

2020

Employees Lived Experiences with the Performance Appraisal System

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Employees Lived Experiences with the Performance Appraisal System

by

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BS, University of Guyana, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Extant research illustrated the efficacy of the appraisal system from the perspectives of the evaluators of employees' performance. Although a plethora of performance management literature exists on the appraisers' perceptions, the perspectives of the employees have received little attention. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system. The performance management systems framework and goal-setting theory conceptualized the framework for the study. Data were drawn from a review of policy statements on appraisal and semistructured interviews with 15 junior employees and analyzed using the thematic analysis framework. Several themes emerged that alluded to employees' experiences with performance appraisal, the meanings ascribed to the appraisal system, and contributions performance appraisal made to their development. Analysis of the themes resulted in 9 research findings, 3 of which concurred with policy and interview themes and literature review while the remaining 6 illustrated nonconcurrence. The findings revealed that junior employees negatively perceived the performance appraisal system. The findings may contribute to positive social change by conveying awareness of the employees' experiences with the appraisal system to management. The inclusion of this critical information in the administration of the appraisal could give voice to the appraisal system from the employees' perspectives and bring about a positive change.

Employees Lived Experiences with the Performance Appraisal System

by

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Dedication

My dissertation journey is dedicated to my family, who has cheered me on to the end. Specifically, I devote this study to my grandchildren (Jonathan, Josiah, Neriah, McKayla, and Malia), with whom I had limited opportunities for interaction during my dissertation journey. I sacrificed our togetherness for the pursuit of this dream. My quest has resulted in the loss of precious moments in their growing up years, compensated with the progressive development and completion of my study for which I am proud to leave this legacy. To my brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews, and daughter-in-law who recognized this level of academic pursuit as the first the family beheld and cheered me on to completion. To my son and daughter, who repeatedly asked the question each time we communicated, “Mom, how long more?” a question being asked with a sense of pride to know that their Mother has done much to feel proud. Well, my children, that time is now as the journey is over. The writing of this dedication page indicates the end of a pursuit, of which I am proud to associate. To my deceased parents, who fostered a culture of learning and always supported my educational pursuits, but regrettably unable to see the light of day for this significant achievement. With God’s Blessings, I have reached the end of this journey.

Acknowledgments

I express immeasurable thanks to my Chair, Dr. Sheryl Kristensen, for cheerfully working me through the process when I could not aptly define my general and specific management problems for research. Her continued support, accessibility, and guidance ensured a scholarly voice in the writing of my dissertation. Express gratitude to my Second Committee Member, Dr. Kimberly Anthony, for valuable comments and insights that ensured my dissertation confirmed to Walden University standards. Many thanks to Dr. Stephanie Hoon, Walden's University Research Review (URR) Member for a thorough review and constructive criticism of my proposal, patience, and tolerance with my misgivings in writings, synthesis, and errors of omission which corrections added value to the final approval. Great appreciation to my classmates who inspired and encouraged me when demotivation caused delays in progress. I appreciate Dr. Craig Barton for guidance on my interview questions that ensured the phenomenological dictate. I also thank my office colleagues, whose moral support inspired me in this academic pursuit. Appreciation to Elsevier Ltd for copyright permission obtained to use the performance management system framework by Ferreira and Otley (2009) that added value in the exposition. To the management and staff of the public service organization for allowing me to conduct my field research at their location and gather pertinent information to support the research from staff during the regular working hours. Finally, I thank God for bestowing me with the resolve and unwavering labor, sacrificing much to complete this journey for a job well done.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Performance Appraisal Analysis

As an approach to evaluating performance (Mihai, Bajan, & Cretu, 2017), organizations engage mechanisms by which performance appraisal functions as a tool for fostering communication on individual and organizational objectives, recognition of high achievers, retention of staff, facilitating promotion, recognition of poor and underperformance, and where applicable, making decisions about dismissal. Because organizations depend on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their employees whose talents drive organizational success, organizations must have an effective performance appraisal system that employees could view as credible and fair.

Of the many studies conducted on performance evaluation systems (Adler et al., 2016; Mihai et al., 2017; Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015), very few have provided in-depth research on the performance evaluation system from the perspective of the employees (Sharma, Sharma, & Agarwal, 2016). Researchers have presented performance appraisal from the viewpoint of organizational managers, who are the implementers and administrators of the appraisal system (Sharma et al., 2016). How, therefore, do employees' perceive the evaluation system? What have been their experiences with their administration? What meanings have they attributed to this system, and how can these experiences count towards its effective administration? Results from 82% of the organizations globally surveyed on performance appraisal showed that individuals reported that it was a waste of time for completion; 41% said evaluations were subjective from the managers' perspectives, and 45% believed that motivation was

unattainable (Deloitte University Press, 2015). Specifically, public sector organizations scored 68% on the priority level assigned to the administration of performance appraisal, indicating a low ranking compared to other analytics such as acquisition of talent, career development, leadership (Deloitte University Press, 2017). These statistics were relevant for my qualitative phenomenological study as these indicated, globally, the ineffective status of the appraisal system by which organizations evaluate, reward, and manage employees' performance and, more specifically, the priority level assigned to performance management. The statistics also signaled a need for transition from the traditional appraisal process to new approaches of performance management whereby employees become the drivers of the process (Sharma et al., 2016; Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). In the driver's seat, employees become inspired about self and work, forge a relationship with their supervisors, and give a voice to the appraisal system through their expressions. The study on the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system has become necessary to address the inadequate knowledge of employees' perspectives.

In Chapter 1, I contextualize my research by providing the study background and description of the knowledge gap. I articulate the importance of performance evaluation through the integration of theory and concept, which formed a singular conceptual approach for the discussion of issues surrounding employees' lived experiences with the performance appraisal system. I illustrate the general and specific problems, and the research purpose and question defined. In Chapter 1, I also describe the nature of the study, together with descriptions of the keywords used in the research, the limitations,

assumptions, and implications of the study to the theoretical, practical, and socially affirmed changes.

Background of the Study

Attempts to effectively administer the performance appraisal system resulted in the redesign of the best appraisal systems to replace traditional ones (Sharma et al., 2016). The new systems have facilitated linkage between the performance of the individual and organization, complementing the organization's business strategy (Khan, Meraj, & Alam, 2017). These systems have illustrated the efficiency of the performance appraisal through the perceptual lens of the appraisers with little attention to the perspectives of the appraisees (Sharma et al., 2016). Concerns recognized as critical by employees include (a) the continued lack of objectivity in the evaluation process and inadequacy in the use of objective performance measures (Joseph, 2014), (b) skepticism on appraisal effectiveness (Pulakos et al., 2015), (c) a focus on the structural and systemic issues of the performance appraisal system rather than on the cognitive perspectives (Harrington & Lee, 2015), (d) the nonrecognition of good performers, (e) nonsanction of underperformance, and (f) a disconnect from the other talent management strategies of the organization (Sharma et al., 2016).

Essentially, employees view the performance appraisal system as an interrelationship between the individual and larger organizational goals (Panda & Pradhan, 2016), yet little attention is given to their perspectives (Sharma et al., 2016). Research on the perception of the appraisal process has shown that understanding the essentiality of the performance evaluation system is a requirement for employees. An

employee who joins an organization has expectations for that organization, and similarly, the organization has expectations for that employee. While the organization expects high levels of performance and achievement of objectives, the employee expects career growth and development, promotions, rewards, and recognition. If these are not recognizable, together with adverse feedback on performance, the employee becomes demotivated and loses job interest, and their attitude toward the job changes, which affect productivity levels (Bekele, Shigutu, & Tensay, 2014; Getnet, Jebena, & Tsegaye, 2014; Makhubela, Botha, & Swanepoel, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016). Employees recognize that their performance matters and supports the performance-reward linkage where the receipt of positive feedback could engender improvement and attainment of rewards (Ghauri & Neck, 2014).

Consequently, managers and supervisors must conduct proper evaluations of performance and provide constructive feedback despite its rejection from employees. Getnet et al. (2014) propounded that misalignment between the individual objectives and the goals of the organization resulted in dissatisfaction in the appraisal practices and lowered performance levels. Despite this, performance appraisal has remained one of the critical elements in the performance management systems (PMSs) framework and the choice method for assessment of employees' performance. Evaluation of performance, therefore, plays a significant role in the life of the organization. The perceptions of employees matter in the attainment of the overall goals of the organization,

In the absence of understanding how employees perceive and value the appraisal system, organizations deny critical information that contributed to the credibility,

accuracy, and fairness of the appraisal system that can be beneficial to the organization and individual employees. This knowledge gap inferred a lack of understanding of the internalized perceptions of the employees with the appraisal system. The findings gleaned from the research provide critical information on employees' lived experiences that could make for valuable contributions to the scholarship on performance appraisal.

Metaphorically, employees give a voice to the appraisal system through the expression of their experiences with performance appraisal. This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study enabled understanding of the meanings ascribed to performance appraisal from the perspectives of the employees.

Problem Statement

Employees' reaction to the evaluation system is a significant factor that informs of the system's acceptability. Despite the system redesign and benefits attained for the employee and organization, the nonacceptance by employees has inferred the invalidity and uselessness of the system (Harrington & Lee, 2015). The nonacceptance of the appraisal system has continuously challenged organizations due to the ineffective administration of the system and doubts about its efficacy, credibility, and impartiality (Kim & Holzer, 2016). The nonacceptability of the appraisal system by employees has made it difficult for the appraisal system to fulfill its purpose. Organizations have continued to be plagued by this problem, although new methods sought after addressed performance measures, evaluation, and rewards (Trosten-Bloom et al., 2014). The general problem addressed in this study was that employees perceived the performance appraisal system as ineffective (Iqbal, Akbar, & Budhwar, 2015; Sharma & Sharma,

2017). The specific management problem indicated a lack of knowledge on the employees' perspectives of the appraisal system (Harrington & Lee, 2015; Kim & Holzer, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016). This knowledge gap on employees' lived experiences with the evaluation system supported the requirement for research to understand the ascribed meanings, which gives voice to the appraisal system and made valuable contributions to the scholarship on performance appraisal.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system, which is the phenomenon of interest. I investigated the specific management problem through an exploration of the employees' lived experiences. One-on-one interviews with junior-level employees complemented the study design with a document review (see Patton, 2015). The relative merits and demerits of the system revealed contributed to the best practices in the administration of the system.

