EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF A PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM IN THE TVET COLLEGES: A CASE STUDY OF NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

by

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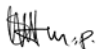**SUPERVISOR: DR P HLONGWANE**

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DECLARATION

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I declare that the dissertation entitled "Employees' perceptions of a performance appraisal system in the TVET colleges: a case study of Nkangala TVET College" is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using complete references.

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SETSOPOLWA

Maikemišetšomagolo a dinyakišišo tše tša thuto e bile go lekola maikutlo a bašomi mabapi le tshepedišo ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo ka Kholetšheng ya TVET ya Nkangala mo go lebakanako la go thoma ka 2015 go fihla ka 2020. Go kwešiša maikutlo a bašomi mabapi le tshepedišo ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo ke selo se bohlokwa, ka ge go laola dilo tše bohlokwa tša diphetogo tša ka khamphaning. Ka lebaka la se, dinyakišišo tše di nyaka go lekodišiša ditšhitišo tše di amanago le tshepedišo ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo le go lekodišiša dilo tše di huetšago phethagatšo ya mekgwa ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo. Mekgwa ya teori ya kabaganyo ya dithoto setšhabeng e dirišitšwe go hlaloša maikutlo a bašomi mabapi le kabaganyo ya methopo. Mabapi le mekgwa ya dinyakišišo, dinyakišišo tše di šomišitše mokgwa wa dinyakišišo wa boleng, tša šomiša dipotsološo tša sebele tša dipotšišo tša go hlohla dipoledišano bjalo ka setlabelo sa kgoboketšo ya tshedimošo go batho. Palomoka ya batho ba masomepedi (20), e ile ya kgethwa ka go diriša disampole tša maleba go netefatša gore go ba le sampole ye e farologanego yeo e nago le dipharologantši tše di hlokagalago. Dikutollo tša bohlatse tša dinyakišišo di utolla maikutlo ao a swanago kudu gareng ga bašomi: e lego go se kgotsofale ga bona ka ga tshepedišo ya bjale ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomi. Go se kgotsofale fa go theilwe kudu go maikutlo a seemo sa tšhoganetšo le go palelwa go šoma gabotse, fao go nago le kgonagalo ya go senya go rerišana le bašomi, tlhohleletšo, le go kgotsofala mošomong. Le ge go le bjale, sehlophana se sennyane sa bašomi se hlathile bokgoni bjo itšego ka tshepedišong ya tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo, kudukudu diputseletšo tša yona tša ditšhelete le mošomo wa yona bjalo ka mokgwa wa go tliša dingongorego go ba taolo. Tsebo ye e kgobokeditšwego mo go dinyakišišo tše e maleba go dihlongwa tše di ikemišeditšego go thuša go kgotsofalo ya bašomi, tlhohleletšo, le go sepelelana le maikemišetšo a khamphani. Mafelelong, dipoelo tše di na le seabe go seemo sa mošomong se sekaone le sa tšweletšo, kudukudu ka gare ga lekala la thuto ya godingwana. Dinyakišišo tše di tšwetša pele kwešišo ya rena ya go hlakahlakana ga ditshepedišo tša tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo, ka go fa tshedimošo mabapi le makala ao a hlokago kaonafatšo le thušo ya go hlohleletša seemo sa sephrofešenale seo se swanago le sa tšweletšo.

Mantšu a bohlokwa: kgokagano, ditherišano le bašomi, diputseletšo tša ditšhelete, kgotsofalo ya bašomi, tekolo ya phethagatšo ya mošomo

NKOMISO

Xikongomelokulu xa ndzingeto lowa ndzavisiso wa xiakhademiki a ku ri ku lavisisa mavonelo ya vatirhi hi mayelana na sisiteme ya makambelelo ya matirhelo eka Kholichi ya TVET ya Nkangala leyi nga na vunavi bya nkarhi wa kusuka hi 2015 kufika hi 2020. Ku twisisa mavonelo ya vatirhi ya sisiteme ya makambelelo ya matirhelo i ya nkoka swonghasi, tanihileswi ma hlamuselaka swiphemu swa nkoka swonghasi swa swihlawulekisi swa nhlangano. Hikwalaho ka sweswo, vulavisisi lebyi byi lava ku xopaxopa swikanganyisi leswi fambelanisiwaka na sisiteme ya makambelelo ya matirhelo na ku xopaxopa swikumisisi leswi hlohlotelaka ku humelerisiwa ka maendlelo ya makambelelo ya matirhelo. Xivonisi xa thiyori ya vululami byo hangalasa xi tirhisiwile ku veka erivaleni mavonelo ya vatirhi hi mayelana na ku averiwa ka swipfuno. Hi ku ya hi ntivamaendlelo, ndzavisiso lowu wu amukerile endlelo ra ndzavisiso wa risima, wu tirhisa tiinthavhiyu to va mi langutanile leti nga na xivumbekohafu tanihi xitirho xa nhlengeleto wa switiviwakulu. Ntsengo wa makumembirhi (20) wa vanhu va hlawuriwile hi ku tirhisa masampulelo lama nga na xikongomelo ku tiyisisa leswaku ku va na nsampulo yo hambana leyi nga na swihlawulekisi leswi lavekaka. Swikumiwa swa vukambisisi swa ndzavisiso lowu swi vonakarisa matitwelo lama nga tala exikarhi ka vatirhi: nkaeneriseko hi sisiteme ya makambelelo ya matirhelo. Nkantshamiseko lowu wu simiwile eka mavonelo ya xihatla na mihluleko, leswi nga na vuswikoti bya ku hunguta mbulavurisano na vatirhi, nhlohlotelo, na eneriseko hi ntirho. Hambiswiritano, ntlawatsongo wa vatirhi wu kumile timeriti to karhi eka phurosese ya makambelelo, ngopfungopfu swihlohloteri swa yona swa timali na xiave xa yona tanihi ndlela ya ku tivisa swivilelo eka vufambisi. Mitwisisio leyi hlengeletiweke kusuka eka ndzavisiso lowu yi khomile vufambelani bya mihlangano leyi nga na xikongomelo xa ku tiyisa eneriseko wa vatirhi, nhlohlotelo, na mfambelaniso na swikongomelo swa nhlangano. Ekuheteleleni, mivuyelo leyi yi hoxa xandla eka mbangu wa ntirho lowu tirhekaka na ku va na ntshovelo swinene, ngopfungopfu endzeni ka sekitara ya dyondzo ya le henhla. Ndzavisiso lowu wu antswisa ntwisiso wa hina wa miphasaphasano leyi rhendzeleke tisisiteme ta makambelelo ya matirhelo, wu ri karhi wu veka erivaleni swiyenge leswi swi faneleke ku antswisiwa na ku tirhisiwa swinene ku kondletela mbangu wa xiphurofexinali lowu nga na ntirhisano na ku va na ntshovelo swinene.

Maritokulu: mbulavurisano, mbulavurisano na vatirhi, swihlohloteri swa timali, eneriseko hi ntirho, makambelelo ya matirhelo

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this academic research endeavour was to delve into the employees' perspectives regarding the performance appraisal system at Nkangala TVET College spanning the period from 2015 to 2020. Understanding employee perceptions of the performance appraisal system is of paramount importance, as it informs critical aspects of organizational dynamics. Consequently, this investigation sought to scrutinize the impediments associated with the performance appraisal system and scrutinize the determinants influencing the execution of performance appraisal practices. The lens of distributive justice theory was employed to elucidate the employees' viewpoints regarding the allocation of resources. Methodologically, this study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilizing semi-structured face-to-face interviews as its primary data collection instrument. A total of twenty (20) individuals, were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse sample with necessary attributes. The study's empirical findings unveil a predominant sentiment among employees: dissatisfaction with the existing performance appraisal system. This dissatisfaction is rooted in perceptions of haste and inefficacy, potentially corroding employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, a subgroup of employees identified certain merits in the appraisal process, particularly its financial incentives and its role as a channel for communicating concerns to the management. The insights gathered from this research hold relevance for institutions aiming to bolster employee satisfaction, motivation, and alignment with organizational objectives. Ultimately, these outcomes contribute to a more conducive and productive work environment, particularly within the higher education sector. This study advances our understanding of the intricacies surrounding performance appraisal systems, shedding light on areas that warrant improvement and optimization to foster a more harmonious and productive professional environment.

Keywords: communication, employee engagement, financial incentives, job satisfaction, performance appraisal

ACRONYMS

DSG	Development Support Group
FOR	Frame-of-Reference Training
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
NTC	Nkangala TVET College
PDMS	Performance Management and Development System
PMS	Performance Management System
PM	Performance Measurement
PGP	Personal Growth Plan
RET	Rater Error Training
SDT	Staff Development Team
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTORDUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated employees' perceptions of the performance appraisal system at Nkangala Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College within the time frame of 2015 to 2020, with a specific focus on five campuses: Witbank, Middelburg, CN Mahlangu, Waterval Borven, and Mpondozankomo, all located within the Nkangala District. The primary aim of this research was to explore employees' perspectives concerning the quality of the performance appraisal process, the factors influencing its effectiveness, and the characteristics that define an effective performance appraisal system, all from the viewpoint of the employees at Nkangala TVET College and its associated campuses.

This introductory chapter provides the essential context and rationale for the study, beginning with a problem statement that underscores the significance of investigating the performance appraisal system within the specified educational institution. The chapter proceeds to elucidate the research's overarching purpose, research questions, and research objectives, which collectively provide a framework for the study's exploration. Following this, the chapter outlines the geographical scope of the research, offering a definition of relevant concepts, and delineates the study's limitations and delimitations. A concise overview of the subsequent chapters of this study is also presented and the summary section concludes the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The concept of performance appraisal has been widely discussed in the realm of performance management, and its significance arises from the dynamics of the contemporary business environment. The necessity to achieve organizational objectives and maintain relevance in highly competitive markets through the facilitation of superior employee performance is a driving force behind the emphasis on performance appraisal systems (Touma, 2022).

Within this context, a study asserted that organizations may have limited control over the behaviour of their employees (Anand, Centobelli and Cerchione, 2020). However, they can exert control over how employees execute their roles. Furthermore, research in performance management indicates that a substantial number of employees are

inherently motivated to excel in their job performance as part of their personal goals and as a demonstration of loyalty toward their organization (Modipane, Botha and Blom, 2019). This suggests that creating the right working environment, characterized by equitable treatment, support, effective communication, and collaboration, is vital to promoting employee performance. (Neher and Maley, 2019) contends that an effective performance appraisal system is instrumental in cultivating these qualities.

In considering performance appraisal as a motivational tool, studies in this domain strongly advocate that performance appraisal systems can serve to enhance motivation (Swanepoel, Botha and Mangonyane, 2014; Idowu, 2017). However, the connection between performance appraisal and employee motivation has often been explored in a conventional or general manner, leading to the blurring of this relationship's nature. The traditional utilization of performance appraisal has, for instance, received criticism for promoting a "win-lose" paradigm rather than a "win-win" scenario, wherein the system encourages cooperative and supportive behaviour (Nair and Salleh, 2015).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned criticisms of performance appraisal approaches, existing literature in the field of performance management affirms that when conducted appropriately, performance appraisal can significantly enhance employee motivation (Narkunienė and Ulbinaitė, 2018). When implemented without clear goals, however, performance appraisal can result in employee dissatisfaction and, consequently, a decline in productivity and organizational commitment (Alshaikhi, 2020). On a positive note, performance appraisal provides a valuable means of acknowledging employees' efforts, with recognition being a recognized employee incentive. The importance of recognition is underscored by (Phillips *et al.*, 2017), suggested that, in many instances, individuals prefer negative recognition to no recognition at all.

One of the long-term objectives of any educational institution, such as a college, is to retain employees. Employee retention is critical in achieving the strategic goals of the college, such as Nkangala TVET. This study primarily focused on how employees' perceptions of the performance appraisal system at Nkangala TVET College impact their performance management and, consequently, how lecturers' empowerment at the college is affected. Here, "performance" refers to outcomes, results, or accomplishments (Wu and Yu, 2022). "Performance Appraisal" is defined as the

systematic evaluation of an employee's strengths and weaknesses (Ugoani, 2020a). Performance appraisal is a fundamental component of effective business management, as it enables a company to assess its progress in achieving its planned objectives, the effective utilization of resources, and the identification of risks to address (Hopkin, 2018). In this context, performance appraisal is a formal system used to evaluate employee performance at Nkangala TVET College.

In Africa, the issues surrounding performance appraisal are often articulated in the context of organizational effectiveness, employee development, and fairness (Beugre and Offodile, 2001). Organizations in Africa often face challenges in implementing effective performance appraisal systems due to various factors such as cultural diversity, lack of resources, and insufficient training (Baporikar, 2022). Employees often express concerns about the transparency and fairness of the appraisal process, as well as the relevance of the criteria used for evaluation. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the need to align performance appraisal with organizational goals and to use it as a tool for employee development rather than just evaluation (Dipboye and Dipboye, 2018a). Overall, the discourse on performance appraisal in Africa emphasizes the need for context-specific approaches that consider the unique challenges and opportunities present in the African context.

Performance appraisal presents a significant challenge in South African workplaces and is a major reason for job loss or resignation and high unemployment rates (Thusi and Chauke, 2023). In the absence of a performance appraisal system, employees may lack structure and accountability, potentially leading to reduced productivity and a lack of responsibility in their work. A well-implemented performance appraisal system can motivate employees to improve their job performance by offering rewards for exceptional performance (Ahenkan, Tenakwah and Bawole, 2018). However, employee dissatisfaction can arise if the system is perceived as lacking objectivity, fairness, and transparency. A common issue faced by organizations is the reluctance to accept employee feedback. Some organizations assess employees based on personal biases, which can lead to employees feeling unappreciated despite their best efforts. This illustrates that an ineffective appraisal system can result in a disconnect between individual performance and organizational achievement.

Performance appraisal, as a pivotal evaluation system, has its roots in the early 20th century, stemming from Taylor's time and motion studies (Merkle, 2023). However, as a formal and distinct management procedure, performance appraisal has been in use for not more than six decades, dating back to the time of World War II. It is a basic human inclination to form judgments about one's colleagues and oneself (Zamir and Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2018). An organization's effectiveness is largely contingent on its human resource management practices, with performance appraisal playing a particularly influential role. The perception of employees plays a central role in the effectiveness of performance appraisal practices.

Managing employee performance is a central focus of human resource activities in both universal and local organizations. Well-designed strategies to recognize and improve performance can have a significant impact on an organization's overall performance. Performance appraisal is an integral facet of performance management, providing a continuous assessment of employee efficiency and effectiveness, which is especially valuable in smaller public sector institutions where management is well-acquainted with all employees (Goliath, 2022). Informal, unsystematic evaluations have limited value when making valid and justifiable human resources management decisions in larger institutional settings.

In this context, Nkangala TVET College requires various activities such as human resources planning, training and development, compensation, career development, and succession planning. Hence, many public sector institutions necessitate a formal performance appraisal system to take the lead in development, implementation, and maintenance (Masumbuko, 2022). This research has sought to investigate the challenges associated with the performance appraisal system, identify the individuals or entities responsible for evaluating employee performance, and examine the factors affecting the implementation of performance appraisal practices in public sector institutions, specifically within Nkangala TVET College.

Nkangala TVET College was chosen as the focus of this research to facilitate an in-depth examination of diverse issues and their impact on performance appraisal. This particular college was selected due to its comprehensive range of educational services and the existence of five campuses in Mpumalanga. The college's reputation for attracting the best applicants underscores the need for an efficient workforce,

positioning the institution prominently in the national landscape. The performance of Nkangala TVET College's employees plays a pivotal role in sustaining its high standards. Consequently, a performance appraisal system is in place to differentiate between efficient and non-efficient employees. As Pendar, Mokhatab-Rafiei and Nilipour-Tabatabaei (2018) aptly stated, success occurs when performance exceeds ambition. Nkangala TVET College, with its five campuses, invests in its employees by identifying their training needs and providing them with various learning opportunities to enhance their performance. This research endeavours to elucidate the factors influencing or influenced by the performance appraisal system at Nkangala TVET College and its role in performance evaluation and enhancement. Ultimately, the research provides valuable insights to the management and employees regarding the prevailing performance appraisal system at Nkangala TVET College.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT, PURPOSE, AND QUESTIONS

This section presents the problem statement, research questions, the purpose of the research, and outlines the research objectives.

1.3.1 Problem Statement

The work by McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn (2018) emphasized the focus of performance appraisal on evaluating an individual's work with the primary objective of making impartial personnel decisions. TVET Colleges, in accordance with this principle, employ the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and Performance Management and Development System (PDMS) to assess their employees' performance. Specifically, IQMS is utilized to evaluate the performance of academic employees, while PDMS is employed for assessing support employees' performance. According to Makoelle, Makhalemele and Plessis (2021) a concern arises as it becomes evident that employees within the organization lack a clear understanding of how IQMS and PDMS are employed in evaluating their performance. Concurrently, the absence of effective methodologies for evaluating the efficacy and fairness of performance appraisal within the organization has the potential to demotivate employees (Dangol, 2021). Consequently, this research endeavoured to investigate the employees' perceptions regarding the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College. The goal was to gain insight into how employees view the effectiveness, fairness, and impact of the appraisal process on their work and

professional development. Understanding these perceptions can help identify areas for improvement in the appraisal process and contribute to a more positive and productive work environment at the college. The absence of a universally accepted method or an efficient approach to evaluate performance appraisal's effectiveness or success has presented a challenge to Nkangala TVET College. Furthermore, how employees perceive the institution process can positively or negatively impact them. The impact of the process stands as a critical component in the ultimate success of any performance appraisal system.

1.3.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine the employees' perceptions of the performance appraisal system in TVET colleges, with a particular focus on Nkangala TVET College. The investigation encompassed several factors, including employee training, the linkage between performance and remuneration, the presence of performance feedback mechanisms, and the attitudes of the employees. Investigating employee perceptions of performance appraisal at Nkangala TVET College is crucial. It will assess whether employees understand evaluation criteria and have skills for performance. The linkage between performance and pay affects motivation and satisfaction, warranting investigation. Feedback mechanisms and employee attitudes towards appraisals also impact effectiveness.

1.3.3 Research questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the employees' perceptions on performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College?
- What are the factors that influence the performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College?
- What are the characteristics of performance appraisal from employees' perspective at the Nkangala TVET College?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to address the following research objectives:

- To explore the employees' perception on performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To critically assess the factors that influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To identify the characteristics that comprise effective performance appraisal from employees' perspective at the Nkangala TVET College.

