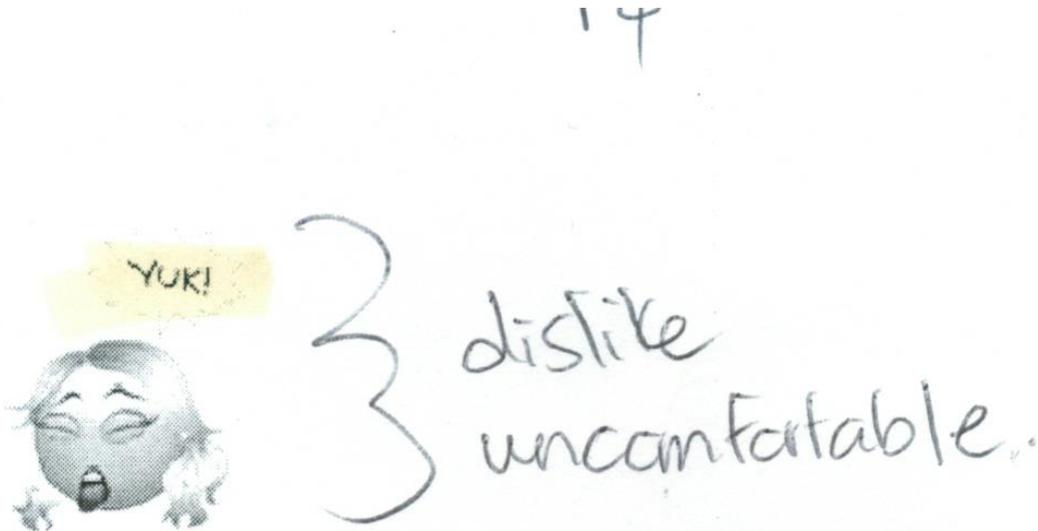
Name and Surname: _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____

ANNEXURE C

Naïve sketch: Picture



ANNEXURE D

Naïve sketch: Narrative

- **Tell me about your overall experience with performance appraisal?**
- **What are the positive and negative factors that influenced your attitude towards performance appraisal?**

In my time of management and performance appraisals the overall experience has remained negative. During my employment with various different companies it has been a general occurrence that staff lives with the idyllic idea that they are much better performers than what they actually are. Even constant feedback and critics are disregarded and set aside.

Many staff approaches the appraisal process very antagonistic and defensive which creates an environment even before the discussions are entered into. There seems to be an overall idea that the process is implemented to "nail" them and that it is a personal attack on them as a person. Some even believe that irrespective of what is being discussed that the end result is all about being liked or disliked. The decision as to the final score has already been determined and the entire process is in fact an absolute waste of time and a sleight of hand and a smoke screen etc. This process is then abused by staff, who are now in a vindictive frame of mind, to only use the forum to let rip at any small grievance and as a bitching and moaning session.