Research Question

Various research questions (RQs) on performance appraisal have been interpreted differently by researchers. The RQs developed for my study were articulated to address the central idea of the research specifically. Determination of the RQ was an essential trajectory as it defined the boundaries of the research, defined the problem statement, and influenced me in the selection of appropriate research design (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). Although little knowledge existed on the employees' lived experiences with the evaluation system, the RQs presented a view on the circumstances that unfolded

during the process. The primary RQ was, “What are the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system?” The RQ focused on the perceptions and experiences of this category of employees. In support of the primary RQ, I developed the following three subquestions that allowed for the coherence of data collection and maintenance of the boundaries defined by the fundamental RQ:

1. What are the employees’ experiences with the performance appraisal system?
2. What meanings do employees ascribe to the performance appraisal system?
3. How can the perceptions and experiences count towards the effective administration of the appraisal system?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework comprises the PMSs espoused by Ferreira and Otley (2009) and the goal-setting theory (GST) by Locke and Latham (2002). Upon this framework, the problem, purpose, and RQ rested and enabled alignment with the research design (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Based on existing literature, and a redefinition of Otley’s (1999) management control systems framework, Ferreira and Otley’s PMSs framework illustrated a broad view of organizational control in the management of performance that enabled for effective implementation of corporate plans and strategies. As a research tool representing the inductive reasoning used by various studies, the PMSs frame provided a holistic approach in the examination of the structure and operations of organizations and an overview of current management systems in use. Ferreira and Otley’s essential elements of performance comprised (a) vision and mission statements, (b) success factors, (c) organizational structure, (d) strategies and plans (work plans), (e)

key performance indicators (KPIs), (f) targets, (g) performance evaluation, and (h) rewards systems within the broader organizational context and culture. Each component of the framework is an essential linkage to the process of performance management in connecting individual and corporate performance.

The objective-setting theory espoused by Locke and Latham (2002) depicts the goal-performance relationship with the rationale for differences in the performance levels of individuals. The rationale illustrated that with the assignment of specific and challenging goals, performance improvement occurred, individuals possessed abilities for the performance of the functions, and feedback provided on progress development and achievement was rewarded. Locke and Latham further emphasized that goal *content* (i.e., specificity, difficulty, complexity, conflict) and *intensity* (i.e., commitment, feedback) were the two attributive factors for the varying performance levels of individuals. The theorists argued that the GST is a foundational theory upon which the PMSs framework of Ferreira and Otley (2009) rests. The PMSs structure gained full acceptance and usage across the spectrum of scholars and practitioners (Broadbent & Laughlin, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Vieira, O'Dwyer, & Schneider, 2017), and its application to my research interest facilitated an exploration of the understanding of employees' perspectives on the appraisal system.

Nature of the Study

The scope of this qualitative phenomenological inquiry was to understand the perceptions and experiences of employees with the appraisal system. The lack of understanding of the reactions of employees to performance appraisal resulted in the

nonachievement of the appraisal objective (Kim & Holzer, 2016). As an element of the broad context of performance management (Kromrei, 2015), the appraisal process required constant communication between appraisers and appraisees on expectation and delivery of goals, performance monitoring, provision of training, mid-term reviews and end-of-cycle assessments and feedback. As an official procedure, supervisors have used appraisals for assessment of employees' performance based on established targets, assigned performance ratings, and provided feedback (DeNisi & Murphy 2017). This cohesion positioned performance appraisal as a crucial connector in the management control system of organizations.

The qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach captured an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences, which added value to the comprehension of the meanings attached to appraisals (Babbie, 2016). The approach allowed for interactions between researcher and participants through a forged relationship unfamiliar to quantitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The qualitative design allowed for the exploration of experiences captured through interviews with a purposive sample of junior level employees. Common themes that emerged from the interviews were analyzed, complemented by data gathered through a document review on performance appraisal policies and procedures. The phenomenological design helped only in the understanding of the human issues and did not allow for quantitative analysis of the experiences (Patton, 2015). The descriptive phenomenological qualitative inquiry illuminated the physical experiences of participants, personal meanings, structure, and

essence of the performance management and appraisal system. Generalizations applied only to similar research settings.

Definitions

Lived Experience: In the phenomenological paradigm, lived experience refers to the way people socially construct their realities, through the acquisition of knowledge from experiences (Burkholder et al., 2016). *Lived experience* is an alternate phrase for the perception of how people comprehend, relate to, and denote a phenomenon.

Perception: Bekele et al. (2014) described perception as the process by which an individual ascribed meaning to the environment. Perception signifies the formation of a unique picture in the mental faculty of the perceived, contextualized by an object, target, or situation, the creation of which may be different from the reality but gives meaning to the perceiver.

Performance Appraisal/Performance Evaluation System: Researchers have characterized performance appraisal as an essential management tool used for the assessment of employees' performance, development of their competencies, improvement of performance, and distribution of rewards (Kromrei, 2015). The terms *performance appraisal* and *performance evaluation* are used interchangeably in scholarly writing.

PMSs: PMSs epitomize an integrated system consisting of strategic elements of an organization's life that connect the organization's goals to the employees' performance. This system allows for organizational sustainability through the achievement of goals (Shahmehr, Safari, Jamshidi, & Yaghoobi, 2014). The vision and

mission statements, success factors, organizational structure, strategies and plans, KPIs, targets, performance evaluation, and rewards comprise the integrated components that focus on the performance of the organization and individual (Ferreira & Otley, 2009).

Public Service: The Cambridge dictionary defined *public service* as the direct provision of services for the people within a jurisdiction. Usually, the service is provided by the government with the consensus that such services be wholly accessible irrespective of physical or mental ability and income. In this regard, Jacobsen and Andersen (2014) described the public service as a civic organization with politically oriented goals where the providers delivered the services on the premise of societal good. Similarly, Hodgkinson, Hannibal, Keating, Buxton, and Bateman (2017) conceptualized public service as politically oriented organizations established to execute public services.

Assumptions

Recognition of deficiencies and shortcomings resulted in the timely amendments and adjustments of assumptions, which depicted the out of control elements of the study. Firstly, there was the underlying assumption that the performance evaluation process continued to be of significance to the performance management and development system for the public service organization. Although the performance evaluation system was not attributive to a useful management tool for the optimization and evaluation of employees' performance for the improvement of deliverables, it nevertheless survived the yearly administration for its completion. A second underlying assumption was that there was adequate representation of the study population through the purposeful sample from the public service organization. The third assumption was that the participants understood the

interview questions and provided appropriate and truthful responses reflective of their actual experiences. The fourth assumption was that as the interview approach was face-to-face, the anonymity of the participants could not be maintained. However, with the administration of the consent form, participants had the opportunity to withdraw without implications.

Scope and Delimitations

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system in terms of the meanings ascribed. The choice of this population resulted from knowledge inadequacy of the views of employees on performance appraisal (Sharma et al., 2016). Despite varied research on performance appraisal, which incorporated the views of the appraiser and organizational leadership, the employees' perspectives have received rare attention (Adler et al., 2016; Mihai et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015). A purposeful sample of 15 employees who met the criteria for selection represented the data set from the public service organization. The 15 employees were in employment for at least 3 years at the junior level positions, and their performance assessed for at least two review periods. Additionally, their employment profiles were active, which signified not being on administrative leave, disciplinary action, or special leave without pay. Employees at the higher echelons of the organization's hierarchy did not participate in the study because previous research showed the appraisal system through the lens of the appraisers with inadequate attention to the employees' perspectives (Sharma et al., 2016).

Open-ended questions (see Appendix B) from the interview protocol were administered to all the participants through a semistructured interview format. I gathered data from Walden University and other accredited databases to support the research and collected secondary data for the document review through artifacts from the research organization. This data set comprised policy documents on performance management and appraisal, statements of the vision and missions, structure of the organization. The documents outlined the purpose and procedures for evaluation, whereas the interviews responded to the experiences of participants. I conducted a thematic analysis of the data and coded transcripts analyzed for themes. The themes were further analyzed and discussed with suggested recommendations. The phenomenological research was limited to the lived experiences of participants with the performance appraisal system and conducted during September 2019. The findings of the study apply only to entities that operated under the same legislative framework of the public service organization.

Limitations of the Study

Deficits in research cause a lack of intended purpose (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). Shortcomings of this research revealed the critical considerations undertaken for comprehension of the researched literature, the methodology used, and my ability to conduct the analysis. A potentiality existed that participants could withdraw because of the sensitivity of the research interest. Additionally, there was the potential for personal bias to invade the study from my preconceived notions (Galdas, 2017) on performance appraisal and my relationship with the phenomenon from previous experiences. In order not to misrepresent the data, neutrality was managed by bracketing (Morse, 2015) to

eliminate subjectivity in the process. I engaged in reflexivity through continuous critiques of my actions, considerations, and preconceived notions (Attia & Edge, 2017). A self-disclosure statement was not required as I did not encounter any anticipated biases during the research.

Significance of the Study

The study contributed to the theory and practices of performance appraisal, and positive social change of the employees and the broader community wherein the public service organization operates. In the study, I explored the lived experiences of employees with the performance appraisal system. Junior-level employees provided information on their lived experiences. Understanding the lived experiences of appraised performance was congruent with the realization of the appraisal objective, which is performance improvement. Noncomprehension leads to negativity in perceptions and resistance, underperformance, stresses, and burnout (Kim & Holzer, 2016). Findings gleaned from the study could provide practitioners with an understanding of the viewpoints on the appraisal system from the perspectives of the employees and the potential for an accepted appraisal system.

Significance to Theory

The study contributed to the literature, and advanced research on the performance theory as this related to the lived experiences of junior employees. The inclusion of the employees' perspectives through the lens of the appraisees expanded the literature on performance appraisal. With this development, the performance appraisal system has the potential to complement the organization's internal capabilities to facilitate the

operationalization of goals (Vilchezl & Darnall, 2016). Globally, corporate, governmental, nongovernmental, and international organizations experience challenges with the assessment of employees' performance (Kamaara, 2017). Attempts at appraisal efficiency formalized systems and processes from the viewpoints of the appraisers (Sharma et al., 2016). Consequently, the appraisees' perspectives through exploration of their lived experiences were a requirement for this research. Utilization of the joined theoretical frameworks of Ferreira and Otley (2009) and Locke and Latham (2002) facilitated this exploration.