1.5 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH AREA

This study was demarcated into various dimensions, namely the geographical dimension, hierarchical dimension, and time dimension. These delineations are briefly elucidated below:

1.5.1 Geographical dimension

Nkangala TVET College is situated in Mpumalanga Province, encompassing all five of its campuses. Witbank campus and Mpondozankomo campus are located in Emalahleni Local Municipality within the Nkangala District. The region had an estimated 500,343 inhabitants according to the 2011 census, and it spans an area of 5,164.27 square kilometres. Middelburg campus is situated in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, also within the Nkangala District, with an approximate population of 229,831 residents as reported in the 2011 census, covering an area of 3,976.45 square kilometres ('Nkangala TVET College_TVET_College.pdf', 2021). C.N Mahlangu campus is located in the JS Moroka Local Municipality, Nkangala District, and is home to about 249,705 citizens, based on the 2011 census, with an area of 1,416.47 square kilometres. Waterval Borven campus is positioned in the Emakhazeni Local Municipality, Nkangala District, and had an estimated population of 47,216 individuals according to the 2011 census, covering an area of 4,735.59 square kilometres.

1.5.2 Hierarchical dimension

The hierarchical dimension pertains to categorization, abstraction, and generalization, aiming to foster an understanding of hierarchical meaning relations and identify the most significant criteria in defining differences (Shute, Sun and Asbell-Clarke, 2017). The study was conducted at the college level, and the researcher interviewed managers and employees, both academic staff and support staff, within the workplace

where performance appraisal was commonly perceived. The selection of these specific employee groups was primarily motivated by the desire to obtain valid research findings, given the prevalent perception of performance appraisal conflicts among them.

1.5.3 Time dimension

The study encompassed a five-year timeframe, spanning from 2015 to 2020. The planned timeline for the completion of the research study was set for November/December 2021. In essence, the five-year duration allowed the researcher to manage the research project effectively within a reasonable timeframe, considering constraints on available resources. A cross-sectional study design was employed for this research since the data were gathered from a single college, constituting a one-time event. Participants in this type of study were selected based on specific variables of interest.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

To avoid misconception, it is necessary to define the following key terms and concepts, which was used throughout this research study.

1.6.1 Performance

Performance refers to attaining defined outcomes results or accomplishments (Wu and Yu, 2022). In the context of the study, performance is defined as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organisations (Terracciano, 2017).

1.6.2 Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal is a systematic evaluation of the individual with respect to his or her performance on the job and his or her potential for development (Ugoani, 2020a). Performance appraisal is a formal, structured system of measuring and evaluating an employee's job, related behaviour and outcomes to discover how and why the employee is presently performing on the job and how the employee can perform more effectively in the future so that the employee, organisation, and society all benefit (Bekele, Shigutu and Tensay, 2014). Performance appraisal is a key component in managing any business. It allows a company to measure how well it has travelled along its planned pathway, to check whether resources are being utilised

effectively and what risks must be dealt with (Hubbard, 2020). In the context of the study, performance appraisal is the assessment of an individual's performance in a systematic way, the performance being measured against such factors as job knowledge, quality and quantity of output, initiative, leadership abilities, dependability, cooperation, judgement, versatility, health and the like.

1.6.3 Performance appraisal system

Performance appraisal system evaluates an employee's performance against a list of set objectives and will identify the strengths and weaknesses of employees (Dipboye and Dipboye, 2018a). Performance appraisal system carefully noting each employee's performance and providing constructive feedback is an arduous task with many steps involved. It's fair to say that each manager might not follow the exact same method and put in an identical amount of effort. On top of the basic execution factors, appraisals have an element of sensitivity involved due to the critical nature a great deal of intention and care must be taken in order to make sure that reviews are productive (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). Performance appraisal systems serve a variety of functions of central importance to employees. Appraisal techniques practiced today are not without problems, though. Managers should keep abreast of recent developments in compensation and reward systems so they can modify existing systems when more appropriate alternatives become available (Mondy and Martocchio, 2015:308). In this study, performance appraisal system is understood as system manages the employee performance process of an organisation to evaluate the job performance of a team.

1.6.4 Performance management

Performance management is a goal-oriented process directed toward ensuring that organizational processes are in place to maximize the productivity of employees, teams, and ultimately, the organization (Mondy and Martocchio, 2015). According to Tukwayo (2018) performance management is a system for reviewing and agreeing to priorities within the context of the school development plan. They further state that the main objective of performance management is to improve the match between the offered and the received curriculum. It does encourage schools to support the teachers/lecturers' work as an individual and team, through the process of setting, agreeing and reviewing the school objectives. According Butkēviča and colleagues

(2018), "performance management needs to assess the goal setting process with regard to an individual's ability. They further stated that performance is multidimensional and for one to manage it successfully there is a need to take into cognisance all the factors that may affect it. In this study, performance management is defined as an on-going process of communication between a supervisor and an employee that occurs throughout the year in support of accomplishing the strategic objectives of the organisation.

1.6.5 Performance management system

Performance Management System (PMS) is a critical tool for increasing an employee's awareness of the value of their contribution to the policy or to the organisation's success and for creating dialogue with their managers, which can enhance the contribution that employees make (Siraj and Hágen, 2023). Performance management system is tool which is used to communicate the organizational goal to the employees individually, allot individual accountability towards that goal and tracking of the progress in the achievement of the goals assigned and evaluating their individual performance. Performance management system reflects the individual performance or the accomplishment of an employee, which evaluates and keeps track of all the employees of the organization. A performance management system is a continuous methodical process by which the human resources arm of a company makes personnel participatory in advancing the effectiveness of the company, by achieving the stated vision, mission, and objectives of the organization.

Performance management encapsulates key human resource functions like frequent communication, employee training for improved performance, acknowledgment of good work, presentation of benefits for improved performance, goal-setting, continuous progress review, and real-time feedback. Performance Management Systems is viewed as a tool to ensure optimum individual performance Awan *et al.*, 2020).

However, Levy and colleagues (2017) also described some dynamic functions of PMS, as it deals with a continue review of performance of individuals and teams' level, consistent feedback over the activities and aligning the job role with organizational strategic. Employee performance management is a 'continuous process of reviewing, measuring and developing the employee performance of individuals and teams and

aligning employee performance with the strategic goals of the organisation' (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). In the context of the study, performance management system can be seen as systematic approach to measure the performance of employees and the process through which the organisation aligns their mission, goals and objectives.

1.6.6 Performance plan

Performance planning (PM) refers to a company's formal process of identifying and planning both an individual's or organisation's goals and the best way to reach them (Levy *et al.*, 2017). Performance planning is the first step of performance management. Performance planning is the process of determining what and how a job is to be done in such a manner that both the employee and his superior understand what is expected from the employee and how success is defined and measured. Performance planning for an employee flows from organizational or unit objectives and is undertaken jointly by the employee and his superior (Musheke and Phiri, 2021:245). Performance planning is a systematic and structured approach to successfully achieve the desired goals of an individual or team throughout the assessment year. A plan is chalked out for the team or an individual(s) keeping in mind the broader objectives of the organisation (Mondy and Martocchio, 2015). In this study, performance plan is defined as a formal business document that explains goals set for a particular employee, also outlines potential performance issues hindering the employee's progress in reaching those goals.

1.6.7 Performance reward

Performance reward gives recognition or rewards to employees whose work advances your business goals. That's what makes the system different from regular raises or merit pay. Raises are an incentive to keep doing good work but not to do exceptional work (Musheke and Phiri, 2021a). A performance appraisal and reward system can be a win-win for you and your team. You get more work out of your staff, and they get more rewards for working harder. These incentives are not the same as regular raises and merit pay. A good performance appraisal and reward system encourages employees to work on company goals (Ugoani, 2020b). In the context of the study, performance reward defined as a system where individuals are reward for the work diligence and level of performance within an organisation with financial incentives.

1.7 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

1.7.1 Limitations of the Study

Sampling presented a limitation in this study, as the research was confined to Nkangala TVET College (NTC) and its five campuses exclusively. The researcher's inability to sample and visit all public TVET colleges in the country, owing to constraints in funding and time, restricted the generalizability of the findings. Consequently, the results obtained from the aforementioned TVET colleges could not be extended to other public TVET colleges nationwide. However, these findings provided a detailed account of the specific phenomenon under study. Additionally, the employment of self-report instruments introduced limitations, as they had the potential to yield response bias, thereby constraining the utility of the findings. To mitigate these issues, significant consultations regarding the phrasing of the research instrument and insights gathered from the pilot study were considered. Furthermore, the participants' proficiency in the English language during interviews might have impacted the responses of employees with lower academic qualifications.

1.7.2 Delimitations of the Study

This study primarily concentrated on investigating employees' perceptions regarding performance appraisal within Nkangala TVET College in Mpumalanga, encompassing its five campuses. The rationale for this focus stemmed from the employees' lack of awareness concerning the evaluation of their performance through Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and Performance Management and Development System (PDMS). On the other hand, the study did not delve into the broader arena of performance management systems, as numerous studies had previously explored various aspects of such systems. The geographical location of the selected TVET colleges was a delimitation in this study. Although other districts could have been sampled, the researcher opted for Nkangala district, where she was already established, simplifying her engagement with Nkangala TVET colleges compared to those in other districts. Additionally, the study's data collection methods, interviews, and document analysis were also delimitations. Although other data collection methods, such as observation, could have been included, the researcher chose to avoid an overwhelming amount of data, which would have consumed more time.

1.8 SEQUENCE OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter outlined the general background, the rationale for the study, and the statement of the problem. The remaining sections of the chapter detailed the purpose of the research, study objectives, and research questions. Moreover, the chapter elucidated the study's limitations and delimitations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The chapter offered a comprehensive account of the pertinent literature reviewed, reflecting the perspectives of various scholars and authorities within the domain of performance management systems, with particular emphasis on performance appraisal. The arguments derived from the literature review pointed towards addressing the central inquiries of the study and understanding the factors influencing employee perceptions of the appraisal systems at Nkangala TVET College.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed in the study. It encompassed the study type, major research themes or variables from which data was gathered, and the study population, inclusive of all managers and employees (comprising academic staff and support staff) at the five campuses of Nkangala TVET College, as well as the Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD) committee. Furthermore, the chapter expounded on the data collection techniques utilized, specifically interviews and document analysis. It also detailed the data analysis process, statistical tests employed, and the study's limitations.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter entailed the systematic presentation of the data analysis results, accompanied by the discussion of the research objectives and research questions. Notably, content analysis was employed as the systematic approach for reducing the content within Nkangala TVET College records and reports.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter furnished conclusions and recommendations derived from the analysis and discussion presented in Chapter 4. The conclusions drawn from the research findings guided the formulation of recommendations for the institutions in question.

1.9 SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the topic of performance appraisal and its use in the Nkangala TVET College in the study. The chapter described the relevant issues of performance appraisal including its purposes, benefits, challenges, and the effects on employee perceptions about performance appraisal. This chapter has thoroughly dealt with a description of the background and rationale for the study. Furthermore, it has provided problem statement, well formulated research questions and clear research objectives used in the study. In addition, the arguments arising from the literature review pointed to the answers of the central questions in order to understand the factors that can affect employee perceptions of the appraisal systems in the Nkangala TVET College. In conclusion, the purpose of the research, demarcation of the research area and the limitation and delimitation were dealt with in detail.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One, the background and rationale of the study were presented, followed by the problem statement, research purpose, research questions, and research objectives that guided the study. The demarcation of the research area was presented next, followed by the definition of concepts, and then the study limitations and delimitations. The sequence of chapters of the study was also presented thereafter, and the summary section concluded the chapter. Therefore, this chapter focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that was under study. Secondly, it examined studies which discussed the purpose of and the benefits that could be derived from conducting performance appraisals.

This assisted employees in gaining a deeper understanding of the purpose of the performance appraisal system. As a result, employees became aware of why and how performance appraisal systems were utilized. Thirdly, the chapter identified the problems in the performance appraisal process. This facilitated the organization in establishing a systematic framework to ensure that performance appraisal was fair and consistent for employees. Fourthly, the chapter focused on the factors influencing the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system. Employees needed to understand the performance criteria and the rating instruments used to evaluate the performance appraisal process. Finally, the chapter reflected on the relevant characteristics that comprised effective performance appraisal from employees' perspective. Employees had to understand how appraisal was measured and how it could enhance performance, increasing their future potential and value to the organization.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON PERFORMACE APPRAISAL

In this study, the distributive justice theory was employed to relate to the perceptions of the allocation of resources (Jasso, 1980; Cohen, 1987). In other words, distributive justice refers to the amount of resources or rewards that were distributed to employees (Jasso, 1980). (Greenberg, 1986a) suggested that distributive justice refers to perceived perceptions of the contents and the consequences. From a different perspective, (Cook and Hegtvedt, 1983) defined distributive justice as perceived

fairness in the distribution of outcomes, including conditions and goods that would affect individual well-being. Employees' perceptions of distribution might lead to emotional feelings and emotional behaviours as they relate to an individual's cognitive decisions (Greenberg, 1986a). According to (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997), unfair treatment of individuals tended to produce more negative attitudes and behaviours than those who were treated fairly. According to Adam's social exchange theory (1965), people were not concerned about the absolute level of outcomes per se, but whether those outcomes were fair (Nord, 1973). Adams suggested that one way to determine whether an outcome was fair was to calculate the ratio of one's outcomes (e.g., effort, time, education, intelligence, and experience) and then compare that ratio with that of a comparison other.

To understand the nature of employees' perceptions of performance appraisal, the distributive justice theory was useful in explaining this interaction (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). In this regard, the distributive justice theory advocated that managers were not consistent in the way they interacted with their employees, categorizing them as "relatively high and low-quality employees" (Govender, Grobler and Joubert, 2015). Additionally, (Byrne *et al.*, 2012) argued that the performance appraisal process was described in terms of its nature of the social exchange theory, which facilitated the relationship between interpersonal and informational justice and trust in the managers. Greenberg (1986b) postulated that the distributive justice theory characterized the workplace as being composed of many personal and professional benefits that employees could enjoy depending on whether they had a good relationship with their managers. Greenberg (1986) regarded the distributive justice theory as a contextual factor in performance appraisal, wherein good relationships, management trust, and fairness were included. On the other hand, (Taylor, 2013) suggested that the most relevant model of a performance appraisal system improved managers and employees' dialogue and reduced conflict in the workplace. In other words, the relationship managers had with employees improved the performance appraisal process, and this relationship should prevail for the workplace to be declared a conflict-free environment.

2.3 PURPOSES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

The importance of performance appraisal in organizations has been long recognized. It serves various purposes, including providing a basis for making selection decisions, determining salary increases, facilitating feedback between supervisors and employees, and acting as a powerful tool for managerial control (Mone *et al.*, 2018). According to Fathi, (2023:78), performance appraisal data are essential for making decisions and justifying them for their objectivity, equity, and fairness. The personnel department also requires data on employee performance and potential to determine how many employees will be available to fill future openings, assuming a certain turnover, retirement, and growth rate. These data help line managers decide who will be promoted and are the means by which organizations attempt to remove favouritism, subjectivity, and politics from personnel decisions. Evaluation is also needed to improve the performance and potential of employees.

The role of a manager is rapidly changing in the world marketplace, and this requires systematic management development efforts at the organizational level (Tallon *et al.*, 2019). Touma (2022)argued that performance appraisal can be an effective device for various purposes, including administering a formal organizational reward and punishment system, evaluating the legitimacy of selection tests, providing feedback to employees, and serving as a vehicle for personal and career development. They are also useful for establishing objectives for training programs and diagnosing organizational problems.

Concerning formal evaluation, Hathorn (2013:86) mentioned that a well-designed formal evaluation can potentially serve development, motivation, human resource and employment planning, communication, legal compliance, and human resource management research. However, Sallis (2014:104) argued that performance appraisal fosters fear, encourages short-term thinking, stifles teamwork, and focuses on the end product rather than leadership to help people. Schleicher and colleagues (2019) pointed out that performance appraisal is fundamentally flawed for various reasons, including its focus on short-term performance, negative effects on teamwork and motivation, and the use of measures that discourage quality.

DeNisi and Smith (2014) described the two major goals of performance appraisal as those related to organizations and individual employees. Armstrong (2019) argued that

both individual and organizational goals are not always compatible, leading to conflicts of interest in performance appraisals. As a result, it brings both benefits and challenges to both supervisors and subordinates. From the organizational perspective, performance appraisals serve two basic goals: evaluation and coaching and development. Evaluation goals are designed to provide feedback to subordinates, develop valid data for pay and promotion decisions, help managers make discharge and retention decisions, and warn subordinates about unsatisfactory performance. Coaching and development goals are designed to counsel and coach subordinates to improve their performance and develop future potential, create commitment to the organization, motivate subordinates through recognition and support, strengthen supervisor-subordinate relations, and diagnose individual and organizational problems.

However, it is important to note that these two goals of performance appraisal often conflict, requiring managers to play the roles of both judge and helper simultaneously. This duality leads to challenges in the evaluation process. Individual employees also have conflicting objectives when it comes to performance appraisal. They desire feedback about themselves, which helps them learn, but they also seek personal development. These desires often conflict with their wishes for rewards and feedback consistent with their self-image. Performance appraisal requires employees to drop their defences, accept the manager's view of their performance, and take an exploratory attitude toward their performance. The conflicting goals between individuals and organizations, as well as supervisors acting as both judges and helpers, have raised significant questions about the efficacy and impact of performance appraisal.

2.4 PROBLEMS IN THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROCESS

Performance appraisal, one of the oldest management tools available, is not without its well-established problems (Hathorn, 2013). Several scholars (DeNisi and Smith, 2014; Levy *et al.*, 2017; J) have identified possible sources of problems in performance evaluation, which stem from three major sources.

2.4.1 System Design and Operating Problems

Lin and Kellough (2019) explained that many of the problems in performance appraisal result from the design and operation of the appraisal system itself. These issues may

include poor evaluation criteria, cumbersome techniques, and systems that are more focused on form than substance. Problems can also arise when evaluation criteria solely focus on activities rather than results and when personality traits, rather than performance, are the basis for evaluation (Hunkenschroer and Luetge, 2022). Such issues are often related to ambiguity in job descriptions, goals, and traits, and they can cause dissatisfaction with the evaluation process.