Significance to Practice

The findings on the lived experiences of the junior employees with the performance appraisal system revealed the relative merits and demerits of the system to decision-makers (Babbie, 2016). Performance appraisal has an integral role in talent management and development strategies of organizations and individuals (Kamaara, 2017). With awareness of the experiences of employees, decision-makers could engage purposeful action through the development of organizational initiatives for a perception change of employees with the appraisal system (Sharma et al., 2016). The current system could be improved with focused procedural guides, targeting best practices that allow for a better perception of the appraisal system.

Significance to Positive Social Change

The ability to attract, recruit, select, and retain a world-class staff is at the heart of an organization's performance and success. Specifically, the study on employees' lived experiences with the performance evaluation system revealed valuable information on the

administration of the system that possessed the capability to impact performance.

Significance to positive social change is impacted by employees giving a voice to the appraisal system through the inclusion of their perspectives and critical information, which contributed to the system's effectiveness.

Summary and Transition

I commenced Chapter 1 with an introduction to the background on performance appraisal and its significance to the talent management strategies of organizations. Researchers have shown that despite interventions, the effectiveness of the appraisal system has remained doubtful by employees (Adler et al., 2016; Mihai et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015), whose perspectives have received minimal attention, hence creating a gap in the literature (Sharma et al., 2016). I further discussed the sections on General and Specific Problems, Purpose of the Study, Primary RQ and Subquestions, and the Conceptual Framework that anchored the various constructs articulated in the study. I discussed the Nature of the Study section, provided the key terms used in the research, and described the Assumptions of the Study section. Description of the Scope and Delimitations section illuminated the established boundaries of the study. Fifteen junior-level employees who met the criteria for participant selection represented the unit of analysis. This research was a qualitative descriptive phenomenological study that explored junior employees' lived experiences with the performance appraisal system (see Iqbal et al., 2015; Sharma & Sharma, 2017), which finally illustrated the significance to theory, practice, and positive social change.

The main feature of Chapter 2 is the literature review, which is a detailed exploration of the pursued efforts on performance appraisal. This comprehensive examination of the literature illustrates the trajectory undertaken for understanding the lived experiences of employees with the appraisal system. Specifically, I analyzed and synthesized previous resources on the different elements of the conceptual framework adopted for the study. Other constructs of the performance appraisal system were reviewed with supporting and opposing assessments together with a review of the gap in knowledge related to the lived experiences. Constructs such as the purpose, benefits, appraisal methods and ratings, challenges, perceptions of performance evaluation were explored as the essentialities for comprehension of the phenomenon.

In Chapter 3, I detail the research method, the rationale for the specific design adopted, the role of the researcher, and the issues of trustworthiness. Significant to Chapter 3 is the Methodology section, which provides the logic for selecting participants, the data collection plan, and the instruments used for collecting data. The procedure used in the analysis of the data, as defined by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, was essential for discovering the meanings extracted from the themes that emerged from participants' interview responses. I document the research findings in Chapter 4, together with the demographics, research setting, data collection, and analysis procedures and evidence of trustworthiness found in the data collection and analysis. Finally, I discuss and interpret the findings in Chapter 5 with recommendations for practice and research and implications to theory, practice, and positive social change, before the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Generally, employees perceive performance appraisal as ineffective (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the appraisal system. Literature related to the appraisal system and its effectiveness generally addressed systemic issues aimed at a better-perceived administered system (Adler et al., 2016; Kamaara, 2017; Mihai et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015; Sharma et al., 2016). The continual use of evaluation systems by organizations for the measurement of growth, development, and accomplishments of employees does not take into account how employees perceive the effectiveness of the system (Iqbal et al., 2015; Sharma et al., 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Contemporary results have illustrated the efficiency of the system through the organizational context and its systemic design. Consequently, a gap existed for the study of performance appraisal from the context of the employees. This research has established the groundwork for exploration of the employees' lived experiences with the performance appraisal system in the public service organization.

The literature review aimed to source pertinent literature that supported or opposed employees' perceptions of the performance evaluation system. The literature review served as the foundation for the RQ, which sought to provide research data for understanding the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system. In the first part of the literature review, I examined peer-reviewed articles, scholarly journals, books, and reports to provide an understanding of the PMSs

framework and GST. Literature was retrieved from Walden University Library and other accredited institutions. The PMSs framework and GST established the support system for the study (Jabareen, 2015) and the lens for understanding the interrelationship of the elements of performance management. Locke's (1968) GST was core to internalizing performance management and enabled for a general understanding of work performed by employees. The second part of the literature review captures the other constructs that emanated from the conceptual framework. Previous researchers examined the performance management and appraisal systems but were unable to close the existing gap with regards to the employees' perspectives on the appraisal system.

Literature Search Strategy

To find information aligned with the study, I conducted keywords searches for relevant literature through Walden Library databases such as Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central and Science Direct, Research Gate, Emerald Management, and Sage. Terms used for the literature search included *performance appraisal, performance evaluation, performance management, effectiveness of performance appraisal system, performance appraisal measures, performance appraisal as a management tool, employees' perspectives, mission and vision statements, performance appraisal methods, performance ratings, biases and errors in performance appraisal, perceptions of the appraisal system, rewards, target, goal-setting, and GST*. An iterative process was engaged to find articles by relevance, followed by the publication year. In this way, retrieval of literature corresponded to publications such as academic journals, books, peer-reviewed articles, and dissertations published within 5 years. I used seminal works

more than 5 years old for data relevant to the research methodology, design, and theories pertinent to the research. A further scan of the references and bibliographies of the selected articles allowed me to procure materials for further research on the topic.

Conceptual Framework

Measuring the success of organizations has been presented as a continual challenge for scholars and practitioners (Alharthi, 2016). Rapid changes in the globalized economy require continued measurement and evaluation of organizational performance to remain competitive in the business environment. Consequently, greater emphasis on PMSs has become critical to the effective functioning of organizations. This study on the performance appraisal systems was guided by the GST (Locke & Latham, 2002) and the PMSs framework (Ferreira & Otley, 2009).

Goal-setting Theory



Figure 1. Schematic of the goal-setting theory (GST)

Researchers have defined a goal as “an objective, a purpose or an aim” of an action that highlighted desired outcomes from performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; van der Hoek et al., 2016; Yousueng, 2018). Goal-setting has become an essential and widely

tested motivational tool in the world of business (Miller & Weiss, 2015; van der Hoek, Groeneveld, & Kuipers, 2016). GST illustrates how the directive, energizing, persistent, and discovery functions of goals influence the performance of individuals (Locke & Latham, 2002). As a directive function, targets steer attention and efforts toward goal-related tasks; as an energizing function, superior efforts demonstrate higher achievement than for purposes that require lesser efforts. As a persistent function, employees manage the time spent on the task. Hence, goals with strict timelines need fast performance. Finally, as a discovery function, goals are actioned indirectly through motivation. In this regard, goals influence performance, and the relationship between goals and performance is robust through motivation and commitment.

GST references the purposeful action of an individual who is motivated to perform through the consciousness of regulated goals (Yousueng, 2018). By this, the theory signifies that an individual's performance is directly related to the goals set, an action supported by Locke and Latham (1990). Consequently, the purposeful ideas of individuals were within their control and allowed for goal selection and actions based on targets set for accomplishment.

Locke and Latham (2002) argued that the effectiveness of goal-setting resided in responsibilities where the individual exuded control, premised on *specificity*, *challenge*, *commitment*, *complexity*, and *feedback* (see Figure 1). The specificity of a goal depicts the measurement of specific outcomes (van der Hoek et al., 2016). Goal specificity helped employees know what their expectations were, and the functional behavior associated with goal accomplishment, hence reducing uncertainties. Therefore, when a

goal is specific, it has consistency with the level of difficulty for execution, which leads to higher levels of performance (Davis & Stazyk, 2015). The GST indicates that higher performance levels are ascribed to performance goals that are specific and challenging rather than performance goals that are vague and unchallenged (Asmus, Karl, Mohena, & Reinhart, 2015; Burdina, Scott Hiller & Metz, 2017; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Miller & Weiss, 2015; Rainey & Jung, 2015). The theory shows that goals profoundly influence performance through directedness, determination, exertion, and stratagem.

The challenge of a goal relates to the difficulty experienced by the individual in the execution of the task. Challenging goals refer to the degree of efforts and initiatives associated with goal accomplishment. Since employers are unable to monitor employees' efforts permanently, setting challenging goals is one way for motivating the workforce (Asmus et al., 2015). Performance increases when goals are challenging and realistically achievable, although goal conflict arises through nonsynchrony where achievement of one goal is at the expense of another. According to Burdina et al. (2017), the establishment of goals beyond its reach was ineffective as employees connect with the organization through the goals. When goals are specific and challenging, demanding, and realistic, employees are motivated to attain.

Commitment denotes the importance, significance, and exerted efforts by an individual in reaching the goal despite impediments (Latham, 2016). An individual who lacks the ability and resources for goal attainment exudes a low level of commitment. Latham (2016) also explained that the lack of commitment signaled goal rejection. In other words, once an individual accomplished the committed goal without goal-conflict,

there was a direct correlation between the achieved performance target and the difficulty of the goal. Complexity purports an association between the individual and the task that depend on the experience and ability of the individual (Davis & Stazyk, 2015). An intricate and influential relationship exists between the goal and the expected result. The GST presents that complex goals are unachievable by inexperienced individuals. Where this occurred, the element of feedback communicated credible and frequent information on the status of goal attainment, which allowed for corrective actions and led to performance improvements in those dimensions (Miller & Weiss, 2015). Consequently, complex goals lead to higher levels of performance of targets that are specific and challenging.

Davis and Stazyk (2015) illustrated how clarity and specificity of the goals connected the individual and organization through expectations, desired outcomes, and linkage between performance and rewards. Miller and Weiss (2015) suggested that feedback contributed to significant improvements through the establishment of defined and challenging goals. Goals function as a motivational mediator for performance where employees participate in the goal-setting exercise. Burdina et al. (2017) supported the establishment of defined and achievable goals that are significant to the achievement of results and claimed that performance worsened when goals were difficult to achieve. The literature on goal-setting (Asmus et al., 2015; Burdina et al., 2017; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Miller & Weiss, 2015) has shown that employees responded with enhanced performance from attainable goals, and employers displayed pride for goal achievement.