Terracciano (2017:150) emphasized that the design and administration of performance appraisal systems should be tailored to match employee and organizational characteristics and qualities, as they are not generic and should not be transferred from one company to another without customization. The use of ineffective rating instruments, unclear performance criteria, and a lack of clear measurement systems can also lead to problems. According to DeNisi and Smith (2014:23), creating a systematic framework to ensure that performance appraisal is fair and consistent is crucial. This framework should provide training for supervisors and employees, review performance frequently, maintain accurate records, define measurement systems clearly, and involve multiple raters in the appraisal process.

Longenecker and Fink (2017:56) studied managerial performance appraisal in five different large United States organizations and found that the majority of respondents (83%) believed that managerial performance appraisal was destined to fail due to unclear performance criteria or ineffective rating instruments. The ambiguity in the criteria and the difficulty in rating instruments often led to issues with the performance appraisal process from the beginning. A well-designed performance appraisal system should provide a link between employee performance and organizational goals, creating individualized objectives and performance criteria. It should also motivate and develop the workforce while providing training for supervisors, raters, and employees. The system should facilitate frequent performance reviews, accurate record-keeping, and clear measurement systems.

2.4.2 Challenges and Biases in Performance Appraisal Systems

Even if the system was well designed, problems could arise when the raters, usually supervisors, were not cooperative or well-trained (Chang *et al.*, 2020). Often, this was due to inadequate training or lack of involvement in the program's design. Insufficient training of raters could lead to a series of issues in completing performance

evaluations, including problems with evaluation standards, the Halo effect, Leniency or harshness, central tendency error, "recency of events" error, contrast effects, and personal bias (stereotyping) ("similar to me") (Anjulo, 2017).

Cook (2014:17) pointed out that, performance appraisals suffered from four major problems: Biases, politicking, impression management, and an undeserved reputation. Biases could be conscious or unconscious due to factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, attitudes, and fundamental values of the raters, and personal preferences or dislikes.

There was growing evidence supporting the idea that supervisors were often motivated to use rating inflation as a strategy to influence subordinates' reactions to their performance appraisals. For example, Gnepp and colleagues (2020:81) identified six major reasons why managers inflated ratings based on interviews with 60 executives: to maximize subordinates' merit raises, avoid publicizing negative aspects, avoid creating written records of poor performance, provide a break to an employee who had recently improved, avoid confrontation with a difficult employee, and promote a problematic subordinate out of the department. Most of these reasons were attempts to elicit positive reactions from subordinates, increase their motivation and performance, and enhance their trust and cooperation with supervisors.

In addition to these reasons, supervisors might deliberately inflate ratings to minimize potential challenges from subordinates to their own performance ratings. Subordinates' opposition to their performance ratings was common because individuals typically overestimated their own performance (Campbell *et al.*, 2013:97). When performance appraisals determined organizational rewards and punishments, this resistance resulted in lower motivation, greater alienation, increased conflict with supervisors, and diminished trust and confidence in the supervisor's legitimacy and power (Raya, 2019). Therefore, supervisors might inflate ratings to avoid creating a demoralized and unproductive work unit.

Generally, rating inflation was a political strategy employed by supervisors to further their self-interest. Managers' own work effectiveness depended on that of their subordinates, so they would deliberately inflate ratings to ensure favourable reactions and avoid unfavourable ones from subordinates. However, the strength of this motivation varied depending on various personal and contextual factors.

DeNisi and Murphy (2017) study, which included 148 supervisors from different organizations, indicated that raters' tendency to deliberately inflate performance appraisal ratings was associated with rater negative affectivity and specific aspects of the rating context. These contextual variables included the extent to which supervisors systematically documented subordinates' work behaviours during the appraisal period and the visibility of performance ratings among subordinates.

From an organizational perspective, this study suggested that the prevalence of deliberate inflation of performance ratings might hinder the organization's efforts to use performance ratings effectively for development, motivation, or administrative purposes. Supervisors who frequently inflated performance ratings might develop cynical attitudes, and inconsistencies among raters could lead to reduced trust and confidence in the fairness of the performance appraisal system, resulting in lower work motivation and performance (van Woerkom and Kroon, 2020).

As Taneja, Srivastava and Ravichandran (2023) stated, an effective due process appraisal system with characteristics like adequate notice, fair hearing, and judgment based on evidence was essential to ensure fairness and justice in the performance appraisal system. Adequate notice involved publicly distributing and explaining performance standards to employees, discussing why and how these standards had to be met, and providing timely feedback on performance. Fair hearing required a formal review meeting during which employees were informed of their tentative assessment, and employees had an opportunity to challenge this assessment and provide self-appraisals. Judgment based on evidence required applying performance standards consistently across employees.

The results of the study suggested that organizations might reduce the inflation phenomenon by promoting or enforcing the documentation of employees' behaviours and activities. Organizations could also control the rate of inflation across supervisors and departments by standardizing the visibility of appraisals throughout the organization (Campbell *et al.*, 2013:97). On the other hand, managers might deliberately give low performance ratings to subordinates for reasons such as getting them back on track, teaching rebellious subordinates a lesson, encouraging them to consider leaving the organization, or building a record of poor performance for termination purposes (Cook, 2014:35).

2.4.3 Ratees' Problems in Performance Evaluation

Problems in performance evaluation were not limited to raters; ratees also contributed to these issues. One major problem related to ratees was their tendency to engage in impression management and ingratiating behaviours. Organizational cultures occasionally fostered environments in which subordinates gained credit for supporting management decisions that were clearly flawed, with cries of "commitment" and "loyalty" stifling criticism of these decisions. Extreme cases of such behaviour might be termed "the World War I mentality" (Freud and Strachey, 2024).

Sun and colleagues (2021:268) identified three underlying types of ingratiating behaviour, or "upward influence styles": job-focused ingratiation (claiming credit for both performed and unperformed tasks, arriving early and staying late, among others), supervisor-focused ingratiation (taking an interest in the supervisor's personal life, praising the supervisor, doing favours for the supervisor, agreeing with the supervisor's ideas), and self-focused ingratiation (presenting oneself as polite and friendly, working hard when results were visible to the supervisor, letting the supervisor know he/she was trying to do a good job). While ingratiation might sometimes succeed in obtaining good performance ratings, it could also be seen as too blatant or non-credible, diminishing the accuracy of appraisal ratings and morale when employees who used these tactics achieved rewards or promotions despite poor performance.

Defensiveness and resistance to evaluations were also significant problems among workers. Performance appraisal could be a highly threatening experience for some employees, as they often regarded their performance more positively than supervisors did. Employees developed defensive mechanisms and resistance to performance ratings to protect their self-esteem. These mechanisms included blaming unsatisfactory performance on others, questioning the appraisal system's validity, demeaning the source of the data, apologizing and promising improvement, or agreeing with feedback while inwardly denying its accuracy. This defensiveness could manifest as open hostility and denial or passive compliance (Campbell *et al.*, 2013).

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

Numerous aspects could undermine the effectiveness of performance appraisal. Brown and colleagues (2019)pointed out several potential issues, including exceptions

for highly visible employees, the use of performance appraisal to punish low performers, rewards for non-performance, doubts among performers about the consequences of the appraisal, and organizational politics that can disrupt the performance of targeted employees. Brown and colleagues (2019) added to this list by noting problems such as the use of fundamentally flawed appraisals, a focus on encouraging individual performance that discourages teamwork and collaboration, inconsistencies in setting and applying appraisal criteria, a focus on extremes (exceptionally good or poor performance), an emphasis on short-term goals, support for autocratic supervisors, the subjectivity of appraisal results, and the creation of emotional distress in employees. Singh and Gupta (2013) included issues such as the use of vague qualities and irrelevant measurement criteria, the use of useless checklists for evaluation, monologues instead of dialogues in feedback sessions, reluctance of appraisers to offer feedback, and supervisors' guidance to appraisers. Edmondson (2018) raised concerns about inaccuracies at the supervisor or organization's end.

2.5.1 Design of the Performance Appraisal Form

According to Duggan and colleagues (2020) many of the problems in performance appraisal stemmed from the appraisal system itself, including its objectives, the administrative system in which it was embedded, and the forms and procedures that constituted the system. Problems could arise when evaluation criteria were inadequate or when the technique used was cumbersome. An appraisal system that was more about form than substance also contributed to these issues. In cases where the criteria focused solely on activities rather than output or results, or on personality traits rather than performance, the evaluation was not well received (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2020).

DeNisi and Murphy (2017b) emphasized that performance appraisal systems were not universally applicable, as their design and administration needed to be tailored to match the unique characteristics and qualities of both employees and organizations. Bono and colleagues (2017) study on 120 experienced managers from five different large United States organizations revealed that a majority (83%) believed that unclear performance criteria and ineffective rating instruments were primary reasons for the failure of managerial performance appraisal. These issues often stemmed from

ambiguity in job descriptions, goals, traits, and behaviours used as the basis for the evaluation, leading the process to fail from the outset.

Demartini (2014:87) stressed the importance of a systematic framework to ensure that performance appraisal was both "fair" and "consistent." In their study on "designing effective performance appraisal systems," it was concluded that an effective appraisal system required strong commitment from top management (DeNisi and Murphy, 2017a). The system should establish a connection between employee performance and organizational goals through individualized objectives and performance criteria. It should create a motivated and committed workforce and include mechanisms for frequent performance reviews, accurate record-keeping, clear measurement systems, and the involvement of multiple raters in the appraisal process.

Woerkom and Kroon (2020) suggested that genuine employee participation in several aspects of the appraisal process could mitigate many of the dysfunctions of traditional performance appraisal systems and promote more ethical human resource management decision-making. Employee participation could occur during the development of performance standards, the design of rating formats and measurement scales, and feedback sessions. This form of participation resulted in increased motivation, ownership of the appraisal process, and a reduction in appraisal-related tension, defensive behaviour, and rater-appraisee conflict.

In summary, employee participation enhanced motivation, feelings of fairness, and overall acceptance of the performance appraisal process, provided it occurred in an atmosphere of trust, open communication, and equal employee treatment. However, the effectiveness of employee participation should be regularly evaluated to ensure its positive impact (Scott *et al.*, 2022). It was essential to assess whether employees perceived participation as an enriching factor and if it contributed to the development of a positive organizational culture.

2.5.2 Attitude of the Appraiser in the Performance Evaluation Process

In the context of performance appraisal, the role of the appraiser, typically supervisors, is crucial, and their attitude and effectiveness can significantly influence the overall process. Even when a performance appraisal system is well designed, problems may emerge if appraisers are uncooperative or insufficiently trained (Murphy, 2020). Such issues often arise due to inadequate training or the lack of appraiser participation in

the development of the appraisal program. When appraisers are inadequately trained, various problems can arise during performance evaluations. These problems encompass issues with the standards of evaluation, the halo effect, leniency or harshness in rating, central tendency error, the "recency of events" error, contrast effects, and personal biases, including stereotyping (Toroitich, 2012:66).

Furthermore, according to Cook (2014:33), performance appraisals are afflicted by four major problems, namely biases, politicking, impression management, and undeserved reputations. Biases can be conscious or unconscious and may stem from factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, attitudes, and personal likes or dislikes. Supervisors often resort to rating inflation to manipulate subordinates' reactions to their performance appraisals. For instance, Dipboye (2018:86) identified six primary reasons why managers inflated ratings, including maximizing subordinates' merit raises, avoiding public criticism, avoiding documenting poor performance, assisting improving employees, averting conflicts, and promoting problematic subordinates out of the department. Such inflationary practices are aimed at eliciting positive reactions from subordinates, including increased motivation, better performance, and heightened trust and cooperation with their supervisors.

In addition to these inflationary reasons, supervisors may deliberately inflate ratings to mitigate potential challenges from subordinates to their own performance ratings, as found by Woods (2012:22). When subordinates resist low performance ratings, they exhibit lower work motivation, increased alienation from the work environment, heightened conflict with supervisors, and reduced faith in their supervisors' legitimacy and power (Richard *et al.*, 2022). Inflated ratings serve as a means to avoid creating a demoralized, unmotivated, and unproductive work unit.

It is important to recognize that rating inflation is often a political strategy employed by supervisors to serve their self-interests. Managers' own work effectiveness hinges on the performance of their subordinates, which motivates managers to deliberately inflate ratings to ensure positive reactions or avoid negative responses to their performance appraisals. Nonetheless, the motivation to inflate ratings varies based on personal and contextual variables. Plessis and Niekerk (2017) study, involving 148 supervisors from various organizations, highlighted that raters' tendency to deliberately inflate performance appraisal ratings correlated with their negative

affectivity and the contextual factors of documentation of ratees' behaviours during the appraisal period and the visibility of performance ratings among subordinates.

From an organizational perspective, this research suggests that the prevalence of deliberate inflation in performance ratings may hinder an organization's efforts to use performance ratings effectively for developmental, motivational, or administrative purposes. The inconsistency among raters in their level of rating inflation could erode subordinates' trust and confidence in the fairness of the performance appraisal system, leading to lower work motivation and performance (Nolan, 2018). As Morrison (2014:221) asserted, there are three characteristics of appraisal systems that are vital for establishing fairness and justice in performance appraisal:

1. **Adequate Notice:** Organizations should publicly distribute and explain performance standards, offer discussions on the reasons and methods behind these standards, and provide regular and timely feedback on performance.

2. **Fair Hearing:** This entails a formal review meeting where an employee is informed of a tentative assessment of their performance, the manager's familiarity with the employee's performance, and the employee's opportunity to challenge the assessment and provide a self-appraisal.

3. **Judgment Based on Evidence:** Organizations should consistently apply performance standards across employees.

The study results suggested that organizations can potentially reduce the phenomenon of inflation by promoting the documentation of employees' behaviours and activities and standardizing the visibility of appraisals across the organization. On the flip side, there is evidence revealing why managers deliberately provide low performance ratings to subordinates. They may do so to encourage an employee to improve their performance, teach a rebellious subordinate a lesson, suggest that someone consider leaving the organization, or build a well-documented record of poor performance for expedited terminations (Cook, 2014).

2.5.3 The Role of Appraisee Behaviour in Performance Evaluation

Appraisees also play a significant role in the performance evaluation process, and their attitudes and behaviours can affect the outcomes. Impression management and ingratiation are notable issues concerning appraisees. In some cases, appraisees

engage in efforts to create unnecessary positive impressions and seek favour within the workplace. As Cook (2014:35) highlights, some organizations exist where subordinates gain credit for complying with management plans, even when those plans appear illogical or pointless. This phenomenon, often labelled as "upward influence styles," encompasses job-focused ingratiation, supervisor-focused ingratiation, and self-focused ingratiation.

However, Azeem, De Clercq and Haq (2021) found that ingratiation does not always lead to better performance ratings. When ingratiation is too blatant or lacks credibility, it can backfire. Such impression management techniques can compromise the accuracy of appraisal ratings and reduce their effectiveness in reflecting true individual worth to the organization. These practices not only undermine performance appraisals and selection processes but also adversely impact morale when employees observe individuals with poor actual performance receiving merit awards or promotions based on their ingratiation skills.

Additionally, defensiveness and resistance to evaluations are common problems among appraisees, largely because performance appraisals can be perceived as a significant threat. Employees typically hold more favourable views of their performance than their supervisors (Wilkinson, 2019). To protect their self-esteem, appraisees may employ various defensive mechanisms when confronted with unfavourable performance ratings. These mechanisms include shifting blame to others or uncontrollable factors, questioning the appraisal system's significance, demeaning the data source, apologizing to avoid negative feedback, or agreeing with the feedback while inwardly denying its validity.

Perceptions are pivotal in the performance appraisal process, influencing how employees perceive the fairness, effectiveness, and value of the appraisal system (Armstrong, 2019). The fairness of the process is paramount; if employees perceive it as biased or unfair, it can lead to resentment, demotivation, and reduced job satisfaction (Taneja, Srivastava and Ravichandran, 2023). Moreover, how employees perceive the appraisal process can impact their motivation. When employees believe the process is fair and that their efforts will be recognized and rewarded, they are more likely to be motivated.

Conversely, if they see the process as arbitrary or irrelevant, motivation and engagement may decrease. Additionally, perceptions of the appraisal process can influence overall job satisfaction. A fair and transparent process can contribute to a positive work environment, while perceived unfairness or irrelevance can lead to job dissatisfaction and possibly turnover (Taneja, Srivastava and Ravichandran, 2023). Furthermore, how employees perceive the process can affect how they receive feedback and view opportunities for development. If employees see the process as constructive and focused on their growth, they are more likely to use feedback to improve their performance. However, if they view the process as punitive or irrelevant, they may be less receptive to feedback and less inclined to seek development opportunities. Therefore, ensuring that the performance appraisal process is perceived as fair, transparent, and relevant is crucial for fostering motivation, job satisfaction, and performance improvement.

2.5.4 Linking Performance Appraisal to Pay/Reward

Performance-based rewards have a history in TVET colleges, particularly in South Africa. Some countries have embraced pay-for-performance strategies to modify traditional salary structures over the past decade. These schemes link compensation to performance evaluations, thereby rewarding or penalizing employees based on their performance (Vuong and Nguyen, 2022). The types of performance-based reward programs vary, encompassing individual-based incentive schemes, profit-sharing, gain-sharing, employee share option schemes, and skill/competence-based pay. These programs aim to distribute the financial results of organizational performance to employees.

The debate surrounding the effectiveness of performance-based pay is ongoing. Proponents argue that such systems are more efficient and closely aligned with the actual contributions of employees. External factors such as education credits or degrees have shown inconsistent links with employee output, while the existing salary scales do not adequately reflect the skills and expertise required in the workplace (Hampf, Wiederhold and Woessmann, 2017). Pay structures, they assert, should be based on performance criteria to attract and retain the best talent.

However, critics contend that performance-based pay can encourage competition over collaboration and may not adequately motivate employees. Internal commitment and

motivation, they argue, are more critical for organizational success. The emphasis should be on internal commitment, which drives employee contributions and is superior to external commitment (Lee, 2020). Instead of relying solely on performance-related pay, improvement in performance should be pursued through various strategies, including training, better information sharing, and communication mechanisms.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of a performance-related pay system depends on a variety of factors, including the nature of the business, human resource management strategy, and procedural justice. Fair and transparent procedures are crucial, and distributional justice is also important to ensure acceptance among employees. The performance-based pay system should be part of a broader reward system that encompasses both financial and non-financial incentives to address individual needs and promote cooperation (Hosain, 2014:36).

2.5.5 Employee Training

It is widely acknowledged by authors that rater training is an essential element to enhance the effectiveness of performance appraisals. For instance, Holmer and Rudner (2021:71) proposed three primary training goals. The first was to familiarize evaluators with the measures they would be employing. The second goal involved ensuring that evaluators comprehended the sequence of required operations. Lastly, training aimed to clarify the interpretation of normative data provided to the evaluators. Given the deeply ingrained nature of errors, Fraidlin and colleagues (2022) stressed the necessity of extensive training to mitigate such errors. As a result, comprehensive training programs were advocated, providing ample opportunities for trainees to practice the requisite skills, receive feedback on their practice appraisal performance, and develop a thorough understanding of the behaviours to be observed. Hejase (2016) also emphasized the ongoing need for training, particularly in areas such as goal-setting, frequent performance monitoring, and personal and interactional skills. It was suggested that organizations could incorporate regular training into their supervisors' roles, fostering a culture where training was an integral part of the position.

Additionally, it was essential to address interpersonal issues, especially trust, during training, as they played a significant role in the performance appraisal process

(Woerkom and Kroon, 2020). Gnepp and colleagues (2020b)underlined that training must be continually updated, covering appraisal-related aspects such as providing and receiving feedback, addressing personal biases, honing active listening skills, and learning conflict resolution approaches. To establish trust and gain acceptance of the performance appraisal process, Pulakos and O'Leary (2011:188) stressed the importance of providing a comprehensive understanding of the system. In this context, training was viewed as a means to minimize employee confusion, improve their understanding of performance measures, and enable them to provide constructive feedback and critique of the appraisal process. Various training methods were available. One of them was "Frame-of-Reference Training" (FOR), introduced by Lee (2020:106), aimed at developing detailed performance scripts, which served as norms or standards for effective performance behaviours and facilitated information organization. Research by Lee (2020:114) demonstrated that FOR was effective in producing more accurate performance ratings.

In contrast, "Rater Error Training" (RET) focused on the avoidance of common rating errors (Hedge and Kavanagh, 2018:92). However, Hedge and Kavanagh (2018:105) contended that RET introduced new and often inaccurate rating behaviours and might be more appropriately labelled "inappropriate response set training." Instead, they recommended combining observation and decision-making training, suggesting that this combination might lead to greater improvements in rating accuracy than either method alone. Despite the potential for improved performance appraisal effectiveness through training in various areas, it was important to recognize that training of raters alone could not compensate for the lack of opportunity to observe, as exposure to appraisees was crucial for reliable ratings (Rothstein, 2017:177). In summary, adequate rater training encompassed understanding the appraisal process, proper use of appraisal instruments, effective feedback provision, including goal-setting. Acceptance would only be achieved if both appraisees and raters perceived these conditions as fulfilled. Additionally, these skills required continuous updates. Furthermore, appraisees should also receive some form of appraisal training to ensure their acceptance and support of the appraisal system. Employees needed to understand the entire appraisal system, including the behavioural aspects, standards, and the acknowledgment that certain performance aspects, especially profitability, could be influenced by factors beyond their control.

2.6 PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK OF THE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

The process of providing feedback to employees aimed to improve performance by encouraging behavioural change. The manner in which employees received feedback on their job performance played a crucial role in the success of the performance appraisal system (Harris, 2016:46). Receiving feedback, especially when it was inconsistent with one's self-image, could be challenging and emotionally charged. Therefore, creating conditions that allowed appraisees to tolerate, hear, and accept discrepant information was essential. The importance of confidential and credible feedback sessions to avoid denial, emotional outbursts, and disengagement, allowing discrepancies in evaluations to be discussed and potentially reduced (Jacobs et al., 2017:157).

Given that both employees and supervisors often found formal performance appraisal demotivating and distressing, it was argued that informal, regular communication between supervisors and employees was more effective (Govender and Bussin, 2020). Kondrasuk et al. (2012:88) suggested integrating feedback into daily interactions between supervisors and subordinates through more frequent but less formal meetings. These included weekly "achievement updates" addressing both positive and negative aspects and bimonthly "achievement assessments" for a more formal and comprehensive review of issues of concern to both parties. Moreover, it was emphasized that effective feedback should be timely, specific, and behavioural in nature and should come from a credible source (Roberts, 2013:108). Precision and timeliness in performance feedback had the potential to bring about behavioural changes, even for behaviours that were typically difficult to modify.

While performance feedback alone was shown to enhance employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction, combining performance feedback with goal-setting had the most significant positive impact on job satisfaction (Tziner and Kopelman, 2012:83). Goal-setting, by encouraging employee participation in work-related issues and imbuing work with a sense of meaning, played a vital role in achieving this effect. Harris (2016:49) endorsed the use of evaluative interviews for providing feedback that centered on problem-solving and goal-setting, with a high degree of employee involvement. When conducted in this manner, such interviews were likely to be more satisfying for employees compared to retrospective, subjective interviews.

Furthermore, it was noted that setting specific, moderately challenging, and accepted performance goals was pivotal to enhancing employee performance and satisfaction (Roberts, 2013:108). It was crucial to remember that giving overly complex feedback was risky, as complexity could lead recipients to focus on information aligning with their self-perceptions while ignoring contradictory data (Stouten, Rousseau and De Cremer, 2018). Roberts (2013:108) also stressed the need for continuous, ongoing formal and informal performance feedback for maximal effectiveness.

2.7 CHARACTERISTICS THAT COMPRISE EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

In order to dispel potential misunderstandings, it is imperative to delineate the pivotal characteristics that collectively constitute an effective performance appraisal system, particularly from the perspective of employees:

2.7.1 Clear Appraisal Objectives

The primary aim of a performance appraisal is to gauge and enhance employees' performance while simultaneously augmenting their future potential and value to the organization. Ancillary objectives encompass offering feedback, ameliorating communication, identifying training requirements, elucidating roles and responsibilities, and establishing a framework for rewards allocation. It is of utmost importance that the appraisal objectives remain explicitly specified. An efficacious performance review system invariably exhibits specific appraisal attributes harmonized with the employee's job description (Saleheen and Habib, 2023).

2.7.2 Accurate, Valid, and Reliable Data

An effective performance appraisal system yields consistent, reliable, and valid data that assists management in formulating strategic decisions. The data generated should align with the objectives inherent in performance appraisal and succession planning (Fisher, 2015:380). The accuracy and credibility of data engender a fair and transparent performance appraisal system, thereby fostering employees' trust.

2.7.3 Well-Defined Performance Criteria

An effective performance appraisal system encompasses standardized and top-tier appraisal forms, protocols, and procedures, conjoined with well-defined performance

criteria and standards. For instance, it is incongruous to evaluate a graphic designer based on a skill not delineated in their job description (Tziner and Roch, 2016:456).

2.7.4 Time Efficiency

Effective performance appraisal systems are meticulously designed to be cost-effective and time-efficient, enabling the attainment of maximal benefits (DeNisi and Murphy, 2017a). Human resources personnel need not squander their valuable time exclusively on managerial tasks; instead, a proficient performance appraisal system permits them to allocate time and effort to more salient and productive undertakings.

2.7.5 Post-Appraisal Interview

Conducting a post-appraisal dialogue between employees and their immediate superiors is imperative for the exchange of feedback. This practice not only facilitates organizational awareness of the challenges and impediments faced by employees but also serves as a means of identifying suitable training avenues (Tziner and Roch, 2016:456). Acting based on employees' feedback fosters mutual trust between employees and management.

2.7.6 Alignment with Organizational Needs

A truly effective performance appraisal system must be harmonized with the distinct requirements of the organization (Murphy, 2016:149). For instance, if an organization promotes cross-functional, matrix teams, the performance appraisal system should be tailored to ensure that employees working in such teams are duly evaluated. This includes assessments by both the primary manager and cross-functional manager.

2.7.7 Managerial Mentorship

The success of an appraisal system predominantly hinges on the role of managers, who perform administrative and feedback duties (Tziner and Roch, 2016:457). Managers should not only focus on employees' shortcomings but should also highlight their achievements as a motivational strategy. Effective managers serve not merely as authoritative figures but as mentors who guide employees on the path to personal and professional development.

2.7.8 Continuous Feedback

Contemporary performance appraisal systems are at their zenith when they operate as ongoing processes throughout the year. Year-end ratings should not be a revelation to employees due to the continuous feedback provided by managers regarding their performance (Ruben; Elizur and Yaniv, 2015:167). This practice allows employees to address performance gaps and enhance their skills while enabling managers to design development plans that align with their team members' needs.

2.7.9 Focusing on Job-Relevant Behaviour

Performance appraisal should emphasize job-relevant behaviours rather than personal behaviour (Roazzi; Campello de Souza and Bilsky, 2015:182). Employees ought to be evaluated based on their competencies and their ability to achieve objectives rather than on interpersonal issues unrelated to their job functions.

Inadequately executed performance appraisals have the potential to generate conflict and detrimentally impact both the organization and its employees. An organization marred by internal discord is unlikely to flourish. Consequently, selecting an effective performance appraisal system is a judicious course of action (Roazzi; Campello de Souza and Bilsky, 2015:182).

2.8 SUMMARY

The central objective of this chapter was to provide insight into the perspectives of scholars on the problem under examination. Distributive justice theory was utilized as a theoretical framework. This theory posits that perceptions of fairness in the distribution of rewards and resources affect individual well-being, emotions, and cognitive decisions. In the context of performance appraisal systems, it serves diverse functions, such as determining salary increases, facilitating feedback between superiors and subordinates, and serving as a database for human resource departments to identify potential candidates for promotional positions. However, the discussion underscored the fundamental flaws inherent in performance appraisal systems, including the potential for inducing fear, short-term thinking, and discouraging long-term planning.

The chapter also delved into the problems associated with the performance appraisal process, which included system design and operational issues, rater-related

challenges, and problems on the part of ratees. It was highlighted that the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems was influenced by several factors, including the design of the appraisal form, the attitude of the appraiser, and the attitude of the appraisee. To prevent misconceptions, the characteristics that constitute a robust performance appraisal system were elucidated, with an emphasis on continuous feedback and post-appraisal interviews. This chapter emphasized the urgent need to investigate employees' perceptions of performance appraisal systems in TVET colleges.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two played a pivotal role in the progression of this research, delving into the theoretical framework and an extensive literature review pertaining to the subject of performance appraisal. It involved a comprehensive examination of various studies, all with the overarching aim of cultivating a profound comprehension of the issue under investigation. However, this chapter's focal point shifts to the research methodologies that underpinned this study. The research methodology was predominantly rooted in qualitative research, chosen for its aptitude in affording the researcher a robust platform for delving into the perspectives of employees and managers at Nkangala TVET College. The research paradigm, closely aligned with interpretive research, was contextualized within this study. This chapter also elucidated the adopted data collection strategies, primarily relying on interviews and document analysis. Furthermore, it expounded upon the techniques of data analysis and interpretation. Of equal significance, the chapter outlined the criteria for ensuring the quality of qualitative data, with a specific emphasis on trustworthiness.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design employed in this study was a qualitative case study. Savin-Baden and Major, 2023 contends that qualitative research design is primarily focused on understanding the study rather than explaining it. Researchers gain a deeper understanding when they immerse themselves in the setting and explore the reality from within. In alignment with this perspective, this research embraced the qualitative case study approach as it enabled the investigation of Nkangala TVET college employees and managers' perceptions. The choice of research design is influenced by ontological and epistemological perspectives, researchers' skills, and data collection methods. Ontology refers to the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality, while epistemology refers to the beliefs about how knowledge is acquired. In this case, the researcher had a constructivist ontology, which views reality as socially constructed and subjective. This aligned with the study's focus on understanding employees' subjective perceptions of the performance appraisal system. The qualitative research design was selected because of its congruence with the research topic, philosophical assumptions, and its ability to produce the desired data. Sułkowski

and colleagues (2020) identified five key components of qualitative research design, all of which revolve around the central research question. In this case, the study aimed to investigate employees' perceptions of the performance appraisal system.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research paradigm that guided this study was the interpretive paradigm. According to Gama (2015:130), research paradigms are philosophical frameworks that provide structures and procedures for exploration within a discipline. The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that there is no single truth but rather multiple perspectives and positions. In this context, the study explored the perceptions of TVET college employees regarding the performance appraisal system. Interpretive research emerged as a shift away from positivism, with an increasing focus on understanding and interpreting the meaning of participants' lives. Researchers within this paradigm aim to observe multiple realities and construct the world through diverse processes of observation. The interpretive paradigm strives to understand the subjective meanings of individuals in the study, recognizing the potential for bias, individual perceptions, and experiences (Cuthbertson, Robb and Blair, 2020). Through this paradigm, the researcher gained insights into how interviewees reacted in various situations, considering shared factors among them.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, a qualitative research approach was chosen. This approach involves obtaining data through various methods and techniques rather than relying on quantitative measures. Qualitative research focuses on the richness and depth of data, aiming to explain and describe complex phenomena (Ravitch and Carl, 2019). It is especially useful for situations where in-depth information is needed to understand the subject under investigation. The qualitative research methodology allowed the researcher to collect data from executives, senior and middle management, and trade union representatives. This methodology is well-suited for scenarios where detailed and in-depth information is required (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023). It emphasizes naturalistic inquiry, inductively creating detailed narrative descriptions and constructive case studies. While qualitative research has been criticized as purely descriptive and less rigorous due to its subjective nature, it excels at providing a deep understanding of the phenomena under study, although its findings may not always

be generalizable to other settings (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2024). In contrast to quantitative research, which often aims to test specified theories and generalize findings, qualitative research seeks to capture the richness and complexity of a specific social setting. It provides in-depth insights and understanding, making it a valuable approach for this study's objectives.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.5.1 Document Study

Document study involves the interpretation of documents by the researcher to gain insights into a specific subject (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2020). This method entails analysing the content, coding it into themes, similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analysed (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). Document study allows researchers to supplement the information collected and offers the advantage of not interfering with the case setting (McNabb, 2013:324). For this study, an analysis was conducted on the Department of Higher Education Training (DHET) PDMS and IQMS policy documents to understand how the performance appraisal process is managed. Document study was chosen to enhance knowledge about the performance management system and performance appraisal in the Nkangala TVET College. The PDMS and IQMS are used to standardize the management of employee performance within the DHET, providing a framework to monitor, measure, and reward employees to improve efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, and service delivery.

3.5.2 Interviews

The interview questions for this research study was derived based on the research objectives, the research design, and the theoretical framework guiding this study. Semi-structured interviews were employed as an effective data collection method in order to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the subject matter, especially in addressing personal and sensitive issues. The advantages of semi-structured interviews include the ability to prepare questions beforehand to guide the conversation, open-ended responses for in-depth information, and fostering two-way communication (Chen, Dobinson and Kent, 2020). However, it cannot guarantee the absolute honesty of participants, infer cause and effect, and may reduce reliability due to its flexibility and open-ended nature. This was achieved through having a transparent communication about the study's purpose and by ensuring confidentiality

and anonymity of responses. The researcher obtained permission to access and interview the research participants from the TVET college management. After the management approved, the researcher conducted interviews at various campuses, which included Witbank Campus, CN Mahlangu Campus, Water Val Boven Campus, and Mpondozankomo Campus. Participants were informed about the permission granted by management to conduct the study. Furthermore, they were invited to participate via email and follow-up communication through telephone calls to arrange personal appointments. The interviews were recorded using a cell phone and voice recorder, under the strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.

3.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling involves selecting a subset of participants to represent the larger population (Lohr, 2021). Purposive sampling was used to select participants to give insights into the performance appraisal at Nkangala TVET College. Purposive sampling is a key non-probability sampling method that allows researchers to maximize valuable insights from a small population of interest. However, it can introduce some bias and may not be suitable for generalizing research findings. Four campuses were purposively selected, while the fifth, where the researcher is employed, was excluded to eliminate bias. The selection of campuses was done in consultation with the college's CEO/principal and campus managers, considering their relevance to the research questions. The selected participants, primarily lecturers with a minimum of three years of experience, were interviewed at each campus, the point at which no new information or themes were emerging from the data occurred when the 19th participant was interviewed. Notably, the four campuses are similar in their operations, use of PDMS and IQMS forms, and are registered with the DHET. Permission to access these campuses was granted to ensure privacy and anonymity while conducting the study, in accordance with research ethics. The selection of documents for analysis was guided by the research objectives in order to answer the research questions.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This research used a deductive approach as it was guided by the distributive justice theory and data was collected to test or support this theory. The researcher had predefined research questions based on existing literature about performance

appraisal. The interviews were structured to gather data specifically related to these predetermined concepts, aiming to confirm, refute, or refine existing theory or ideas. Interviews were conducted with eligible participants who consented freely to participate in the study. The responses to a series of questions provided insights into the participants' perceptions of performance appraisal at Nkangala TVET College.

Thematic analysis was a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the collected data using NVivo. The data, including audio recordings and non-verbal data like gestures and laughter, was transcribed to facilitate analysis. This ensured that all data was accurately captured and could be easily analyzed. The researcher familiarized themselves with the transcribed data by reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of the content. This was followed by coding process and identifying and labelling interesting features of the data, such as specific statements or gestures related to performance appraisal. These codes were used to categorize the data and identify potential themes. The researcher looked for patterns or themes within the coded data, which were recurring patterns of meaning that captured important aspects of the participants' perceptions of performance appraisal.

Once potential themes were identified, the researcher reviewed and refined them to ensure they accurately represented the data. This involved comparing themes to the original data and checking for consistency. The researcher defined and named the final themes based on their content and relevance to the research questions. Each theme was clearly defined and supported by examples from the data. Finally, the researcher wrote up the analysis, including a description of each theme, supporting quotes or examples from the data, and an interpretation of the findings. This narrative provided a coherent and meaningful account of the participants' perceptions of performance appraisal at Nkangala TVET College. The document analysis, involved examining the selected documents to extract relevant information that provided additional context or insights into the participants' perceptions. This information was integrated with the data from the interviews to enrich the analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of performance appraisal at Nkangala TVET College.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF COLLECTED DATA

In research, the trustworthiness of data is a fundamental concern, ensuring that the results are consistent and reliable across various applications of the research method (Perri and Bellamy, 2012:21). To establish trustworthiness in this study, five criteria were employed: credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility pertains to the confidence that can be placed in the accuracy of research findings (Anney, 2014:276). To ensure credibility in this study, several strategies were implemented:

- The researcher had access to relevant documents, benefiting from an understanding of the organization's culture.