The Performance Management System Framework

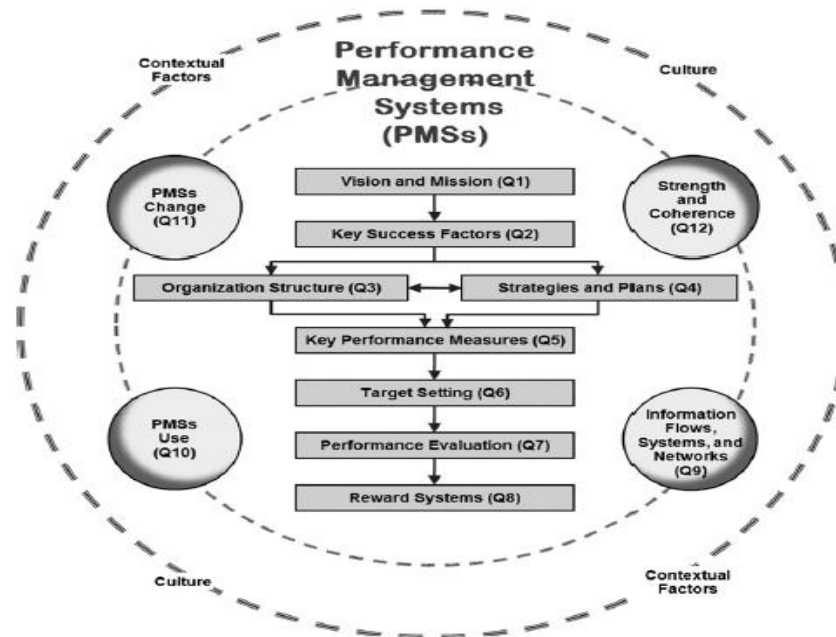


Figure 2. The performance management systems (PMSs) framework. From “The design and use of performance management systems: An extended framework for analysis,” by A. Ferreira, and D. Otley, 2009. The performance management systems (PMSs) framework Volume 20(4), p.268. Copyright 2009 by Elsevier Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

As a research tool, the PMSs framework illuminates a holistic approach in the examination of the structure and operations of organizations and an overview of current PMSs in use. This broad view highlights critical elements that comprise (a) vision and mission statements, (b) success factors, (c) organizational structure, (d) strategies and plans (work plans), (e) KPIs, (f) target setting or goal-setting, (g) performance evaluation and (h) rewards systems. Each construct is linked and connects the organization to the individual through the process of performance appraisal.

Apak, Gümüş, Öner, and Gümüş (2016) referred to performance management as the method for the systematic control of the individual and organizational performance.

Organizations implement performance standards by requirements while an employee utilizes knowledge, skill, and ability in the execution of the tasks for the achievement of the established organizational goals. Ferreira and Otley (2009) established the PMSs framework that extended the traditional perspectives of management control systems through a description of the critical elements, structure, and processes of performance management. This 12-question framework represented a holistic approach to the organization's functional design and illustrated significant performance issues that existed within an organization.

The 12-question framework was an extension of Otley's (1999) five-question framework on performance management, addressed in the details by each construct. The context of Otley's framework provided the structure for the analysis of management control systems, the ability to process and use data within a profit and non-profit organizational setting. However, there were limitations to the background that included an absence of vision and mission statements, a static view on control systems that barred a holistic view of the system, inattention to the use of organizational information and emphasis on methods of controls that were only diagnostic (Ferreira & Otley 2009). As an improvement to the limitations, Ferreira and Otley's framework complemented the work of Otley (1999). Ferreira shared similar views but demonstrated an extended analysis of the framework integrated with some aspects of the lever of control, which comprised 12 questions. The questions signify awareness of the various dimensions of PMSs but also indicate the weakness of the framework; its lack of considering the

environmental factors, namely the cultural and contextual factors within which the organization and individual perform.

Broadbent and Laughlin (2009) considered the PMSs framework useful and highlighted its importance on the contextual and cultural factors. The importance of the contextual and cultural factors was supported by Abdullah, Khadaroo, and Napier (2017), who, in their study on performance management in the arts industry, illustrated that external factors influenced the pursuit of objectives and achievement of organizational outcomes. External power structures, constraints, and pressures that shaped the values and practices of organizations illustrated the cultural and contextual factors being concomitant upon the design of PMSs. Although the arguments pointed to an inadequacy in the Ferreira and Otley's (2009) framework, Vieira et al. (2017) alluded to the use of context in their case study of a wind farm organization for a holistic view on the problems and opportunities of the existing PMSs. The setting enabled critical assessments that provided insights for revision consistent with the social, environmental, and economic goals that resulted from the integrative feature of the PMSs framework.

Vision and mission statements. Mission and vision statements were considered one of the many management tools for the provision of direction and guidance for organizational pursuits. Once well-crafted, the vision and mission statements influence the daily responsibilities of employees (Taiwo, Lawal, & Agwu, 2016). While the mission depicted the purpose of the organization aligned with the values and expectations of stakeholders, the vision established the organization's aspirations (Ferreiraa & Otley, 2009). The mission and vision statements signify the organization's functioning and

communication to the employees (Mollel Eliphas, Mulongo, & Razia, 2017); otherwise, these remained inactionable landmarks (Ayers, 2015). Mission and vision statements have strategic roles for propelling performance and change in organizations (Kirkpatrick, 2017), which begin with the statement declaration (Shahmehar et al., 2014), and cascade into strategies and objectives relative to the goals of the employees.

In their examination of the vision and mission of the PMSs framework, Ferreira and Otley (2009) posed the question of its essentiality and communication to employees, noting its importance when communicated for action. This question illustrated that nonclarity of the statements influence the functioning of the PMSs. The focus of Ferreira and Otley was to demonstrate how organizational values and objectives were determined, communicated, and influenced employees' behaviors, taking note of differences in individuals' perceptions. An experiential study by Orhan, Erdoğan, and Durmaz (2014) showed the challenge by organizations to have one vision and mission statement, which were similar in some cases. Although a relationship between the two statements was recognized, Orhan et al. (2014) claimed that employees rarely embraced vision and mission statements. In their study of employees' perspectives on the statements, Orhan et al. found a misalignment between the priorities and decisions of organizations that impacted a shared culture. Sharing of mission and vision statements with organizational members was the recommended action.

Saratun (2016) advanced the concept of a shared vision for effective PMSs aligned to purpose, mission, and vision. The embodiment of a shared vision was complemented by O'Boyle (2015), who posited that a common and shared vision

contributed to an effective appraisal process through the management of organizational goals, objectives, and strategies, individual targets, the measurement of performance, and provision of feedback. Inclusion and participation in a shared vision were not only ascribed to senior officials but all employees (Taiwo et al., 2016). As such, employees' knowledge of their contributive efforts in support of the achievement of the organizational goals was vital to their performance. Kopaneva and Sias (2015) expanded this view and showed that besides the seniors in the organization, employees also contributed to the common and collective knowledge on the current position of the organization, its identity, and strategic direction. Engagement of organizational leaders with employees on mission and vision initiatives illuminated significance that positively impacted performance, increased commitment, and influenced performance behaviors. Orhan et al. (2014) argued that for the achievement of positive performance, the statements must be shared and acknowledged by employees. Consequently, well-crafted, meaningful, and compliant vision and mission statements for organizational direction establish a shared purpose when molded with employees' performance.

Key success factors. Success factors are the pre-requisites for measuring organizational success, codify in real terms with specific timeframes. Noting that factors such as competencies, characteristics, capabilities, and actions were essential to the achievement of the organizational goals, Ferreira and Otley (2009) questioned the centrality of these. The critical success factor is one of the structural elements of the PMSs architecture for the system to be functional. Alharthi (2016) examined the criticality of success factors in the implementation of PMSs and noted that lack of

understanding of the impact of success factors on performance led to negligence in contributory value to the appropriate design of PMSs. As such, the focus on success factors needs to be of priority as the inability to measure outcomes implies difficulty for improvement.

A distinction was, however, drawn between the structural perspective and behavioral perspective of PMSs by De Waal and Van Der Heidjen (2015), who elaborated on the role critical success factors and KPIs played in the success of the organization. Determination of the success factors and KPIs refer to the behavioral aspects of employees on the use of the system. Critical success factors are supportive illustrations to PMSs, creating a strategic focus when aligned with KPIs. These help to balance the financial and non-financial information-cascade on performance targets achieved by employees and measured through the performance appraisal system.

Organizational structure. Rusu, Avasilca, and Hutu (2016) described the organization structure as representing one of the contextual elements with a featured role in the PMSs framework for the enhancement of employee performance and the organization. Ferreira and Otley (2009) articulated the impact and influence of the organization's structure, which defined the responsibilities, roles, and accountability of employees. Setiawan, Putrawan, Murni, and Ghozali (2016) outlined five pillars that linked divisions and positions in an organization. Formalization identified the first pillar with application to the policies, rules, procedures, classification, and descriptions of jobs. The second pillar earmarked the authority of the hierarchy related to the centralized or decentralized level of decision making by leadership. Specialization, as the third pillar,

depicted the level of expertise required to perform the job. Standardization was identified as the fourth pillar and related to the routine activities of the position, while job complexity described the fifth pillar. According to Setiawan et al. (2016), the structure of the organization directly impacted performance. Further, while the systems and policies of performance management influenced the structure, the goals and objectives shaped the fabric. Hence, in developing the organization, the pillars directed influence on efficiencies, motivation, the flow of information, and control.