- A trust relationship was established between the researcher and participants due to the researcher's familiarity with the organization and executive role.

- In-depth discussions were conducted with participants to validate the credibility of the data.

- Data accuracy was verified after each data collection session, with the researcher reviewing audio recordings for accuracy, and participants reviewing transcripts.

- Findings were compared with existing research to assess consistency, and critical individuals related to the research were consulted to ensure consistency.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability concerns the extent to which research results can be applied to other contexts (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams and Blackman, 2016:3). To enhance transferability, thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation were provided, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to their own situations (Cameron, 2011:6). By offering comprehensive context and data, readers can compare the phenomenon described in the research report with their own experiences.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability ensures the reliability and consistency of research findings and methods (Moon et al., 2016:2). To uphold dependability, the study documented research procedures to enable external auditing and critique of the research process. This documentation included research instruments, coding frames, data sets, and data analysis techniques (Perri and Bellamy, 2012:114). The interconnectedness of data collection and analysis was assessed to ensure accuracy and consistency, with detailed data collection records maintained.

3.8.4 Conformability

Conformability assures that findings and interpretations are derived from data rather than the researcher's preferences (Anney, 2014:279). An audit trail of raw data, memos, notes, data reduction, and analysis was maintained to validate confirmability (Cameron, 2011:6). The research process was transparently described, allowing others to examine the research design and evaluate the source of the findings.

3.8.5 Authenticity

Authenticity measures the extent to which data accurately reflect the truth and support sound inferences (Perri and Bellamy, 2012:92). In this study, authenticity was ensured through a thorough examination of information relevant to the research. Fairness was maintained by presenting all value differences, views, and conflicts, offering a comprehensive representation of the realities signified in the study (Billups, 2014:4). This process enabled the findings to be grounded in the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles guide the conduct of research and are integral to ensuring that research respects the rights and well-being of participants. In this study, ethical considerations played a significant role, and the following key aspects are discussed:

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of ethical research (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:305). The informed consent included detailed information about the purpose of the study and several key elements. This was done to ensure that participants are fully informed about the study and can make an autonomous decision about whether or not

to participate. They were given ample time to understand and consider their participation and were encouraged to discuss their involvement with their managers to ensure they are afforded time to participate . Consent was obtained through written correspondence and email follow-ups.

3.9.2 Right to Privacy

Protecting participants' right to privacy is essential, regardless of the sensitivity of the information gathered (Nissenbaum, 2017). To ensure participants' privacy, identifying information, such as names and addresses, was not included during the analysis stage. Pseudonyms were used to reference participants throughout analysis and reporting.

3.9.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality, or safeguarding personal information from disclosure or misuse, is crucial in research (Brooks, Riele, and Maguire, 2014:54). Participants were assured that their identity and the information they provided would be treated as confidential. Measures included coding research data, limiting access to information, and properly discarding unwanted data.

3.9.4 Anonymity

Ensuring that participants are not psychologically, physically, or emotionally harmed is a critical ethical consideration (Marshall and Rossman, 2016:50). This study took several steps to prevent harm, including providing comprehensive information to participants, allowing them to decide whether to participate, and ensuring they could withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity and privacy were maintained, and misleading practices were avoided.

3.10 LIMITATIONS TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research has faced criticism for being purely descriptive, less rigorous, subjective, and lacking transparency (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023). Additionally, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other settings because they are based on a small, purposefully chosen sample. However, the study made use of thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation, making the findings transferable to similar settings. Future research might consider employing quantitative or mixed methods to enhance the study's findings.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research methodology employed in the study. It adopted a qualitative case study design and an interpretivist philosophical perspective. Data collection methods included interviews and document analysis. Ethical considerations encompassed informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Limitations of the research methodology were noted, and it was suggested that future studies may benefit from incorporating quantitative or mixed methods. This chapter laid the foundation for the discussion of research findings in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS AT NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter focuses on the research findings and discussion, encompassing three main themes that provide a comprehensive answer to the research questions. These themes included employee perception and attitudes, factors influencing the performance appraisal process, and characteristics of an effective performance appraisal. This research used a deductive approach because it started with a specific theory and data was collected to test or support this theory.

The first theme on employee perception and attitudes, aimed to delve into the perceptions held by employees regarding the quality of the performance appraisal process. This theme encompassed four sub-themes, namely: perceived value and relevance, fairness and objectivity, stages of performance appraisal, and suggestions for improvement. Through exploring these sub-themes, the chapter sought to gain insights into how employees perceive and assess the performance appraisal process at the college. The second theme addresses the factors influencing the performance appraisal process. This theme critically evaluates the key factors that impact the effectiveness of the appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College.

The two sub-themes explored under this theme are criteria and measurement, performance recognition and rewards. By examining these factors, the chapter seeks to identify the critical elements that shape the appraisal process and their influence on employee perceptions and outcomes. Lastly, the third theme revolves around the characteristics of an effective performance appraisal. This theme aimed to identify the specific attributes that employees consider crucial for a successful performance appraisal process. It comprised of three sub-themes: communication and feedback, organizational culture and leadership, and training and development. These sub-themes explored the aspects that contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the appraisal process from the employees' perspective. The themes and sub-themes are outlined below:

Table 1: Identified themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Employees perceptions and attitudes regarding the quality of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET college	• Perceived value and relevance • Stages of performance appraisal • Fairness and objectivity • Suggestions for Improvement • Perceived lack of employee development • Lack of employee engagement • Lack of clarity in performance expectations
Factors influencing performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET college	• Criteria and measurement • Performance recognition and rewards • Employee Involvement in Goal Setting • Feedback frequency and timeliness • Recognition of non-monetary contributions
Characteristics of effective performance appraisal	• Communication and feedback • Organizational culture and leadership • Training and development • Goal Alignment and Clarity • Performance appraiser training and accountability

4.1.1 Participants demographics

This research study includes 19 participants, with a gender distribution of 11 males and 8 females. In terms of position, the participants occupied different roles, including Educational Specialists, Head of Department, and Lecturers.

Table 2: Description of participants

Participant Number	Gender	Position
1	Female	Educational specialist
2	Male	Educational Specialist
3	Female	Educational Specialist
4	Male	Educational Specialist
5	Female	Head of Department
6	Male	Lecturers
7	Male	Lecturers
8	Male	Lecturers
9	Male	Lecturers
10	Male	Lecturers
11	Female	Lecturers

12	Male	Lecturers
13	Male	Lecturers
14	Female	Lecturers
15	Male	Lecturers
16	Female	Lecturers
17	Male	Lecturers
18	Female	Lecturers
19	Female	Lecturers

4.2 EMPLOYEES PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS AT THE NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

This section presents the findings of the study based on the comments made by the participants as a reflection of their perceptions and attitudes concerning the quality of the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College.

4.2.1 Perceived value and relevance

The findings of this study unveiled a notable perception shared by the majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College regarding the perceived lack of value and relevance in the performance appraisal system. Employees expressed significant dissatisfaction with the process, highlighting concerns about the appraisal's quality and perceiving it as a hurried procedure. These findings indicate that employees view the performance appraisal system as ineffective and flawed, potentially impacting their engagement, motivation, and overall job satisfaction. It is important to acknowledge that individuals' perception of fairness is influenced by their personal experiences and endorsed opinions regarding equitable distribution of outcomes and treatment of others (Tyler *et al.*, 2019). The following statements by the interviewed employees exemplify this sentiment:

"Here, we're just filling in the papers. Nobody is coming to class to check whether I'm doing even the things that I'm recording there in their papers, it's like it's not properly done. It's like it's just an exercise that we do, but it's a futile exercise that I need to do. And I don't really see the use of it at all" [Participant 5]

"My view is that is not done in a correct way for now because what we normally do is just complete the forms without doing other things and then we the management send the forms to a proper place then where they and they record, everything done, it doesn't" [Participant 12]

"I would say we normally rush it when we are due to submit. To me, it's more like a paper exercise so that there's something to send to DHET. Other than that, people just enjoy the issue of okay, after filling in the forms, you'll get a pay progression 1% increase. To us, it's just about performance bonus of 1%" [Participant 19]

"I think it's poor. It's a poor we are not doing so well in that area and mean there's very little performance appraisal that happens and then the little that does happen is not done effectively" [Participant 14]

The perception of employees regarding the lack of value and relevance in the performance appraisal system is consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of employees' perceptions of fairness and transparency in the appraisal process (DeNisi and Pritchard, 2012:4). When employees perceive the appraisal process as lacking value, it can diminish their trust in the system and undermine their confidence in the organization's ability to fairly assess their performance. This can have negative consequences for their job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation (Roberts, Davenport, and Sweeney, 2018:43-52).

The perception of a rushed process also raises concerns about the thoroughness and accuracy of the appraisal. When employees perceive the process as rushed, it may signal a lack of attention to detail, inadequate feedback, and insufficient time for meaningful discussions about performance. Such perceptions can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the performance appraisal system, as employees may question the validity of the feedback and ratings provided (Boswell and Boudreau, 2014:178).

In contrast to the previous finding, this study also identified a group of employees at Nkangala TVET College who perceive value and relevance in the performance appraisal system. While the previous finding indicated a general dissatisfaction with the system among employees, this new finding suggests that there is a subgroup of employees who actually perceive value and relevance in the system. These employees may see benefits in the appraisal process, such as financial incentives or the opportunity to communicate concerns to management. This contrasting perception highlights the diversity of opinions and experiences among employees and underscores the complexity of organizational dynamics. These employees highlighted the financial and professional benefits associated with the appraisal process as a key

source of value. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of the appraisal system as a platform for expressing their concerns to management. These findings suggest that there is a subgroup of employees who perceive the performance appraisal system as a meaningful and beneficial process. For example, three employees made the following statement:

"I think it's fair enough because it helps the employees grow not just financially, but it also helps them grow in terms of the personal development and professional development as the lecturers" [Participant 21]

"The system that they are using, I think it's good because we have a recognition in terms of lecturer performance and that is done through a lecturer awards and we also have whereby the lectures are evaluated time and again using a system called IQMS" [Participant 6]

"I just want to say also they has been good things happening like in my performance appraisal. So, I have been asking for a laptop before we received it and put a projector and we've received it" [Participant 3]

The perception of value and relevance in the performance appraisal system aligns with research that emphasizes the significance of rewards and recognition in motivating employees (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades, 2012:571). Employees who perceive financial benefits, such as salary increases or bonuses, as tied to the appraisal process are more likely to view it as valuable. These tangible rewards serve as incentives for employees to actively engage in the appraisal process and strive for higher performance levels.

Furthermore, the perception of the appraisal system as a platform for airing concerns to management highlights the importance of communication and feedback channels within organizations (Dulebohn, Hoch, and Jones, 2017:81). When employees feel that their voices are heard and that the appraisal process provides an opportunity to address their concerns, it enhances their perception of the system's relevance. This aspect of the appraisal process can contribute to a sense of fairness, openness, and transparency, ultimately strengthening the employee-employer relationship.

4.2.2 Poor execution of performance appraisal

The findings of this study indicate that a majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive the stages of the performance appraisal process as ineffective and poorly executed. The employees expressed their dissatisfaction with the rushed nature of these stages, suggesting that the appraisal process lacks thoroughness and attention to detail. This is seen in the following statements by the employees interviewed:

"The performance planning stage of the performance appraisal process is a bit overlooked and rushed at some times" [Participant 4]

"It's poorly done. Usually because of the time constraint, the people are supposed to sit and moderate the performance appraisal process. They simply just sign on the dotted line without going through the document, engaging you as the subordinate. They just attach signature, which at the end really does not help you as the subordinate" [Participant 15]

"On paper, there is a planning stage, but we receive our papers to fill in and to hand in tomorrow. So, we do not have a planning stage. So, I can't really elaborate on that" [Participant 10]

The perception of the ineffectiveness of the performance appraisal stages is consistent with research highlighting the importance of a well-designed and comprehensive appraisal process (Schleicher *et al.*, 2019). When the stages of the appraisal process are rushed, it can result in inadequate time for meaningful discussions, feedback, and goal setting. This rushed approach may undermine the validity and reliability of the performance appraisal outcomes, as employees may question the accuracy and fairness of the evaluations (Boswell and Boudreau, 2014:1315).

On the other hand, findings of this study reveal that some employees at Nkangala TVET College are not aware of certain stages of the performance appraisal process, specifically the planning and moderation stages. However, on assessing the IQMS, particularly with regard to the steps that are involved during performance management it details in clause 3.1 that it involves several key steps (IQMS, 2013:13).These employees who expressed a lack of knowledge or understanding regarding these

stages, indicates that there may be a communication gap or a lack of transparency in the appraisal process. For example, two employees made the following statement:

"No, there is no planning stages there is a do stage" [Participant 8]

"Honestly, I don't have an idea. I really don't know. So, I cannot answer you on the moderation process of the whole performance appraisal" [Participant 11]

The lack of awareness about the planning and moderation stages of performance appraisal is a concern, as these stages play crucial roles in ensuring a fair and effective appraisal process. The planning stage involves setting performance goals, clarifying expectations, and establishing performance criteria. It provides a foundation for evaluating employee performance and aligning individual goals with organizational objectives. On the other hand, the moderation stage involves reviewing and calibrating performance ratings to ensure consistency and fairness across different appraisers and departments (Pichler, 2019).

4.2.3 Fairness and objectivity

The findings of this study indicate that a majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive a lack of fairness and objectivity in the performance appraisal processes. These employees attribute this perception to the nature of relationships within the college. The study suggests that the quality of relationships among employees, supervisors, and managers play a significant role in influencing the fairness and objectivity of the appraisal process. Clause 3.9 of the IQMS states that if any unfairness is experienced between an educator and the Development Support Group (DSG) should be resolved at that level. Where agreement cannot be reached the matter must be referred to the Staff Development Team (SDT) within a week. If there is still no resolution within 5 working days, either party may request a formal review by the grievance committee (IQMS, 2023:17). This is seen in the following statements by the employees interviewed:

"Yeah, the factors that may influence, for instance, it can be favouritism , for instance in terms of favouritism, you can score or give a person good marks even if that person doesn't deserve those good scores and then the other one is hatred"
[Participant 12]

"You find out that people will just group themselves as friends or as people working together and do paperwork, not that they are doing it the way it should be done so that is what is killing it now if management can do it the way. It should be done, whereby maybe you have your HOD or your SES, you have your ES and it's you, then you do it the way it should be done" [Participant 17]

"And the other problem might be the personnel problems whereby you'll find that the subordinates and the managers, they don't get along well. And also, some the problem is from the top, from the senior management, when they give information or instructions, the instructions are not clear" [Participant 19]

"So, we find ourselves in a situation where we're copying performance appraisals from each other and we don't see it as a method to truly upskill ourselves. We just see it as one of those administrative duties that has to be completed" [Participant 20]

The perception of subjectivity in the performance appraisal process aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of perceived fairness in employee reactions and outcomes (Rubin and Edwards, 2020). When employees perceive biases or favouritism in the appraisal process, it can lead to feelings of resentment, demotivation, and decreased job satisfaction. Furthermore, subjective evaluations can undermine the credibility and validity of the appraisal outcomes, reducing employee trust in the process.

The role of relationships within the college in contributing to less objectivity in the appraisal process highlights the significance of organizational culture and interpersonal dynamics. A positive and supportive work environment fosters trust, open communication, and fairness, which can positively influence the appraisal process (Nazir *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, when relationships are characterized by favouritism, conflicts of interest, or lack of transparency, employees may perceive the appraisal process as unfair and biased.

On the contrary, the findings of this study also revealed that some employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive the performance appraisal process as fair and objective. These employees expressed a positive view of the appraisal process, indicating that they believe it is conducted in a fair and unbiased manner. For example, two employees made the following statement:

"So I think if your senior can be involved in the performance appraisal process and that topic more, it will be fair because that is the person that knows who the best and can also assist you to set goals that you must reach for the next semester or for the next year, I think that is the appropriate person that must be more involved"
[Participant 3]

"I do feel like all appraisals that it is a subjective exercise and it should be an objective The I am I can assist means that you in your team identify the gaps and work together to improve and to uplift so that you have an effective group of people. But I think people are scared that they are going to be sort of victimized on this score" [Participant 8]

While the study does not provide specific details about the reasons behind this perception, there could be several factors contributing to this positive view. One possible explanation is that the college has implemented policies and practices that promote fairness and objectivity in the performance appraisal process. Research has shown that fairness and objectivity in the performance appraisal process can have positive effects on employee attitudes and outcomes (Brown *et al.*, 2019; Pichler, 2019; Govender and Bussin, 2020; Sułkowski *et al.*, 2020). When employees perceive the appraisal process as fair, they are more likely to accept appraisal outcomes, trust the organization, and experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Fairness and objectivity can also enhance motivation, performance, and commitment among employees.

4.2.4 Suggestions for Improvement

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College suggested improvements to the performance appraisal processes. Two specific improvements mentioned were the incorporation of face-to-face interviews and the digitalization of paperwork involved in the appraisal process. However, no participant suggested improvements according to clause 4.3 of the IQMS that states that the college improvement plan document is a blueprint of the actions and processes needed to produce improvement at the institution This is seen in the following statements by the employees interviewed:

"I think there should be one on one interviews with colleagues and supervisors to actually have a more feeling of expression and what can be used to actually assess

their performance instead of using it on a piece of paper that we duplicate each and every year" [Participant 1]

"It should be digital. It should be digital more than anything" [Participant 9]

The suggestion of incorporating face-to-face interviews reflects the importance of direct communication and interpersonal interaction in the appraisal process. Face-to-face interviews provide an opportunity for managers and employees to engage in meaningful discussions, exchange feedback, and clarify expectations. This personal interaction can enhance the quality and depth of the appraisal process(Sun *et al.*, 2019). It allows for a better understanding of employee performance and facilitates the identification of areas for improvement and development. According to Brown and colleagues (2019) many of the problems in performance appraisal stem from the appraisal system itself the objectives it is intended to serve, the administrative system in which it is embedded, and the forms and procedures that make up the system which often results in a need to constantly improve it.

The suggestion of digitalizing paperwork aligns with the trend of technology adoption in various organizational processes, including performance management. Digitalization can streamline the appraisal process, reduce administrative burden, and improve accessibility and record-keeping. By transitioning to digital platforms, Nkangala TVET College can facilitate the efficient flow of information, increase transparency, and enhance data accuracy and security (Srivastava and Kumar, 2021).

4.2.5 Perceived Lack of Employee Development

The findings of this study revealed that many employees perceive a lack of emphasis on employee development within the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College. Participants expressed concerns about the appraisal process primarily focusing on evaluating past performance rather than identifying opportunities for skill enhancement and career growth. According to the personal growth plan as indicated in clause 4.2 of the IQMS, it is anticipated that development should take place soon after the observation of the educator in practice and the evaluation on which consensus was reached (IQMS, 2023:18). This sentiment is reflected in the following statements:

"It feels like the appraisal process is all about looking back at what we've done, not about looking forward and helping us develop further." [Participant 7]

"I wish the appraisal process would place more emphasis on identifying my strengths and areas for improvement and then providing training or development opportunities based on that." [Participant 14]

Employee development is a crucial aspect of effective performance appraisal, and this perspective aligns with contemporary Human Resources (HR) practices. Performance appraisal traditionally centered on evaluating past performance, but modern organizations recognize the importance of integrating future development and training needs discussions into the process. According to Roberts and DeCotiis (2013:47), an appraisal process that solely focuses on past performance can limit its effectiveness. When employees perceive it as a backward-looking exercise, they might miss out on the opportunity to identify areas for skill enhancement and career advancement. This perception could result in disengagement, as employees may not see how the appraisal process contributes to their professional growth.

Incorporating discussions about future development and training needs within performance appraisals addresses this limitation. As suggested by Mehale, Govender and Mabaso (2021) these discussions can be forward-looking, enabling employees to set goals and development plans that align with organizational objectives. By doing so, organizations create a more dynamic and motivating appraisal process that helps employees see the connection between their personal growth and the organization's success. This approach to performance appraisal fosters a sense of partnership and continuous improvement. Employees become more invested in their own development, and organizations benefit from a more skilled and motivated workforce. It also supports the concept of the performance appraisal as a developmental tool, as outlined by Mehale, Govender and Mabaso (2021).

Incorporating discussions about future development and training needs can also facilitate better communication between employees and managers. It provides a platform for employees to express their career aspirations and seek guidance on how to achieve them (Lacerenza *et al.*, 2018). Managers, in turn, can provide valuable insights, resources, and opportunities to help employees reach their goals. Organizations should recognize that performance appraisal is not just about evaluating

past performance; it's also an opportunity for employee development and growth (Weiss and Hartle, 2023). By incorporating discussions about future development and training needs into the appraisal process, organizations can align individual growth with organizational goals, foster engagement, and enhance overall performance. This approach represents a shift towards a more holistic and forward-thinking approach to performance appraisal in today's dynamic workplace.

4.2.6 Lack of Employee Engagement

The study findings indicate that a significant number of employees perceive a lack of engagement in the performance appraisal process. They expressed feelings of disconnection from the appraisal process, highlighting a lack of involvement, participation, or ownership in the process. However, in practice according to clause 3.5 and 2.5 of the IQMS the educator should be involved throughout the performance assessment processes (IQMS, 2023:15). This is evident in the following statements:

"I don't feel engaged in the appraisal process. It's something I have to do, but I don't feel like I have a say in it." [Participant 11]

"Engagement should go beyond just filling out forms. I want to feel like I'm an active participant in my own performance evaluation." [Participant 18]

Employee engagement is a pivotal factor for the effectiveness of the appraisal process, contributing to improved performance and a positive organizational culture. Engaged employees are more likely to take ownership of their performance, set meaningful goals, and actively contribute to continuous improvement efforts. According to Cesário and Chambel (2017) employee engagement involves employees who are enthusiastic about their work, committed to their organization's goals, and willing to go the extra mile to contribute to its success. When employees are actively engaged in the appraisal process, it leads to several positive outcomes.

Firstly, encouraging self-assessment is essential. When employees participate in assessing their own performance, they gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This self-awareness empowers them to take ownership of their growth and development (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019:283). Secondly, goal setting becomes more meaningful when employees are actively engaged. Engaged employees are more likely to set ambitious but achievable goals that align with both

their personal aspirations and the organization's objectives (Carton, 2018). These goals become a source of motivation, driving improved performance.

Thirdly, regular feedback exchanges play a crucial role in employee engagement. When employees have open and ongoing communication with their managers or peers, they receive constructive feedback that helps them course-correct and make continuous improvements (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019). This dialogical approach fosters trust and collaboration, strengthening the employee-manager relationship.

Employee engagement is a critical factor in the effectiveness of the appraisal process. When employees are actively engaged, they take ownership of their performance, set meaningful goals, and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement. Organizations should adopt strategies that involve employees more meaningfully in the appraisal process, such as self-assessment, goal setting, and regular feedback exchanges, to foster engagement and drive performance improvements.

4.2.7 Lack of Clarity in Performance Expectations

The findings of this study also indicate that some employees perceive a lack of clarity in performance expectations. They expressed difficulties in understanding what is expected of them in terms of performance criteria and goals. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion and frustration during the appraisal process. For example, two employees made the following statement:

"I often feel like I'm working in the dark because I don't have a clear understanding of what's expected of me in terms of performance." [Participant 13]

"The appraisal process would be much better if there was more clarity about performance expectations. Sometimes, it feels like we're guessing." [Participant 22]

Clear and well-communicated performance expectations serve as the bedrock of an effective appraisal process. When employees possess a precise understanding of what is expected of them, they become better equipped to align their efforts with the overarching goals of the organization, thereby contributing more effectively to the achievement of these objectives (Pervaiz, Li and He, 2021). This alignment of expectations not only enhances employee performance but also fosters a culture of accountability within the workplace, ultimately resulting in a more transparent and constructive appraisal process (Govender and Bussin, 2020).

Effective communication of performance criteria and expectations is pivotal in addressing this concern. Organizations should accord a high priority to this aspect to ensure that employees not only grasp the essence of their job roles but also comprehend the specific metrics and standards by which their performance will be assessed. This clarity has a profound impact on the appraisal process, influencing it in several significant ways. Firstly, clear performance expectations ensure alignment with organizational goals. When employees are cognizant of the performance criteria connected to the organization's objectives, they are more inclined to channel their efforts toward the realization of these goals (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). This alignment is instrumental in propelling the overall success of the organization.

Secondly, well-communicated expectations foster motivation and engagement among employees. Such clarity generates a sense of purpose and motivation, as employees understand precisely what is expected of them and how their contributions matter to the organization (Ngobeni, Saurombe and Joseph, 2022). Thirdly, clearly defined expectations establish a foundation for accountability. They provide managers with a basis for providing constructive feedback based on specific criteria, enabling employees to gauge their progress and make improvements as necessary (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019:58).

Additionally, this clarity reduces ambiguity surrounding performance expectations, mitigating the potential for misunderstandings and conflicts within the workplace. By articulating expectations clearly, organizations create a more harmonious work environment, promoting cooperation and understanding among employees (Hyatt *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the transparent communication of expectations contributes to a perception of fairness and transparency in the appraisal process. When employees understand the criteria used for their evaluation, they are more likely to view the appraisal process as equitable, enhancing trust in the organization (Zwiech, 2021).

To ensure the clear communication of performance expectations, organizations should implement a range of strategies. These include well-structured job descriptions that outline roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations (Harvard Business Review, 2017:29). Regular feedback provided by managers helps reinforce these expectations and assists employees in making necessary adjustments (Mone *et al.*, 2018). Collaborative goal-setting processes enable employees to comprehend how

their individual goals contribute to the broader organizational objectives (Mone *et al.*, 2018). Lastly, the use of quantifiable performance metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) assists in measuring performance objectively (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019:145).

4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS AT THE NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

In this section, we shift our attention to the factors expressed by the employees at Nkangala TVET College that they believe have an impact on the performance appraisal process within the institution. The presentation of these findings is organized according to the subthemes outlined below.

4.3.1 Criteria and measurement

The finding from this study reveals that a majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive that the criteria and measurement of the performance appraisal process are not executed properly, resulting in a negative impact on the overall process. Employees expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and execution of the criteria and measurement throughout the appraisal process. This sentiment is reflected in the following statements provided by the interviewed employees:

"It's actually poor the way that it is handled here so yeah. It is not done according to what I think is expected from organizations" [Participant 10]

"I just score myself the way I want It's like right now as we are speaking, I must have reached the ceiling. I think I'm at 100, I'm P.L.1, so I'm at 112. I do not even remember my score. The way we do not take this thing so serious in this college" [Participant 5]

"I also think that it's not everybody understand what the criteria is. And that makes it difficult to score yourself. Because if they if they give you a specific criterion, and you don't understand it, you're going to give yourself a score by yourself" [Participant 9]

The perception of poorly executed criteria and measurement in the performance appraisal process aligns with current literature emphasizing the significance of valid and reliable measures for effective performance evaluation (Dijkstra and Van Dierendonck, 2019:392-410). When the criteria and measurement lack clarity, objectivity, or consistency, it can lead to perceptions of unfairness and subjectivity.

This perception can erode trust, diminish employee engagement, and compromise the effectiveness of the appraisal process. However, the purpose of IQMS is clearly outlined in clause 1.2 and states; the purpose of Performance Measurement (PM) is to evaluate individual teachers for salary progression, grade progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives.

Additionally, training and support should be provided to managers and supervisors to ensure they have the necessary skills to effectively evaluate performance using appropriate measurement techniques. This may involve providing guidelines, workshops, or training sessions on objective performance assessment, rating scales, and behavioural observation. For example, one employee made the following statement:

"Number one they did not actually train us on or give us a workshop on what it entails and how do they actually grade us" [Participant 1]

A previous study showed that, a regular calibration sessions or discussions among appraisers can help promote consistency in evaluating employee performance. These sessions allow appraisers to compare and align their assessments, ensuring that evaluations are fair and objective across different individuals and departments (Murphy, 2020).

4.3.2 Performance recognition and rewards

This study found that employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive that performance recognition and rewards influence the performance appraisal process. However, employees also expressed concerns that some staff members receive recognition and rewards even when their performance is not outstanding. This is seen in the following statements by the employees interviewed:

"They complete the form, they send it in and they get their pay, if they do get. And I mean not all people deserve that. Or some people deserve more because they do more and they work harder. I am not saying people don't work hard. Everybody works hard but some people really go the extra mile and there is no recognition for that" [Participant 2]

"One year, I didn't get my performance price money and when I wanted to inquire, I was told that God give me a reason. You must just accept you that you didn't get it"
[Participant 3]

The perception that performance recognition and rewards influence the appraisal process aligns with research on the motivational impact of rewards on employee performance (Milkovich and Newman, 2016:116). Employees often view performance appraisal outcomes as linked to tangible rewards, such as salary increases, bonuses, or other forms of recognition. The expectation of rewards can influence their perception of the fairness and objectivity of the appraisal process.

However, the concern raised by employees about some staff members receiving recognition and rewards despite not having outstanding performance highlights the importance of ensuring the fairness and meritocracy of the reward system. A study also found that rewards on non-performance was an aspect that harmed the effectiveness of performance appraisal (Caesar, 2018). Employees' perceptions of unfairness in the distribution of rewards can undermine their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall engagement (Cropanzano et al., 2017:468).

4.3.3 Employee Involvement in Goal Setting

Many employees at Nkangala TVET College expressed a desire for more involvement in the goal-setting process within the performance appraisal system. They felt that the current process of setting performance goals was top-down and did not consider their input or aspirations. Whereas, the IQMS under clause 2.2 states that the employees must develops a Personal Growth Plan (PGP) and finalizes it together with the Development Support Group (DSG) (IQMS, 2023). Meaning the process of setting performance goals should include the lecturers. The sentiments on how they are not involved are highlighted in the following statements:

"I wish we had more say in setting our performance goals. It often feels like these goals are imposed on us without considering our individual strengths and career aspirations." [Participant 6]

"Goal-setting should be a collaborative process. I believe employees would be more motivated if they had a say in defining their own objectives." [Participant 11]

Employee involvement in goal setting is aligned with the principles of participatory management and has the potential to significantly enhance employee motivation, commitment, performance, and job satisfaction. When employees actively participate in defining their own performance objectives, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their work. This sense of ownership leads to higher engagement, increased accountability, and improved overall job satisfaction. Therefore, organizations should strongly consider implementing a more participatory approach to goal setting within the performance appraisal process.

Participatory management, which involves employees in decision-making and goal-setting processes, is rooted in principles of empowerment and collaboration (Pervaiz, Li and He, 2021). When applied to the context of goal setting, this approach allows employees to contribute their insights and perspectives, creating a sense of inclusion and value within the organization. Research byPervaiz, Li and He (2021) supports the idea that involving employees in goal setting can lead to higher levels of commitment and motivation. Employees who have a voice in defining their own objectives are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over those goals. This ownership translates into a greater commitment to achieving them.

Furthermore, when employees actively participate in setting their performance objectives, the goals tend to be more realistic and achievable. This is because employees have a better understanding of their own capabilities and limitations. As a result, they are more likely to take on challenges that they believe are attainable, which can lead to improved performance (Yang and Li, 2021).

Employee involvement in goal setting also fosters a culture of continuous improvement. When employees are engaged in defining their objectives, they are more likely to monitor their progress, seek opportunities for skill development, and adapt to changing circumstances (Pervaiz, Li and He, 2021). This proactive approach to goal achievement benefits both the individual and the organization. Additionally, participatory goal setting enhances job satisfaction. Employees who have a say in their goals are more likely to find their work meaningful and fulfilling. This, in turn, leads to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates.

Employee involvement in goal setting is in line with the principles of participatory management and can have a substantial positive impact on employee motivation,

commitment, performance, and job satisfaction. Nkangala TVET college should consider adopting a more participatory approach to goal setting within the performance appraisal process to harness these benefits and create a more engaging and productive work environment.

4.3.4 Feedback Frequency and Timeliness

Employees at Nkangala TVET College also expressed concerns about the frequency and timeliness of feedback provided during the performance appraisal process. Many participants felt that feedback was often given infrequently and that there were delays in receiving performance evaluations. This is reflected in the following statements:

"I only hear about my performance once a year during the formal appraisal, and by then, it's too late to make any meaningful improvements." [Participant 13]

"Feedback should be more continuous. Waiting for a whole year for feedback is not helpful for personal growth." [Participant 7]

Timely and frequent feedback is a critical component of employee development and performance improvement. Organizations that prioritize regular feedback sessions throughout the year can provide employees with ongoing guidance and support, leading to more immediate course corrections and helping employees stay aligned with organizational goals (Sorensen *et al.*, 2018). This approach not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to a culture of continuous improvement within the organization.

Research and management literature emphasize the significance of timely and frequent feedback. According to Pervaiz, Li and He (2021) feedback is one of the key mechanisms through which individuals gain insights into their performance, adjust their efforts, and make necessary improvements. Waiting for an annual performance review to provide feedback can be detrimental as it delays the opportunity for employees to make real-time adjustments to their work habits and strategies. Timely and frequent feedback is essential for employee development and performance improvement. Organizations should consider implementing regular feedback sessions throughout the year to provide employees with ongoing guidance and support. This approach not only facilitates immediate course corrections but also helps employees

remain aligned with organizational goals, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

4.3.5 Recognition of Non-Monetary Contributions

While performance recognition and rewards were discussed in sub-theme 4.3.2, employees at Nkangala TVET College also emphasized the importance of recognizing non-monetary contributions to the organization. They felt that efforts beyond monetary rewards, such as verbal appreciation or certificates of achievement, were often overlooked. This sentiment is captured in the following statements:

> *"Not everything can be measured in terms of money. Sometimes, a simple 'thank you' or a certificate can go a long way in motivating employees." [Participant 14]*

> *"I've seen colleagues do great work that doesn't result in a bonus or pay raise. It would be nice if their efforts were acknowledged in other ways." [Participant 4]*

Recognizing non-monetary contributions is integral to fostering a positive work environment and acknowledging the holistic value that employees bring to an organization. While financial rewards undoubtedly hold significance, non-monetary recognition plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall engagement. Organizations should consider implementing a comprehensive recognition system that encompasses both monetary and non-monetary forms of appreciation to create a well-rounded and motivating work environment.

Non-monetary recognition, such as verbal praise, written appreciation, public acknowledgment, and opportunities for skill development, holds several advantages in the realm of employee motivation and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, recognizing non-monetary contributions is vital for cultivating a positive work environment and acknowledging the comprehensive value that employees bring to an organization. Non-monetary recognition enhances morale, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation, contributing to a more engaged and motivated workforce. Organizations that embrace both monetary and non-monetary forms of appreciation in their recognition systems are more likely to create a balanced and motivating workplace.

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The previous section presented the study findings on the factors influencing the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College. The current section identifies characteristics that comprise an effective performance appraisal at the Nkangala TVET College.

4.4.1 Communication and feedback

The findings of this study reveal that employees at Nkangala TVET College have a perception of inadequate communication and feedback throughout the performance appraisal process. Employees expressed their concerns regarding the absence of any communication from management, both before, during, and after the appraisal process. The IQMS on clause 17 states that the DSG must discuss their evaluation with the educator and must provide feedback. Differences (if any) need to be resolved (IQMS, 2013:25).This lack of communication is evident in the following statements provided by the interviewed employees:

"In my opinion, it's maybe too much a paper exercise because no one gives feedback on what I rate myself for" [Participant 2]

"There is no stage whereby you see your senior and your peer they sit together to moderate you and then they give you the feedback" [Participant 19]

"There is no feedback whatsoever from there is no interaction between the lecturer and or even other staff members and from their supervisors" [Participant 2]

"lack of communication and adherence to time, I don't think there are other major factors which can have maybe a negative impact in terms of this performance appraisal" [Participant 21]

The perception of a lack of communication and feedback aligns with research highlighting the importance of effective communication in the performance appraisal process (Dangol, 2021; Musheke and Phiri, 2021b). Communication plays a crucial role in providing clarity about performance expectations, explaining the appraisal process, and ensuring employees' understanding of the evaluation criteria and outcomes. Furthermore, feedback is essential for employees to learn, grow, and improve their performance. According to IQMS clause 3.8 feedback and

communication should focus on; performance and not personality; observations and not assumptions; objectivity and not subjectivity.