Hunter (2015) supported the view that the organization structure defined the hierarchy of reporting, complemented by employment relationships, and the workflow. Hunter argued that understanding the interconnectivity of the organizational structure with performance management was key to designing an effective system for performance appraisal. As an element of the PMSs framework, the structure was directly linked to strategic decisions and success factors, which impacted the design, and influenced the process of strategic management (Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova, 2015). This conceptual view of structure asserted the underpinning of the way the organization performed through the division of jobs, formalization, standardization of procedures, relationships, and authority. This demarcation affected the administration of performance appraisals, which Hunter (2015) ascribed the formal and informal structures as two streams that linked the organization and performance. While the impact of the formal structure on performance was contingent upon the organization's strategic plan, the informal arrangement focused on the network of intraorganizational and interpersonal relations, which have a negligible impact on performance. Gurianova and Mechtcheriakova (2015)

cited that strategy formulation preceded organization structure as only after the development of strategy, that an organization took form. Despite the structural type, organizations must design appraisal policies based on structural relationships where performance feedback is pertinent for improvement. The structure of an organization, therefore, illustrates its layout with connecting nodes that represent the coexistence of the various positions and the reporting relationships. Hence, since performance appraisal vacillates around the appraisee-appraiser relationship, then the structure serves as a guide to the positions responsible for evaluating performance.

Strategies and plans. Organizations have capitalized on strategic planning as a managerial tool for the direction and acceleration of performance (Babafemi, 2015). Strategic planning is one of the dominant practices associated with future-oriented performance, and to which Sophia and Owuor (2015) subscribed a process of formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies for the achievement of future goals. Ferreira and Otley (2009) referenced strategy and plans as necessary actions taken by the administration for the development and attainment of organizational goals and questioned how these were communicated to organizational members. The strategic plan has an action-oriented focus where actions resulted in outcomes, a view upheld by Bryson, Edwards, and Van Slyke (2018) in their definition of a strategic plan as the deliberate efforts and activities which shaped the rationale for the organization's existence and operations.

Traditionally, the development of strategies and plans pursued by senior management cascaded to the other echelons of the organization for implementation and

execution. Sophia and Owuor (2015) articulated that employees viewed this approach as being impractical, inflexible, disconnected from the actual, and prevented development. Babafemi (2015) claimed that strategic planning required the involvement and participation from all hierarchical levels of the organization. De Waal and Van Der Heidjen (2015) explicated that employees embraced the articulated strategies with the involvement of staff from all units of the organization. Heidjen further explained that the failure to seek employees' participation in strategies and plans was indicative of their lack of knowledge on their contributions to the organization's strategy. This finding gave credence to the process of strategic management on how programs were initiated and communicated. Ferreira and Otley (2009) have shown that with the empowerment of employees, strategic planning involved all levels of employees who garnered better understanding and acceptance of the tactical process and alignment of the organizational goals.

Haythem's (2015) study on strategic planning, its importance, and its relationship to performance management illustrated the establishment of organizational goals and development of plans for achievement. Sophia and Owuor (2015) described strategic plans to show the continual and systematic evaluation of an organization's environment with the use of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) framework, mission and vision statements, long and short-term priorities and initiatives, and KPIs that enabled assessment. The process involved tactical analysis, selection, and implementation of actionable initiatives, which, once completed, the selected strategy created a brand for the organization, distinct from other organizations (Couto da Silva,

Vieira, & Pinto da Silva, 2017). Accordingly, strategic plans dramatically shape the organizational design, facilitate intelligent decision-making, and avoid crisis (Sophia & Owuor (2015). Strategic plans provide additional advantages through cohesion in goal accomplishment among participating members, thereby embracing change (Couto da Silva et al., 2017). Affirmed to have a high correlation with organizational performance (Babafemi, 2015; Ferreira & Otley, 2009; Haythem, 2015; Sophia & Owuor, 2015), through strategies and plans, the organization establish goals which resonate to objectives at the level of the department or unit and by which, the employees are appraised through the performance evaluation system. This effect is a goal-cascade which becomes objectives for achievement by the employees. Strategies and plans enable effective managerial decisions, coordination between the various parts of the organization's structure, provision of strategic focus, direction, and extensive organizational alignment.

Key performance measures. The inability to measure performance indicates a failure to manage the same (Berenson, 2016). This claim questioned the establishment of measurements that have been advanced and engaged by organizations to monitor and evaluate performance towards the achievement of objectives, strategies and plans, and success factors (Baird, 2017). The derivation of measure and the role in the performance evaluation of employees have been the emphasis of the PMSs framework by Ferreira and Otley (2009). Performance measures target the expected and demonstrated performance of individuals towards goal achievement (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015), measure the tactic or strategic accomplishment of an operation (Gonzalez et al., 2017) and signify the criticality of successful performance (Badawy, Abd El-Aziz, Idress, Hefny, & Hossam,

2016). Measurements also influence employee behavior through the derivation of objectives, success factors, strategies, plans, and the role in the performance appraisal system (Ferreira & Otley, 2009).

Monetary and nonmonetary measures align with the operation and strategy and suggest an intrinsic relationship for organizational success. Yuliansyah, Gurd, and Mohamed (2017) theorized this relationship to offer enhancement in the integration of business strategy and performance measurements. Bitici, Cocca, and Ates (2016) found that the relationship begun with a process of strategy development and consisted of a definition for the mission, vision, and values, and the establishment of strategic goals, followed by specific action plans for achievement. Once established, the integrated business plan was continuously measured and monitored for attainment through the formal appraisal system. Alignment of performance measures with organizational strategy enhanced PMSs and enabled effective formulation, implementation, execution, and evaluation of performance appraisals (Baird, 2017). This position was consistent with Ferreira and Otley (2009), who claimed that the operational and strategic connection of goals portrayed the integrative nature of the system of performance measures. Ferreira and Otley further explained that integration of performance measures with other vital factors driven by senior officials whose attention and focus was on the attainment of objectives, filter into the performance evaluation system, and impacted individual performance and behavior, Noordin, Haron, and Kassim (2017) viewed this aspect of performance measurement as the organization's ability to manage and control its internal activities while at the same time displaying its authority.

While Ferreira and Otley (2009) did not discuss the different types of performance measures, Badawy et al. (2016) identified three types of performance measures used in the measurement of an organization's performance. The researchers established key result indicators (KRI), which focused on how critical success was achieved, result indicator (RI), which demonstrated what was done, and key performance indicator (KPI) that highlighted performance critical for organizational success. Star, Russ-Eft, and Braverman (2016) conceptualized KRI, RI, and KPI as overlapped concepts of performance measurement, noting no indication for improvement in KRIs and the financial nature of RIs. Star et al. (2016) upheld the view on KPIs by Badawy et al. (2016), who claimed that a performance measurement system with KPIs aimed to achieve organizational objectives and has a significant role in measuring and evaluating performance.

Target setting or goal-setting. Critical to the functioning of PMSs, targets represent the expectant performance level for achievement by the organization and individual relative to the KPIs. Teo and Low (2016) defined goal-setting as an activity that establishes common goals for performance enhancement and motivation. By this, employees develop a trajectory for the achievement of personal and organizational goals. Locke and Latham (2002) and other theorists (Herzberg, 2003; Maslow, 1943; Vroom, 1994) underlined GST as having a basis in the creation of targets wherein a significant relationship exists between performance and goals. Ferreira and Otley (2009) developed the construct of target setting to address questions on the performance level required for the achievement and the degree of difficulty or challenge faced in the accomplishment.

This disposition supported the principle of goal difficulty (see Locke & Latham, 2002) in performance where the performance level of an individual was explained by the targets set.

Although challenges exist in goal achievement, van der Hoek et al. (2016) articulated goal-setting to imply better performance by employees through clarity of goals. This view illustrated the motivational aspect of goal-setting of which Asmus et al. (2015) exemplified as motivational to employees who possessed the capabilities to perform and attain goals, and whose behaviors were objective-driven. Goals and objectives present a means by which employees work together for the same cause and move in the same direction. Islami, Mulolli, and Mustafa (2018) supported goal-setting with a focus on motivation and higher-level performance achievement of specific targets by employees. This interrelationship between target setting and performance underscored the emphasis of goal-setting, widely accepted as a means for the improvement and sustenance of performance measured through the performance appraisal system. GST presupposed that targets impacted the performance and motivational levels with an emphasis on the accuracy of appraising performance against the predetermined objectives (see Locke & Latham, 2002)

The importance of communication of the targets was advanced by Teo and Low (2016) on their overall effectiveness. Performance enhancements resulted when employees understood the association between personal and organizational goals, expectations, and the value of their contributions to goal achievement. The association of target-setting and performance appraisal showed higher levels of job and appraisal

satisfaction that resulted in increased performance (see Islami et al., 2018). Consequently, goal-setting has a high impact on the performance behavior of employees and supported goal-setting, used for the evaluation of employee performance through the performance appraisal system.

Performance evaluation. Many organizations continue to depend on the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of its employees for the performance of tasks. Apak et al. (2016) ascribed performance to the fulfillment of responsibility in a manner that met predetermined conditions, activated for goal achievement. Ferreira and Otley (2009) alluded that performance evaluation is critical in the control of management activities as it determines organizational progress and refers not only to the performance of the individual but the whole organization.

Heywood, Jirjahn, and Struewing (2017) presented performance appraisal as the most common format used for evaluating performance. Ismail and Gali (2017) composed appraisal as a process of management that linked organizational and individual objectives and reviewed by evaluation standards with different methods and techniques applied. Kampkötter (2017) referred to techniques such as graphic rating scale, critical incident, behaviorally anchor rating scale, management by objectives, and others. Performance evaluation represents a procedure for individual assessment and improvement of performance, contributing to the general performance of the organization (Chianchana & Wichian, 2016). The identification, observation, measurement, development, and evaluation of performance behavior is central to this procedure. In this way, the PMSs

framework illustrated performance evaluation as part of an integrated and aligned system of performance management.

Researchers have presented performance evaluations as engendering many advantages to the individual and organization, but not without challenges and criticisms (Harrison & Lee, 2015; Iqbal et al., 2015; Joseph, 2014; Kromrei, 2015); advantages such as performance recognition, feedback, career development, and reward. garnered (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015; Joseph, 2014; Kim & Holzer, 2016; Lee & Raschke, 2016; Salah, 2016; Seniwoliba, 2014). Typically, employees have accredited the appraisal system with dissatisfaction because of the nuances practiced. The nuances affect the motivational level of employees to work towards goal achievement that results in challenges such as demotivation, burnout, stress, and nonconfidence in its usefulness, impartiality, and veracity (Kim & Holzer, 2016). The challenges faced in the administration of performance appraisal support the need for a functional appraisal system, one which Tanwir and Chaudhry (2015) credited with the ability to be measure performance. However, full employee-support and buy-in of the merits of performance appraisal, anchor on the perceptions employees possess on the significance of the appraisal system to performance improvement, career development, and capacity building.

Rewards. In the drive to achieve organizational success, many organizations distinguish the performance of employees through a reward system (Joseph, 2014; Lee & Raschke, 2016; Salah, 2016). A reward method uses ratings such as *excellent*, *good* and *poor* to manage performance (Saleh, 2016), depict the present needs of the employees

and organization, behavioral levels in performance and how to remedy behaviors to boost production for the organization (Mehmood, Ramzan, & Akbar, 2013). According to Lee and Raschke (2016), the reward is a motivator by which constructive relationships exist between the organization and its employees, essential for performance optimization. Several theorists (Herzberg, 2003; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Maslow, 1943; Vroom, 1994) have examined the relationship of performance and rewards that culminated in motivational theories such as goal-setting, expectation, and hierarchical needs, intrinsic and extrinsic where rewards contributed to increased motivational levels.

Vroom (1994) concluded that rewards influenced the positive efforts of employees who were highly motivated in their performance and resulted in positive rewards. Maslow (1943) espoused the needs of employees as lower and higher levels and argued on the achievement of the physiological and safety requirements on the lower level of the hierarchy before motivation occurred for the next stratum of need. Locke and Latham (1990) theorized that the achievement of high-level performance resulted from goals that were challenging and specific versus unspecific and unchallenged goals. Herzberg's (2003) extrinsic-intrinsic theory referred to motivators and hygiene factors as being influential to performance. Motivators are the essential aspects (recognition that produces satisfaction of the job), and the hygiene factors are the extrinsic aspects (salary, security that produces dissatisfaction with the situation).

The PMSs framework established by Ferreira and Otley (2009) referenced the taxonomy of the PMSs centered on a financial and accounting system. The system signified financial and nonfinancial rewards for the achievement of performance goals.

The framework illustrated the question of monetary and nonmonetary rewards derived by employees from the successful accomplishment of targets evaluated through the performance appraisal system. Although this construct of reward showed a connection between accountability procedures and structures, it engendered the issue of positivity and negativity of efforts in performance where positive rewards motivated higher levels of performance (see Vroom, 1994). Alignment between the organizational goals and employees who possess the necessary skills and abilities transcend to positive contributions. Rewarded and recognized employees make valuable contributions to corporate performance and build a performance culture of interconnected human capital activities such as leadership development, employee development, selection and promotion, and rewards and compensation. A system of appraisal should always ensure that employees are oriented and motivated toward achievement with the provision of a basis for reward and employee development.

Information flows, systems, and networks. The PMSs framework of Ferreira and Otley (2009) illustrated the importance of the information system as an essential element for the effectiveness of performance management. In discussing the systems thinking concept Meadows (2008) and Arnold and Wade (2015) alluded to a system where the cohesion of elements worked together to achieve a common purpose. This definition inferred elements receiving and transmitting information, acting as necessary agents to keep the system together.

Ritzman and Kahle-Piasecki (2016) suggested the use of systems theory for analysis of issues related to performance for a thorough examination of the parts, the

functioning, and information-flow. Kolawole, Komolafe, Adebayo, & Adegroye, (2013) pointed out that in organizational life, information flows upward and downward through a communication stream to achieve employee feedback and garner data to address future performance plans. Accordingly, detail and customize performance plans for employees are communicated in the downward flow of data, while goals and aspirations flow upward. Ferreira and Otley (2009) distinguished this action as information feedback and feedforward, whereby information feedback enabled for corrective actions, and information feedforward allowed for growth and development through the regeneration of strategic plans.

Aro-Gordon (2016) discussed the use of information technology to impact appraisal effectiveness through the integration of various elements of the broader PMSs framework into a united whole where simplification of processes for evaluations of performance resulted. Encompassing research by Vieira et al. (2017) illustrated how different forms of information flows provided information and feedback. Information flow in performance appraisal reflects a networked structure through which operational systems revolved to bring about effective communications. Effectiveness linked the use of the systems theory (see Ritzman & Kahle-Piasecki, 2016) with the broader PMSs framework to facilitate information flow in the different areas of the system.

PMSs use. The significance of PMSs use rest within the domain of information control rather than in the system design and refer to the use of performance information and control mechanisms at the various hierarchical levels. Ferreira and Otley (2009) focused on the organizational level and introduced the concepts of instrumental and

communicative rationalities as a dimension for analysis that required interaction and interdependence of the elements of performance management. Instrumental rationality preceded the transactional dimension for goal achievement through agreed-upon objectives with defined indicators and measurements for performance, monitoring, and evaluation. Compliance was executed through a formal, legal authority and structure (Vieira et al., 2017). Communicative rationality characterized the relational dimension of the PMSs, whereby the achievement of goals resulted from the relationships that worked together within organizations. Communicative rationality aimed to have an agreement on objective performance.

PMSs change. PMSs change focus on the flexibility and adaptability of the organization to environmental changes (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). The change does not exemplify a process but rather the extensiveness, scope, and form to which a proactive or reactive approach is engaged. In a world where the competitiveness of the marketplace characterizes globalization, an organization considers the scope of strategic changes. When a change occurs, it cascades throughout all the subsystems of the PMSs. According to Gurianova and Mechtcheriakova (2015), organizations possess built-in flexibility and adaptive capacity to change in strategies. Hence, depending on the rate of change, the system design consists of change dynamics that provide a better understanding of the interrelations of the various components of the PMSs, specifically when delays in the system indicated system incoherence.

Strength and coherence. This element of the PMSs framework indicates the intensity of the linkage between the various constructs (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). Strength

and coherence premise the entire framework on the systems concept (see Arnold & Wade, 2015; Meadows, 2008; Ritzman & Kahle-Piasecki, 2016) and indicated synchronization of all parts for performance efficiency. Irrespective of how well put together one part of the system could be, if all the parts are not well-fitted together, system failure resulted. In the determination of the strength and coherence of PMSs, an organization should examine the interconnectivity of the system's parts. How critical measurements and KPIs connect to the organization's strategies, consistency in perspectives of performance, monetary and nonmonetary results, corporate relations to the beneficiaries of society, system's adaptability, information system flow regarding communicative feedback, and objectives.

The PMSs framework by Ferreira and Otley (2009) represents a detailed account of the use of the many pillars of the system. The first eight constructs - vision and mission, critical success factors, organization structure, strategies and plans, key performance measures, target setting, performance evaluation, and reward systems - represent the first-level analysis of the framework that incoherently interconnected to each other. Information flows, systems and networks, PMSs use, PMSs change, strength, and coherence comprise the second-level analysis. Although each represented a system within itself, these altogether portray systems within systems (see Arnold & Wade, 2015; Meadows, 2008). The pillars synchronize for the first and second-levels analyses of the framework for successful outcomes and deliveries. One drawback of the system is the unaddressed contextual and cultural factors that comprise the third-level analysis of the framework. Researchers (Cravens, Oliver, Oishi & Stewart, 2015; DeNisi & Murphy,

2017; Rusu et al., 2016) have emphasized the significance of the functioning of PMSs through this third level. This level signified the norms or practices within the operating environment that impacted performance. When strategizing efforts at performance improvement, the inclusion of culture and technology in the process of managing performance must be considered.

Contextual and cultural factors. Researchers have underscored the contextual framework of an organization as being significant to the institutionalization of a performance appraisal system (Cravens, Oliver, Oishi & Stewart, 2015; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Rusu et al., 2016). Framed in this manner, the context of the organization was part of an extensive PMSs that influenced its design. Among the goals, strategies and plans, technology, rules and procedures, and legal framework considered for the development of an evaluation system, Rusu et al. (2016) identified structure and culture as essential contextual elements that influence the organizational processes established to improve the performance by employees. The organizational structure shows arrangement on how the different positions and relationships align with each other for goal achievement. Setiawan et al. (2016) claimed that this structural element influenced performance assessment through the organizational processes used to manage employees' performance, and demonstrated the relationships, authority, procedures, and policies by which the organization functioned.

Similarly, Gurianova & Mechtcheriakova (2015) proclaimed that the organizational structure guided the administration of the performance appraisal system and supported its design. With a structural relationship, each organization develops

appraisal criteria and design that meets the organization's profile and activity, allowing for the collection, data analysis, and performance feedback relevant for organizational development. Pulakos et al. (2015) subscribed that the purposes of performance assessment (evaluative, developmental, and informational) exemplified the structural design and definition of the various jobs, functions, and expectations. Contextually, the design and definition presupposed a successful performance appraisal system aimed to improve communication between the parties.

The effectiveness of PMSs, therefore, placed performance appraisal in a social context with significance to the daily interaction of people (Pulakos et al., 2015). The definition of performance appraisal is a "structured formal interaction between a subordinate and supervisor" (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Kromrei, 2015; Panda & Pradhan, 2016) supported the social context of the relationship between the parties in the appraisal process which further inferred fairness of rules, procedures, structures, and interactions in the broader context of the organization. This inference aligned structure with the perceptions of the employees and placed the evaluation system within a definitive organizational context.

Closely linked to the structure was the cultural element, which reflected the engagement of employees with the shared values and vision, socially constructed relations, strategies and plans, and organizational practices (Rusu et al. 2016). The alignment of performance appraisal to the culture of the organization creates a positive environment, contribute to growth and development, and help to resolve challenges. To this, Cravens et al. (2015) argued that the organizational context is a cultural one where

holistic support and transparency of culture created an environment of productivity and success that transcended to the evaluation process. The evaluation process was viewed as constructive when employees have a favorable view of its administration, which is core to their perceptions (Miller & Cockrell, 2015). Positive perceptions of workplace culture produced performance effectiveness. Doubts arise when the culture is negatively perceived and engenders undesired outcomes from the evaluation process.