The absence of communication and feedback before, during, and after the appraisal process can have detrimental effects on employee perceptions, engagement, and motivation. When employees do not receive timely and meaningful communication, they may feel undervalued, disconnected, and uncertain about their performance and future development (Ouyang *et al.*, 2022). This lack of communication can also hinder employees' ability to address any concerns or seek clarification on performance expectations.

4.4.2 Organizational culture and leadership

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive the performance appraisal process to lack organizational culture and leadership elements. The employees expressed their concerns regarding the absence of inadequacy of these crucial aspects within the appraisal process. Previous research supports the notion that factors such as organizational culture and leadership significantly influence employees' attitudes towards performance appraisal, irrespective of their educational or professional background (Mutonyi *et al.*, 2022). This perception is reflected in the following statements provided by the interviewed employees:

"There's none. There's nothing that I can say XXX is doing except to give us the form that we must complete and sign and submit so that at least they are also safe in terms of saying, we have done it. But I think they are only doing it for the sake of compliance and paperwork. But in reality, we will be knowing that it won't be of any assistance" [Participant 17]

"I have never had a conversation with a superior person about my performance appraisal, so I think the interaction there is short" [Participant 2]

"If the subordinates and the managers are not working as teams, in terms of leadership skills, you have a manager who is acting like superior but is not part of the team then it means the subordinates are alone" [Participant 6]

"So, I think there should be more interaction and even with management at this is all most of the subordinate so we can in the end we can all improve our performance in the long run" [Participant 3]

The perception that the performance appraisal process lacks organizational culture and leadership aligns with research emphasizing the role of organizational culture and leadership in shaping and facilitating effective performance management practices (Hennessey, 2015:593). Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide behaviour within an organization, while leadership encompasses the actions and behaviours of managers and supervisors in influencing employee performance and engagement.

When the performance appraisal process lacks alignment with the organizational culture and leadership, it can result in inconsistencies, confusion, and reduced employee trust and commitment. Organizational culture and leadership play a vital role in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviours, including their perceptions of fairness, motivation, and commitment to the organization (Hennessey, 2015:571). Previous research is consistent with the findings of this study as it also highlights that rater-ratee relationship quality cannot be inseparable from performance appraisal (Pichler 2012:710). On the other hand, (Radebe 2015:182) argues that performance appraisal system is not effectively implemented as per the analysis of the managers due to lack of trust, support and openness between appraisers and those being appraised.

4.4.3 Training and development

According to the findings of this study, it was evident that employees at Nkangala TVET College perceive the performance appraisal process as lacking in training and development opportunities. The employees expressed their concerns regarding the absence of any training and development initiatives, even after expressing their training needs during the appraisal process. However, the review of IQMS particularly with regard to training, it was found that clause 3.1 indicates that educators, principals and management of colleges will receive training immediately after advocacy (IQMS, 2023:12).The lack of training sentiments are reflected in the following statements provided by the interviewed employees:

"So, if they can provide support in terms of everyone improving their skills so that everyone at the end can feel that the evaluation was good" [Participant 6]

"I think the training of staff to uplift them with their skills and training methods, maybe workshops so that we can perform better in the classroom" [Participant 2]

The perception that the performance appraisal process lacks training and development aligns with research emphasizing the importance of integrating performance management with employee development (Noe, 2017:5). Performance appraisal should not only focus on evaluating past performance but also on identifying employee strengths, areas for improvement, and providing opportunities for growth and skill enhancement.

When employees do not receive the necessary training and development support, it can lead to feelings of stagnation, decreased motivation, and reduced job satisfaction. Training and development opportunities contribute to employee engagement, continuous learning, and improved performance (Noe, 2017). On the under hand the need to train both leaders and employees on the entire process of the performance appraisal is important. For example, one employee made the following statement:

"Some form of training where they can know exactly how this process should be run so that at the end can give us the results that we are looking for" [Participant 15]

"So, I think the real if they if they train the people, they understand how it's really supposed to be done with your support group. And they can give you that support, I think it will, will really motivate you to do better" [Participant 9]

The finding above aligns with existing literature on the topic. Dipboye and Dipboye, (2018a) conducted a study that supports the idea that training should have three primary objectives. Firstly, training should familiarize judges with the specific measure or criteria they will be utilizing. This familiarity enables judges to comprehend and work effectively with the measure. Secondly, training must focus on ensuring that judges have a clear understanding of the sequence of operations they are required to perform. This understanding helps judges execute their tasks in a structured and efficient manner.

4.4.4 Goal Alignment and Clarity

Employees at Nkangala TVET College expressed concerns about the alignment and clarity of performance goals within the appraisal process. Many participants felt that their performance goals were not aligned with the broader organizational objectives, leading to confusion about their role in achieving the college's mission. This is evident in the following statements:

"I often wonder how my individual goals contribute to the college's overall mission. There's a lack of alignment between what I'm expected to achieve and what the institution is trying to accomplish." [Participant 8]

"Goal-setting should be more transparent. I want to see a direct link between what I'm working on and how it benefits the college and its students." [Participant 12]

Goal alignment and clarity are fundamental aspects of an effective performance appraisal process. When employees have a precise understanding of how their individual goals contribute to an organization's strategic objectives, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and committed to achieving those goals. These elements form the cornerstone of a performance management system that drives individual and organizational success.

One crucial point to consider is the impact of goal alignment on employee motivation and engagement. When employees can clearly see the connection between their goals and the broader mission of the organization, they gain a sense of purpose and meaning in their work (Raya, 2019). This sense of purpose fuels motivation and fosters a deep level of engagement. Employees understand that their efforts are not isolated but rather integral to the organization's success.

Furthermore, goal alignment fosters a sense of commitment among employees. Clearly communicated and aligned goals create a shared understanding of what needs to be achieved, fostering a sense of responsibility and dedication to reaching those objectives (Pervaiz, Li and He, 2021). This commitment transcends individual tasks and contributes to a collective effort to drive the organization forward.

In addition to motivation and commitment, goal alignment enables performance improvement. Well-defined goals serve as benchmarks for performance evaluation, allowing employees to track their progress and make necessary adjustments (Pervaiz,

Li and He, 2021). This iterative process of goal setting, tracking, and refining leads to continuous improvement in individual and organizational performance.

Aligning individual goals with the broader organizational strategy is essential (Gede and Huluka, 2023). This alignment ensures that every employee's efforts contribute to the achievement of the company's mission. It creates a cohesive and coordinated approach to pursuing organizational objectives. Transparent communication of goals is pivotal in achieving these benefits. When employees are aware of what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated, it reduces ambiguity and fosters a sense of fairness (Pervaiz, Li and He, 2021). Transparent communication builds trust within the organization and reinforces the idea that success is achievable through collective effort.

4.4.5 Performance Appraiser Training and Accountability

Employees raised concerns about the training and accountability of those responsible for conducting the performance appraisals. Many participants felt that the appraisers lacked the necessary training and skills to conduct fair and effective evaluations. This is reflected in the following statements:

"I don't think my manager is adequately trained to evaluate my performance objectively. It often feels like a subjective judgment rather than an informed assessment." [Participant 3]

"There should be consequences for appraisers who consistently provide inadequate feedback or show bias in their evaluations. Without accountability, the process loses its credibility." [Participant 9]

Ensuring that performance appraisers receive proper training and are held accountable for their assessments is crucial for the credibility and fairness of the process (DeNisi and Murphy, 2017b). Appraisers play a pivotal role in evaluating employees' performance and providing feedback that can influence career development and organizational decisions (Govender and Bussin, 2020). Here, the significance of training and accountability for performance appraisers will be discussed, supported by relevant references.

Firstly, proper training of appraisers is essential to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to conduct objective and constructive assessments. Appraisers

need to understand the evaluation criteria, performance standards, and the organization's expectations. They should also be proficient in delivering feedback in a manner that is clear, respectful, and helpful for employees' growth (Vuong and Nguyen, 2022). Training can encompass various aspects, including the use of assessment tools, communication skills, and the ability to recognize and address bias or subjectivity in evaluations.

Appraisers also need training on the legal and ethical aspects of performance appraisal, such as avoiding discriminatory practices and ensuring that evaluations are fair and unbiased (Brown *et al.*, 2019). This training ensures that appraisers adhere to best practices and organizational policies, contributing to the overall credibility of the appraisal process.

Furthermore, accountability measures are essential to maintain consistency and fairness across appraisals. Accountability means that appraisers are responsible for the assessments they make and that their evaluations are subject to review and scrutiny. This accountability can be achieved through various means, including calibration sessions where appraisers discuss and align their assessments to reduce inter-rater variability (Dipboye and Dipboye, 2018a). It can also involve regular audits or checks on the quality of appraisals to identify and address any discrepancies or biases.

Accountability not only ensures fairness but also motivates appraisers to take their roles seriously. When appraisers know that their assessments will be reviewed and that they may be held responsible for any inconsistencies or biases, they are more likely to approach the process with diligence and objectivity (Govender and Bussin, 2020). Proper training and accountability for performance appraisers are vital components of a credible and fair appraisal process. Training equips appraisers with the necessary skills and knowledge, while accountability measures help maintain consistency and fairness in evaluations. By investing in the development of appraisers and holding them accountable for their assessments, organizations can enhance the overall effectiveness and credibility of their performance appraisal systems.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the majority of employees at Nkangala TVET College hold a negative perception and attitude towards the

performance appraisal system. Their lack of faith in the value and relevance of the system raises concerns about its effectiveness in promoting employee growth and organizational success. One significant finding of this study is that some employees do recognize the value and relevance of the performance appraisal system, particularly in terms of the financial and professional benefits it offers. However, this positive perception is overshadowed by the prevailing negative sentiment among the majority of employees.

The ineffectiveness of the performance appraisal stages emerged as a recurring theme in this study. Employees expressed dissatisfaction with the rushed and poorly executed nature of these stages. Such shortcomings not only undermine the fairness and objectivity of the appraisal process but also contribute to the overall negative perception of the system. Furthermore, the study highlighted the influence of relationships within the college as a key factor contributing to the perceived unfairness and lack of objectivity. This suggests that addressing the nature of relationships and fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment could positively impact the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system.

To improve the system, employees emphasized the need for face-to-face interviews and the digitalization of paperwork involved in the process. These recommendations reflect the desire for more personalized and streamlined procedures that can enhance communication and efficiency during performance evaluations. Another crucial aspect that emerged from this study is the poor criteria and measurement employed throughout the performance appraisal process. Employees reported instances where staff members received recognition and rewards despite their performance not being outstanding. Such inconsistencies further erode employees' trust in the system and its ability to accurately evaluate their contributions.

In addition, employees expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of communication from management before, during, and after the appraisal process. This lack of communication not only hampers transparency but also diminishes the sense of organizational culture and leadership, ultimately impacting employee motivation and engagement. Lastly, employees highlighted the absence of training and development opportunities, even when they indicated their training needs during the performance appraisal process. This deficiency in addressing employees' professional growth

needs reflects a missed opportunity for the performance appraisal system to contribute positively to their development.

Finally, this study revealed that the performance appraisal system at Nkangala TVET College faces significant challenges. The negative perception and attitude among employees, combined with the perceived ineffectiveness of the appraisal stages, lack of fairness, poor criteria and measurement, inadequate communication, and the absence of training and development opportunities, all contribute to an overall sense of discontentment. Addressing these issues through the implementation of face-to-face interviews, digitalization of paperwork, improved criteria and measurement, enhanced communication, and a stronger focus on employee development can lead to a more effective and positively perceived performance appraisal system at the college. Such improvements have the potential to foster a culture of growth, fairness, and accountability, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organization as a whole.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented findings and discussions on performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College. The current chapter presents the summary of the major findings on the effectiveness and efficiency of the appraisal process from the employees' perspective at Nkangala TVET College. In addition, the chapter presents the conclusion, recommendations for implementation, the study contribution and suggestions for further research. In this chapter, it is revealed that employees expressed dissatisfaction with the current the performance appraisal processes, perceiving it as hurried and ineffective. This chapter highlights the recommendations for implementation where possible, contribution of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are based on the research objectives presented below:

- To explore the employees' perception regarding the quality of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To critically assess the factors that influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To identify the characteristics that comprise effective performance appraisal from employees' perspective at the Nkangala TVET College.

5.2.1 Employees perceptions and attitudes regarding the quality of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College

Employees' perceptions toward the quality of the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College revealed several noteworthy findings. The majority of employees expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of value and relevance in the performance appraisal system, deeming it hurried and ineffective. This perception potentially has adverse effects on their engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction (Boswell and Boudreau, 2014:178). Nevertheless, a subset of employees found value in the appraisal process, especially regarding its financial benefits and as a platform to voice concerns to management. Moreover, many employees regarded

the stages of the performance appraisal process as ineffectively executed, attributing this to their rushed nature, which can compromise the thoroughness and accuracy of the appraisal, impacting the credibility of its outcomes. A notable communication gap was also evident, with some employees being unaware of specific stages. The majority of employees perceived a lack of fairness and objectivity in the appraisal process, often linked to the quality of relationships within the college. This aligns with research emphasizing the significance of procedural fairness in influencing employee reactions and outcomes (Boswell and Boudreau, 2014:1315).

Conversely, a subgroup of employees viewed the appraisal process as fair and objective, possibly due to organizational policies that promote fairness and objectivity. Most employees offered suggestions for process improvement, advocating for the incorporation of face-to-face interviews and digitalization of paperwork, highlighting the role of direct communication and technology in enhancing efficiency. Furthermore, many employees felt that the appraisal process predominantly focused on evaluating past performance, neglecting opportunities for skill enhancement and career growth, which aligns with contemporary HR practices emphasizing the importance of integrating development and training discussions.

A substantial number of employees perceived a lack of engagement in the performance appraisal process, leading to feelings of disconnection, emphasizing the importance of employee engagement in driving motivation and positive organizational culture. Lastly, some employees expressed difficulty in understanding performance expectations, which could lead to confusion and frustration. Clear and well-communicated performance expectations are fundamental for effective performance appraisal and can enhance employee alignment with organizational goals, motivation, and accountability. Strategies for achieving clarity include structured job descriptions, regular feedback, collaborative goal setting, and the use of quantifiable performance metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

5.2.2 Factors influencing performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College

In assessing the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College, several key findings emerge. Firstly, the majority of employees expressed dissatisfaction with the criteria and measurement aspects of the process, underscoring the need for

improvements in execution to ensure valid and reliable performance evaluation. Enhancing clarity, objectivity, and consistency in these criteria and measurements is deemed essential, with recommendations for providing training and support to managers and supervisors, including calibration sessions, to enhance the quality of evaluation. Secondly, performance recognition and rewards are seen as significant influencers of the appraisal process (Anjulo, 2017). However, there are concerns about the fairness and meritocracy of this system, as some employees receive recognition and rewards without demonstrating outstanding performance. Ensuring a direct alignment between performance outcomes and tangible rewards is crucial to prevent demotivation and dissatisfaction among the workforce.

Furthermore, employees expressed a strong desire for more involvement in the goal-setting process, which is currently characterized by a top-down approach. It is suggested that involving employees in defining their own performance objectives can significantly boost motivation, commitment, performance, and job satisfaction (Pichler, 2019). Encouraging active participation in defining objectives through open communication, regular reviews, and guidance is recommended (Musheke and Phiri, 2021b). Additionally, feedback frequency and timeliness during the appraisal process were identified as areas of concern. Employees felt that feedback was infrequent and delayed, emphasizing the importance of timely and frequent feedback in facilitating employee development and performance improvement. Implementing regular feedback sessions throughout the year is encouraged to guide employees and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Lastly, recognizing non-monetary contributions emerged as a critical factor in enhancing morale, job satisfaction, and overall engagement. Employees place value on non-monetary forms of recognition such as verbal appreciation and certificates of achievement (Srivastava and Kumar, 2021). Establishing a comprehensive recognition system that encompasses both monetary and non-monetary methods is suggested, including structured programs, customization to individual preferences, regular feedback, peer recognition, and development opportunities to create a motivating and balanced work environment.

5.2.3 Characteristics of effective performance appraisal

Firstly, there is a pronounced issue of inadequate communication and feedback during the performance appraisal process. Employees voiced concerns about the absence of communication from management, both before, during, and after the appraisal process. This lack of communication is incongruent with the importance of effective communication in performance appraisal, which should provide clarity on performance expectations, the appraisal process, and evaluation criteria. Feedback is equally vital for employee growth, and its absence can lead to feelings of undervaluation and disconnection (Dipboye and Dipboye, 2018a). Ensuring timely and meaningful communication and feedback is essential for employee engagement and motivation.

Secondly, the perceived absence of organizational culture and leadership elements within the performance appraisal process was highlighted. Employees expressed concerns about the insufficiency of these critical aspects in the appraisal process. This finding aligns with the idea that organizational culture and leadership significantly influence employees' perceptions of performance appraisal. When the appraisal process lacks alignment with the organization's culture and leadership, it can result in inconsistencies, confusion, and reduced employee trust and commitment (Chapman, 2005:176). Organizational culture and leadership play a vital role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviours, including their perceptions of fairness, motivation, and commitment (Mutonyi *et al.*, 2022).

Thirdly, employees expressed that the performance appraisal process lacks training and development opportunities. This finding resonates with research emphasizing the importance of integrating performance management with employee development. Employees' performance should not solely be evaluated on past performance but should also focus on identifying strengths, areas for improvement, and offering opportunities for growth and skill enhancement. Without necessary training and development support, employees may feel stagnant, leading to decreased motivation and job satisfaction (Pichler, 2019). Moreover, concerns were raised about the alignment and clarity of performance goals within the appraisal process. Many employees felt that their goals were not aligned with the broader organizational objectives, causing confusion about their role in achieving the college's mission. Goal alignment and clarity are fundamental for motivating employees and fostering

commitment (Dipboye and Dipboye, 2018a). When employees can clearly see the connection between their goals and the organization's mission, they gain a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, which fuels motivation and fosters a deep level of engagement.