Miller and Cockrell (2015) critiqued Cravens et al. (2015) theorization of the organizational culture and its applicability to GST for performance improvements rather than a culture of the workplace. Ferreira and Otley (2009) nevertheless acknowledged that their study did not give credence to the cultural and contextual factors, viewed as being outside the scope of the PMSs framework, and which focused internally on the organization. Specifically, further research on the cultural and contextual factors requires the application of a broader context for the study. Although the framework was an improved research tool, Ferreira and Otley recognized that their study supported anecdotal evidence that needed validation with empirical research. The PMSs framework used in this study did not refer to cultural and contextual factors. My research focused on the lived experiences of the employees with the performance appraisal system, which is an internal framework of the organization.

Literature Review on Constructs of Interest

Purpose of Performance Evaluation

The managerial, developmental, and educational purposes of performance evaluation are strategically important to employee and employer (Apak et al., 2016;

Joseph, 2014; Kampkötter, 2017; Kim & Holzer, 2016; Turgut & Mert, 2014). Implicitly, the purposes align with the organization's regulatory procedures that managers and supervisors use for assessment of employees' performance.

As a managerial purpose, performance appraisal serves as an evaluative tool for decision-making on salary and promotion, retention and termination, recognition of exemplary performance, and identification of poor performance (Kim & Holzer, 2016). The evaluative purpose differentiates between excellent and poor performance levels of employees. The developmental purpose facilitates the identification of training needs, strengths and weaknesses, and provide feedback on performance that filters into decision-making on employee development (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015). The focus is on skills enhancement and capacity building, as well as the detection of improvement areas in cases of less than average performers (Kampkötter, 2017). In this way, the developmental function of performance appraisal contributes to the capacity building and development within organizations. The evaluative and developmental purposes of performance appraisal complement the organizational structure and in the measurement of its success factors. Educationally, performance appraisal enables the consolidation of data that aligns organization and individual goals (Saratun, 2016), which differed between employees (Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine (2015). Research from the educational perspective by Cappelli and Conyon (2018) showed a rich contractual relationship between the organization and the employee in support of the performance appraisal system. To this end, the researchers have determined that the purposes of performance appraisal were not only evaluative and developmental but informative to management on appraisal rating,

employee differentiation, criticisms, the efforts of employees, and the dysfunctionality of the process.

Benefits of Performance Evaluation

Kromrei (2015) alluded that benefits derived from performance evaluation were advantageous to employees and organizations. From the organization's viewpoint, fair assessments positively impact the performance of employees, harmonize interests between appraisees and appraisers, increase effective communication and development of plans to minimize weaknesses, and motivate employees to perform. Employees and supervisors have the opportunity for one-on-one discussions on work plans and achievements. Employees view this exchange as a medium to inform of their developmental needs and goals, increase productivity efforts, and motivation for career development. Through the performance discussions, the organization's interest in the performance and development of the employee is displayed, which positively impacts employees' commitment, detect errors, and motivate employees for higher levels of achievement while providing feedback.

Feedback helps strategize improvement plans for employees to focus on goal achievement. From the employees' viewpoint, feedback assists with personal goal achievement (Ismail & Gali, 2017), contributes significantly to workforce planning, justifies promotional opportunities, identifies shortfalls in performance, and acts as an impetus to high performers (Kampkötter, 2017). Feedback assists employees in understanding their performance levels, which is fundamental to building and developing capacities (Kromrei, 2015). A study on the contractual relationship in employment

relations by Cappelli and Conyon (2018) showed that employee motivation increases to perform better as both employee and employer were stakeholders in the appraisal process.

Performance Appraisal Methods and Ratings

Several methods have been developed and utilized for the efficiency of the appraisal process. Urbancová, Stachová, and Zdenko (2017) classified appraisal methods as past and future actions. Past methods focused on the assessment of performance targets after time passed, and future methods assessed forecasted performances. Methods that focus on past performance are advantageous in determining completed tasks which could be measured but not altered. Future appraisal methods concentrate on the evaluation of future performance. Turgut and Mert (2014) categorized the different techniques as relative, absolute, comparative, behavioral, and output-based subject to the features and procedures used in the evaluation. This categorization illustrates that no one method defines a situation, but the choice on the use gave priority over the features of the appraisal methods. Kromrei (2015) added that appraisal methods vary for measurement of performance, but a choice technique represented alignment with the broader PMSs.

The Behavioral Anchor Rating Scale (BARS), critical incidents, graphic rating scales, and confidential reports were the most common methods associated with past performance (Joseph, 2014; Majid, 2016; Turgut & Mert, 2014; Urbancová et al., 2017). Management by objectives (MBO) and 360-degree feedback methods are the most common types linked to future performance (Chianchana & Wichian, 2016; Chopra, 2017; Hageman, Ring, Gregory, Rubash, & Harmon, 2015; Turgut & Mert, 2014). These

appraisal methods represent the most frequently used by organizations, with the adoption of a specific type base on organizational needs.

Behavioral Anchor Rating Scales (BARS). BARS depicts a combined format of behavioral and attitudinal rating scales (Gillespie et al., 2018) anchored on a continuum against that measure performance behaviors (Kell et al., 2017). As a combination of the graphic rating scale and critical incidents methods (Debnath & Tandon, 2015) BARS focus on work approaches and procedures that measure the quality and quantity of outputs and numerically allocate a rank to the expected behaviors (Venclová, Šalková, and Koláčková, 2013). Grades classified as *excellent*, *good*, *very good*, *poor*, are marked along with attributive scales that explicitly define each with a narrative (Turgut & Mert, 2014). As an evaluation method, BARS minimizes the eccentricities which influence appraisers through the definition of the terms that constituted the specific performance behaviors. Managers and supervisors evaluate subordinates along the ranked continuum and exemplify performance at the various levels, through the observance of identical behavior patterns. Debnath and Tandon (2015) introduced BARS as the most resilient performance method due to its potentiality for being an integral part of human resource (HR) management functions and its significant contribution to organizational success. As a hybrid of the graphic rating scales and critical incidents methods, the BARS method enables assessment of achievable and nonachievable performance in all behavioral performance dimensions.

Critical incidents. Represent incidents in the workplace that demonstrate effective and ineffective performance behaviors (Kell et al., 2017). The incidents

comprise performance behaviors from specific situations captured by managers and supervisors through inscription and use for the evaluation of employee performance (Seniwoliba, 2014; Turgut & Mert, 2014). Critical incidents feature advantages of performance evaluations, job descriptions and supported ratings, provision of feedback, and reduction in recent biases (Majid, 2016). On the other hand, prioritization of embarrassing incidents, nonremembrance of events if not correctly recorded, and the constant supervision of employees placed critical incident appraisal method at a disadvantage for use.

Graphic rating scales. Represent the most traditional format where the manager or supervisor assesses the employee's performance within a defined framework. The framework consists of attributes along a spectrum of scales with narratives that focus on factors reflective of the organization's need (Turgut & Mert, 2014). The scale listed a range of scores represented by performance attributes such as *very good, good, fair* and *poor*, or *excellent, very good, and satisfactory*, or *outstanding, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory* (Majid, 2016; Seniwoliba, 2014; Turgut & Mert, 2014). The attributes indicate the level of performance by the employee when numerically scored and summarized (Majid, 2016). The development and administration of the graphic rating scales offered advantages to the individual and organization through its cost-effectiveness, standardization, and comparison of employees' performance across the diversity of job functions and the ability to quantitatively analyzed data (Seniwoliba, 2014). Contrarily, graphic rating scales feature wide variations in the use of data as different appraisers match and score the performance attributes that best suit the

organization. Biases engender as the appraiser assessed the dimensions of performance for which the appraiser possessed those qualities (Majid, 2016). This type of appraisal format was not apt for the provision of feedback, as employees provided minimal contributions. Graphic rating scales have significant benefits when combined with other techniques such as the essay type appraisal.

Confidential reports. Majid (2016) theorized confidential reports as an appraisal method where the appraiser assessed the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the employee in alignment with the personality traits of the employee. Known as an annual confidential report (ACR), ACR records evaluation scores with regards to work and personality-related attributes. The supervisor decides on what is best for the employee due to the close work relations. Government offices and institutions in the public sector in lower and middle-income economies use the ACR method, which is completed annually and is linked closely to decisions for promotions based on seniority (Purohit & Martineau, 2016). Confidentiality enshrines the appraisal, and only when there is an adverse report, is the employee made aware (Seniwoliba, 2014). The confidential nature of ACRs facilitates benefits but deprives employees of the opportunity for performance discussions with their supervisors (Purohit & Martineau, 2016) and of feedback to employees on their strengths and weaknesses that impacted their development.

Management by objectives (MBO). Islami et al. (2018) referred to MBO as an approach to management and evaluation based on past performance. MBO defines the method by which the objectives are converted into individual targets for employee and supervisor, and assessment made on the attainment. The objectives result from the

mission and vision statements of the organization. The employee's involvement is significant to the establishment of objectives. MBO is premised on results with little attention on performance behavior (Purohit & Martineau, 2016). In the translation of organizational goals into objectives for employees, the use of SMART (*specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, and time-bound*) concept to set objectives is acceptable as agreed upon by the employee and supervisor. Engagement in the process allows managers to execute tasks while maintaining a productive and harmonious environment.

360-Degrees feedback. With a focus on future performance (Urbancová et al., 2017), the 360-degrees feedback refers to the multi-rater or multi-level feedback because of its comprehensive overview of the performance of the employee (Venclová et al., 2013). Behaviors and proficiencies demonstrate employees' fulfillment of defined objectives assessed through a ranking of data collected from one or more individuals or teams (Turgut & Mert, 2014). The employee, subordinates of the employee, supervisors, and peers are participants to this review and feedback, that could also include external customers and stakeholders (Chopra, 2017). The ranking reflects the grading principle where employees, in comparison to other raters, ascribe organizational value to a level of significance to tasks, which tasks possess greater or lesser significance than a previous rating (Venclová et al., 2013). Alternate and paired comparisons and forced distribution are approaches used for ranking. According to Turgut and Mert (2014), the multiple data collected through this method provided the employee with improved self-awareness about performance. The 360-degrees feedback method was found popular among recent trends (Urbancová et al., 2017) with advantages and disadvantages in its use (Chopra,

2017). In team-oriented settings, the focus is more customer-based with benefits of increase reliability, reduce bias and leniency, and simplification of processes. When applied in a positive work environment, the assessment of employees' performance is aligned to target achievement that yield results in workforce improvement. Traditionally, appraising performance involved only the employee, the supervisor, and a senior; however, with the 360-degree feedback, information received from different sources defined a full-circle assessment on the employee.