Lastly, performance appraiser training and accountability were recognized as areas of concern. Employees felt that appraisers often lacked the necessary training and skills to conduct fair and effective evaluations. Ensuring proper training and accountability for appraisers is crucial for the credibility and fairness of the process. Training equips appraisers with the required skills and knowledge, while accountability measures help maintain consistency and fairness in evaluations (Noe, 2017:5). By investing in appraiser development and holding them accountable for their assessments, organizations can enhance the overall effectiveness and credibility of their performance appraisal systems.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In examining employees' perceptions and attitudes towards the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College, a complex picture emerges, reflecting a range of opinions and areas for improvement. The majority of employees expressed dissatisfaction with the current system, perceiving it as hurried and ineffective, which can potentially erode their engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction. However, a subset of employees found some value in the appraisal process, particularly in its financial benefits and as a channel for voicing concerns to management. Several challenges in the execution of the performance appraisal process were identified. These challenges included rushed stages of the process, communication gaps, and concerns about fairness and objectivity, often tied to the quality of interpersonal relationships within the college. The need for process improvement was a recurring theme, with employees advocating for face-to-face interviews and the digitalization of paperwork, emphasizing the role of direct communication and technology in enhancing efficiency.

The importance of alignment between performance goals and the broader organizational objectives emerged as a crucial element. Many employees felt that their goals were not aligned, which can lead to confusion and a lack of motivation. Clear and well-communicated performance expectations were identified as fundamental for

effective performance appraisal, which can enhance employee alignment with organizational goals, motivation, and accountability. Furthermore, it was evident that training and development opportunities were lacking in the current appraisal process, which can lead to feelings of stagnation and decreased motivation. Integrating performance management with employee development is recognized as crucial in modern HR practices. In the context of the broader organizational culture, leadership, and communication, it is apparent that these aspects significantly influence employee attitudes and perceptions of the performance appraisal process. Inconsistencies in alignment between the appraisal process and the organizational culture and leadership can lead to confusion and reduced trust and commitment among employees. Therefore, maintaining this alignment is vital for fostering a positive and effective performance appraisal process.

Lastly, performance appraiser training and accountability were identified as critical components in ensuring the credibility and fairness of the process. Proper training equips appraisers with the skills and knowledge required for objective and constructive evaluations. Accountability measures help maintain consistency and fairness, motivating appraisers to approach the process with diligence and objectivity.

In conclusion, the findings regarding the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College highlight both challenges and opportunities for improvement. Addressing the identified issues related to communication, goal alignment, training and development, organizational culture, and leadership, as well as appraiser training and accountability, can contribute to a more effective, fair, and engaging performance appraisal system. By taking these findings into account and implementing relevant changes, the college has the potential to enhance employee satisfaction, motivation, and alignment with organizational goals, ultimately contributing to a more positive and productive work environment.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the comprehensive findings regarding the performance appraisal process at Nkangala TVET College and the factors influencing it, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness and overall quality of the process:

5.4.1 Improve Communication and Feedback:

- Implement a robust communication plan that ensures timely and meaningful communication throughout the appraisal process, including clear communication during the different stages to all employees.

- Foster a culture of open and transparent communication, where employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns and expectations with their appraisers and management. To foster open communication, top management should lead by example, creating formal and informal channels like team meetings and suggestion boxes. Encouraging two-way communication ensures feedback is welcomed. Training in communication skills is crucial, along with setting clear expectations and celebrating successes. A culture of respect and regular review of communication practices are essential, with leaders modelling open communication.

- Emphasize the importance of regular feedback, both constructive and positive, to facilitate employee development and growth.

5.4.2 Enhance Goal Alignment and Clarity:

- Align individual performance goals with the broader organizational objectives, ensuring that employees understand how their contributions connect to the college's mission. Aligning individuals involves linking their performance goals with the broader objectives of the organization, in this case, the college. This alignment ensures that employees understand how their individual contributions contribute to the college's mission and overall success. By clearly communicating organizational objectives and how individual goals support them, employees can see the relevance and impact of their work. This alignment helps motivate employees, creates a sense of purpose, and ensures that everyone is working towards the same overarching goals.

- Develop structured job descriptions and incorporate quantifiable performance metrics and KPIs to provide clarity on performance expectations.

- Encourage collaborative goal-setting between managers and employees to ensure a sense of ownership and alignment. To enhance goal-setting processes, organizations should encourage collaborative goal-setting between managers and employees. By involving employees in setting their own performance objectives, managers can ensure that goals are aligned with both individual aspirations and organizational objectives. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among employees, leading to increased motivation and engagement. Additionally, collaborative goal-setting helps employees understand how their contributions connect to the broader mission of the organization, thereby strengthening alignment between individual and organizational goals.

5.4.3 Invest in Training and Development:

- Develop and implement a training and development program for employees to enhance their skills and competencies, aligning with their identified strengths and areas for improvement from the appraisal process.

- Provide training and support for managers and appraisers to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge for conducting objective and constructive evaluations.

- Offer regular opportunities for learning and growth within the organization, emphasizing the importance of integrating development and training discussions into the performance appraisal process.

To ensure the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process, it is essential to provide training and support for managers and appraisers. This includes ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct objective and constructive evaluations. Additionally, developing and implementing a training and development program for employees is crucial. This program should focus on enhancing employees' skills and competencies, aligning with their identified strengths and areas for improvement from the appraisal process. This not only benefits individual employees but also contributes to overall organizational performance. Furthermore, offering regular opportunities for learning and growth is important. Integrating

development and training discussions into the performance appraisal process fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the organization. This helps align individual development goals with organizational objectives, ultimately leading to improved performance and organizational success.

5.4.4 Revise Recognition and Rewards:

- Establish a reward system that is closely aligned with individual performance outcomes to ensure fairness and meritocracy.

- Consider a well-structured recognition system that encompasses both monetary and non-monetary forms of appreciation, tailored to individual preferences.

- Encourage peer recognition and development opportunities to create a motivating and balanced work environment.

5.4.5 Cultivate Organizational Culture and Leadership:

- Promote and nurture an organizational culture that values fairness, transparency, and collaboration in the performance appraisal process.

- Ensure that leadership behaviours align with the desired organizational culture, emphasizing the importance of effective leadership in shaping and facilitating the performance appraisal process.

5.4.6 Address Appraiser Training and Accountability:

- Prioritize the training of appraisers to equip them with the skills and knowledge required for conducting objective and constructive evaluations.

- Implement accountability measures, such as calibration sessions and regular audits, to maintain consistency and fairness across appraisals.

- Encourage appraisers to conduct evaluations with diligence and objectivity, knowing that their assessments will be reviewed.

5.4.7 Promote Employee Engagement:

- Develop strategies to enhance employee engagement throughout the performance appraisal process, ensuring that employees feel connected

to the process and valued as integral contributors to the college's success.

- Consider involving employees more actively in defining their performance objectives and providing them with a sense of ownership and responsibility.

By implementing these recommendations, Nkangala TVET College can work toward creating a more effective, fair, and engaging performance appraisal system that aligns with organizational goals, motivates employees, and fosters a positive and productive work environment. This holistic approach to improvement can lead to enhanced employee satisfaction, motivation, and alignment with the college's mission.

5.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study on "Employees' Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding the Quality of Performance Appraisal Process at Nkangala TVET College" contributes significantly to the existing literature on performance appraisal processes in multiple ways. First and foremost, it provides a comprehensive understanding of employee perspectives, capturing a wide range of sentiments from dissatisfaction to constructive feedback, thereby enhancing the existing literature by incorporating the voices of those directly affected by the appraisal process. Moreover, this study addresses the fundamental issues of relevance and effectiveness, emphasizing the importance of an appraisal process that genuinely adds value and is meaningful, thereby enriching the literature's understanding of the impact of perceived relevance on employee outcomes.

Furthermore, the research delves into procedural concerns, identifying the rushed nature of appraisal stages and communication gaps, which are crucial components for successful performance appraisals. This emphasis on procedural execution as a key factor in the appraisal process enhances the literature's insight into best practices for organizations. This study also shines a spotlight on the vital aspects of fairness and objectivity, with a focus on their association with relationships within the organization, providing context-specific insights that enrich the broader research on the influence of fairness on employee reactions.

The study underscores the significance of aligning performance appraisal with modern HR practices, such as focusing on development opportunities. By doing so, it

contributes to the literature by aligning performance appraisals with broader HR trends. In addition, the research recognizes the importance of employee involvement in goal-setting, supporting the literature on goal setting and motivation. It also reinforces the significance of regular feedback, building upon established research regarding the role of timely and frequent feedback in employee development and performance.

Furthermore, this study highlights the often-underestimated value of recognizing non-monetary contributions and provides valuable insights into incorporating non-monetary methods into recognition systems, which is an aspect sometimes overlooked in the existing literature. Additionally, by addressing the absence of organizational culture and leadership elements within the appraisal process, the research offers context-specific insights, augmenting the understanding of the impact of these elements on employee perceptions. Finally, the focus on appraiser training and accountability adds to the literature by emphasizing the need for competent appraisers to conduct fair evaluations and reinforcing the importance of appraiser training and accountability in the effectiveness of appraisal processes.

In summary, this study adds to the literature on performance appraisal processes by taking a nuanced approach to employee perceptions and attitudes. It identifies various factors and areas for improvement in the appraisal process, aligns with and extends existing research on relevance, fairness, communication, and employee development, and adds unique context-specific insights, making it a valuable addition to the literature on this critical aspect of organizational management.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Numerous promising research directions emerge from the findings at Nkangala TVET College that can significantly enhance our comprehension of performance appraisal processes and their implications for employee perceptions and engagement. The proposed studies encompass a broad spectrum of inquiries, spanning from longitudinal analyses to cross-cultural investigations and extending to the integration of technology and external stakeholder involvement. By embarking on these research endeavours, scholars and practitioners can unravel the dynamics of performance appraisal within educational institutions while fostering a deeper appreciation of the diverse factors and strategies that influence employee attitudes and, subsequently,

organizational success. These future studies hold the potential to inform meaningful changes in the way performance appraisal systems are designed and executed, thereby nurturing a more engaged, motivated, and satisfied workforce, ultimately advancing both scholarly knowledge and practical organizational development.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS AT THE NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

GENERAL RULES

1. This interview is based on research about employees' perceptions of performance appraisal system at the Nkangala TVET College.

2. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your extensive experience about performance appraisal system at the Nkangala TVET College.

3. You are kindly requested to answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible.

4. The duration of the interview will be approximately 45 minutes.

5. Participation is anonymous: You are not requested to disclose your identity. Your privacy will be respected.

6. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give.

7. The information collected from you will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only.

8. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. Hence, your participation is regarded as voluntarily.

9. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and the study will not incur undue costs to you.

10. The survey data will be stored in a locked cupboard and the data stored in a computer will be protected by the use of a password.

11. The survey data will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value (after five years).

12. A copy of the dissertation will be available in the library at the Muckleneuk Ridge Campus of the University of South Africa (Unisa), Pretoria.

A. Employee perception of the quality of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College

What is your generic view about the quality of performance appraisal at the Nkangala TVET College?

If you were to rate the quality of performance appraisal processes at the Nkangala TVET College, how would you rate it on a scale of 1 until 5 ranging from poor, fair, average, good, excellent? Please substantiate your answer.

In your opinion, what is the Nkangala TVET College currently doing to enhance the quality of performance appraisal process?

What qualitative aspects do you think are missing from the performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College?

B. Factors that influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal at the Nkangala TVET College

In your opinion, what are the specific factors do you think have a potential to influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal?

What do you suggest the Nkangala TVET College should do to address factors that have negative influence on the effectiveness of performance appraisal process?

In your view, do you think there are factors that hamper effective performance appraisal processes between managers and their subordinates?

How do you think managers need to handle performance appraisal processes when evaluating the performance of their subordinates?

C. Characteristics that comprise effective performance appraisal at the Nkangala TVET College

Do you think there are areas of performance appraisal processes where there are major challenges? Please elaborate your answer.

What is your view about the performance planning of the performance appraisal process?

What is your view about the moderation of the performance appraisal process?

In your opinion, what would constitute a fair and bias free performance appraisal process?

In your view, what do you think should be done to improve performance appraisal processes at the Nkangala TVET College?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

Title: Employees' perceptions of performance appraisal system in the TVET colleges: A case study of Nkangala TVET college.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi, student number: 6255XXXX and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr. Paulus Hlongwane, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration and Management towards a postgraduate degree, Masters of Commerce in Business Management at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Employees' perceptions of performance appraisal system in the TVET colleges: A case study of Nkangala TVET college."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to:

- To explore the employees' perception regarding the quality of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To critically assess the factors that influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal process at the Nkangala TVET College.

- To identify the characteristics that comprise effective performance appraisal from employees' perspective at the Nkangala TVET College.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The participants' contact details were obtained from the gatekeeper and you were chosen because you are closely living and working in the Nkangala TVET College and 20 participants will participate.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio taping and semi-structured interviews and the interview will last for maximum of 45 minutes.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation.   If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The potential benefits will be good evaluation of performance appraisal system and problem of performance will be solved.

ARE THEIR ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

No potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant expected, but if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs, researcher supervisor or UNISA ethics committee can be contacted.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorder anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research OR your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings*.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the

Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. *A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet, for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Information will be permanently deleted and shredded.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

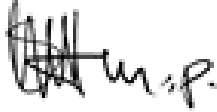No payments will be made, as participation is voluntary.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi on 079 9700 603/013 243 2148 or tmabore@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for 5 years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 079 9700 603/013 243 2148 or tmabore@gmail.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Paulus Hlongwane, 012 429 8499, hlongp@unisa.ac.za. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact the Research Ethics Review Committee chairperson of the College of Economic and Management Science, Unisa at 011 471 2130 or SocEthics@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour at the University's Toll-Free Hotline 0800 86 96 93.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you

Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi

APPENDIX C: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA HRM ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 16 January 2023

NHREC Registration #: (if applicable)
ERC Reference #: 2022_HRM_014
Name: Ms Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi
Student #: 62554727

Dear Ms Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi

Decision: Approved

Researcher(s): Name: Ms Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi
E-mail address, telephone # 62554727@mylife.unisa.ac.za &
tmabore@gmail.com,
079 9700 603

Supervisor(s): Name: Mr Paulus Hlongwane
E-mail address, telephone # hlongp@unisa.ac.za, 012 429 8499

Working title of research:

Employees' perception of performance appraisal system in the TVET colleges: A case study of Nkangala TVET college

Qualification: MCom

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA HRM Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research.

The **low-risk** application was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the UNISA Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment on 16 November 2022. *The ethics application was approved on 16 January 2023.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
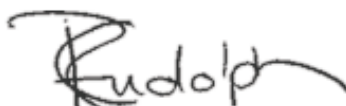
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the HRM Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in the future on the condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance

No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date of **January 2028**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Name of the Chair: Dr Elizabeth Rudolph

E-mail: rudolec@unisa.ac.za

Tel: (012) 429 2586

Sam Ngwenya (Jan 31, 2023 14:09 GMT+2)
Signature

Executive Dean: Prof MT Mogale

E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za

Tel: (012) 429-4805

APPENDIX D: NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE PERMISSION LETTER

higher education & training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Central Office
Cnr Haig & Northey
P.O.Box 2282
WITBANK
1034

Nkangala
TVET COLLEGE

☎ 013 690 1430
✉ 013 690 1450
M email: info@nkangalafet.edu.za

Subject: Permission for conducting research

Date: 22 August 2022

Dear. Ms Tjabadi MP

I am pleased to inform that I give you permission in respect of your research request. Your initiative is appreciated and the college is ready to support this research.

For conducting the research; may you please liaise with the college and ensure that all protocols are followed, and privacy regulations are adhered to before conducting the research.

We wish you all the best in your research.

_____
Mr. CM Maimela
College Principal

25/08/2022
Date

10 August 2022

Nkangala TVET College
Private Bag X7215
Witbank
1035
Tel: +27136584700

Dear Sir

I, Tjabadi Mabore Pontsho, a present and enrolled UNISA Masters student conducting research under the supervision of Mr P Hlongwane, respectfully seek permission to conduct a research study at Nkangala TVET College in Mpumalanga. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: INVESTIGATING EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM AT NKANGALA TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE.

The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which the factors that have contributed to performance appraisal system in TVET colleges. Your College has been chosen because it has been charged with providing College policy direction for the higher education sector. The study will involve The study will involve (25) LECTURERS, 5 LECTURERS from each campus participating in the study through interviews as one of the knowledgeable key informants on the subject at hand. The findings of this study may be used to improve the performance appraisal system in college, among other things. The findings of this study may be used to improve the performance appraisal system in the college, as well as to better manage the identified challenges that affect employee's performance in the TVET sector.

There are no known risks associated with participating in the study. There will be no compensation or incentives for participating in the study. Following the study's successful completion, the Principal of Nkangala TVET College will be provided with a summary report on the study's key findings.

Please contact me using the information below if you have any direct questions, comments, or queries about the subject. tmabore@Gmail.com or 62554727@mylife.myunisa.com

Yours sincerely

Tjabadi MP

Researcher

A0126 Mooteng Gamaepa

Ngwaabe

SEKHUNEKHU

1124

02 August 2022

The Principal

Crn Haig and Northey

WITBANK
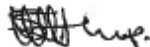
1035

Dear Mr. CM. Maimela

RE: Permission to conduct a research project at Nkangala TVET College, Mpondozankomo campus, Witbank Campus, Waterval Bowen Campus, CN Mahlangu Campus and Central Office.

I am current registered for Masters Degree at University of South African. The title of my study is: employees' perceptions of performance appraisal system in Nkangala TVET College: A case study.

Being part of such a vibrant College has indeed prompted me to play a pivotal role in its request for excellent and quality education and to improve performance appraisal system.

I hereby request your permission to conduct the research study regarding the employees' perception of performance appraisal system which affects productivity of employees of the college. This research study will have position spin-off for the College after completion. The researcher undertakes to share the findings of the study with the office of the Principal.

Thank you very much for your support and kind consideration of my request.

Your Sincerely

Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi (lecturer) Middelburg Campus.

APPENDIX E: EDITING CERTIFICATE

Nasrec Road
Aeroton
Johannesburg
2190
Mobile: +27 081 415 5849
Email: datarecon@gmail.com

MEMO

FROM: DATA RECONSTRUCTORS

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

DATE: 03 NOVEMEBER 2023

RE: EDITING OF DISSERTATION: EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM IN THE TVET COLLEGES: A CASE STUDY OF NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE

I hereby confirm that I have carefully reviewed and edited the dissertation of Mabore Pontsho Tjabadi, Student Number 62554727 titled "EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM IN THE TVET COLLEGES: A CASE STUDY OF NKANGALA TVET COLLEGE" registered at the University of South Africa. This certificate is issued to acknowledge the completion of the editing process for the research work and to confirm that it is now in a suitable form for submission and evaluation.

Yours truly,

03 November 2023
_____

Mr Tlangelani Makamu   Date