Heywood et al. (2017) claimed that the conventional and 360-degree appraisal types were the broad divisions for assessing performance. The traditional model characterized a top-down cascade where the immediate supervisor of the employee performed the assessment. Contrarily, with the 360-degree, supervisors, peers, customers, and other stakeholders conducted the evaluation (Chopra, 2017; Heywood et al., 2017). Despite the various methods, Turgut and Mert (2014) discovered that no one method used is definitive of a situation, organization, or industry. A method is identified by choice rather than the specific features possessed to ensure the precision of evaluation. "No one method" aligned to the views of Javidmehr and Ebrahimpour (2015), who explored the impact of performance subjectivity and recommended the use of multiple performance methods because no single performance method was complete. This view complemented those of Văcărescu (2015), who informed that irrespective of the appraisal method used by an organization, universal application is a requirement of the same evaluation criteria to all appraisals. In this regard, the minimization of biases and errors were achieved.

Performance Evaluation Process

The process of appraising performance is informally and formally practiced by organizations (Shrivastava & Rajesh, 2017; Urbancová et al., 2017; Văcărescu, 2015). The performance of employees is continuously monitored and assessed towards the agreed-upon objectives with the ongoing provision of feedback in the nonsystematic or informal system (Venclová et al., 2013). The systematic or formal appraisal system provides feedback on the performance of an employee through an assessment conducted by the manager or supervisor (Kampkötter, 2017).

The formal process reflects a management control design (see Ferreira & Otley, 2009), where employees are motivated to perform and hence, improve performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). As a management control design, appraisals enable the achievement of the required performance through the operationalization of the goals, competencies, measurements, ratings, and performance expectations. The most significant benefits are obtained through the formal system of evaluation (Ismail & Gali, 2017), and considered to be the best method (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Finalization of the formal appraisal process results in the filing paper-based format as part of the records management of HR offices (Hitka, Lorincová, Ližbetinová, & Schmidtová, 2017), to support performance management decisions. My engagement with the formal appraisal system is the focus of this research, with no consideration of the unofficial stream of appraising performance.

Steps in the formal process. The PMSs framework lists the formal appraisal system as a critical construct of performance management (Ferreira & Otley, 2009). The

congruence of its varied definitions (Chianchana & Wichian, 2016; Ferreira & Otley, 2009; Heywood et al., 2017; Ismail & Gali, 2017; Joseph, 2014; Kampkötter, 2017; Kromrei, 2015) confirmed a process for the management of performance. Identification of performance planning, observation, appraisal interview, and feedback as critical aspects of the performance appraisal process, illustrate the collaboration between subordinates and their superiors in regular periodic interactions, discussions, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback on performance (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015; Kolawole et al., 2013; Kromrei, 2015).

Performance planning. Denotes the establishment of standards and identification of measurements that differentiate success from failure in performance (Apak et al., 2016). Employees are informed of the expectations through goal-setting that emerges from the interrelationship of the vision, mission, strategies, KPIs, and the job competencies required for effective job performance. The employee and supervisor engage in discussions on the attainment of the individual work plan for a specific performance period (Tanwir & Chaudhry, 2015). Usually, organizations adopt annual and biannual appraisal performance cycles to measure employees' performance against pre-defined evaluation criteria and provide feedback (Shrivastava & Rajesh, 2017). With this process, employees are made aware of the performance expectations.

Observation and assessment. The ongoing nature of performance evaluation, observation, and assessment refer to the continuous management of performance. Assistance to employees, removal, or minimization of impediments occur during this stage (Kolawole et al., 2013). At a fixed time based on judgment, the appraiser assesses

the employee's performance and award ratings for the performance level on the organization's prescribed format. The appraisal method that best meets organizational needs is used, employees' work approach and competencies examined, and in some organizations, a mid-point review practiced (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018; Seniwoliba, 2014).

Appraisal interview. Represents a process that is core to the evaluation of performance. The appraiser examines previous performance, barriers to effective performance, and aspects for improvement while at the same time formulates new goals. The appraisal interview is a useful exchange process between the appraiser and appraisee for which Khan (2013) identified several strategies for accomplishment such as preparation for the meeting, drafting issues for discussion, participant encouragement, provision of positive feedback first, and clarification of objectives. Employees' support the process through their involvement. Ahmad and Bujang (2013) claimed that the appraisal interview was not only an appraisal activity conducted for completion of the performance appraisal but also represented a constant method for communicating on performance and feedback.

Feedback. Represents a core element of appraising the performance, predicated by candidness and free communication exchanges for effectiveness (Kolawole et al., 2013), feedback, and identification of areas for improvement (Kromrei, 2015). Feedback is fundamental to building and developing capacities and entails interactions between the subordinates and supervisors (Turaga, 2017). Knowledge is imparted to the employee on the level of work performed in association with the overall organizational objectives.

Conventionally, managers and supervisors were ordained with the responsibility to conduct a performance assessment (DeNisi & Murphy 2017). However, with the use of the 360-degree approach, other individuals provide performance feedback with benefits such as higher accuracy, minimization of bias and error, and a better perception of the appraisal process.

Roles in the Evaluation Process

Performance appraisal identifies one of the essential practices of the HR management (Parameswari & Yugandhar, 2015) premised on the achievement of objectives established for specific job performance within a specified time (Urbancová et al., 2017; Venclová et al., 2013). Typically, three levels of employees are involved in the appraisal process – appraisee, appraiser, and the appraiser’s supervisor, with support from the HR offices and Leadership. Urbancová et al. (2017) pointed out that the appraisee is the employee whose performance is assessed; the appraiser is the supervisor of the employee who conducts the appraisal, and the appraiser’s supervisor is the facilitator of the process who endorses the evaluation report of the supervisor about the employee’s performance. According to Kromrei (2015), the roles in the evaluation process formed the landscape of the administration of performance appraisal.

HR offices. Kampkötter (2017) remarked that HR offices manage the official or formal appraisal process of performance evaluation oriented towards determining the performance level, performance execution, and goal realization. Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) described HR’s role as an implementer of the appraisal process; encourages employees to perform and acts as an intermediary between employees and

managers. In this regard, staff members contact HR offices for assistance to resolve performance conflicts between the employee and immediate supervisor. HR's role in performance appraisal is, therefore, strategic.

Leadership. Makhubela et al. (2016) claimed that the commitment of leadership to an appraisal system is crucial for its effectiveness. Leadership commitment brings with it formality of the appraisal process and the likely influence on employees in goal achievement and performance improvement. Leadership styles also impact appraising performance through the decisions made on the appraisal process (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013; Dias & Borges, 2016). Judgment and control of the appraisal process describe autocratic leadership; democratic leadership develops, supports, and encourages participation in the process; laissez-faire leadership causes a chaotic work environment due to the nonexistence of commitment and inadequate skills to lead employees. Dias & Borges (2016) introduced the transactional leadership style to performance appraisal, which illustrated negotiating characteristics, and aided the establishment of agreements for expected results. This type of leader rewards performance and institutes punishment for nonachieved goals. Inspirational features describe the transformational leader who offers encouragement and individual support to employees who achieves high performance. Despite the style, leadership is responsible for institutionalizing the appraisal process of the organization.

Manager/supervisor. The critical roles of the judge and coach in the evaluation process categorize this employee as the supervisor (Khan, 2013). According to Joseph (2014), these roles aligned because the supervisor guided, mentored, observed, and

assessed the performance of the employee for the appraisal period. The supervisor established performance goals and measurements, evaluated the performance of the employee, awarded appropriate performance ratings, provided feedback, mentored subordinates, and displayed communicative and leadership style as a role model (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018; Seniwoliba, 2014; Văcărescu, 2015). Supervisors have dual roles, one as an appraiser for evaluating the performance of their subordinates and the other as an appraisee, which role was evaluated by their supervisor (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013), hence holding positions as a subordinate and a supervisor at the same time. The manager or supervisor uses a performance appraisal report with the designed rubric or ratings to assess the performance level of the employee (Kromrei, 2015).

Appraisees. Represents the category of employees whose performance is assessed by the immediate supervisors. Generally, the role of the appraisee is passive, but Kromrei (2015) advised of an active role through the process of self-appraisal that increases commitment, perceptions of fairness, satisfaction with the assessment process, and developmental areas.

Challenges of Performance Evaluation

Researchers have associated benefits with the evaluation of performance (Ismail & Gali, 2017; Kampkötter, 2017; Kromrei, 2015) concomitantly, challenges and criticisms (Ellington & Wilson, 2017; Harrington & Lee, 2015; Iqbal et al., 2015; Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015; Joseph, 2014; Majid, 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017; Turgut & Mert, 2014). Although evaluating performance has many advantages for employees and the organization (Ismail & Gali, 2017; Kampkötter, 2017; Kromrei,

2015), appraising performance is not a panacea for organizational success. Javidmehr and Ebrahimpour (2015) articulated its unworthiness and ability to produce undesired results. Kampkötter (2017) alluded to its effectiveness pivoting on the nonachievement of fairness and accuracy. Adler et al. (2016) discussed the dissatisfaction with performance ratings, disappointment of performance interventions, disagreements with multi-rater evaluations, fragility of the relationship between performance of the employees and the ratings received, conflicting purposes of performance ratings in organizations, inconsistency in the effects of performance feedback on prior performance and the weak relationship between performance ratings, researched and practiced in organizations.

While the actual performance ratings were a source of concern, Adler et al. (2016) articulated that the administration of the evaluation system was an administrative burden that communicated evaluative judgments to the employees. Joseph (2014) argued that unless ratings have a basis on actual job performances, the evaluation continued to be devoid of the objectivity required for a fair performance appraisal system. Sharma and Sharma (2017) noted that subjective impressions of appraisers continued to devoid the appraisal process of its objectivity. Joseph (2014) claimed that although weak motivation was attributive to the existence of inaccurate performance appraisal systems, performance ratings were designed for the objective assessment of an employee's performance by the supervisor, and not how well the appraiser likes or gets along with the employee. Ellington and Wilson (2017) supported the claim that ratings were part of the appraisal system design, as the appraiser awarded ratings for work completed by employees within the specific organizational context.

Turgut and Mert (2014) discovered that while the appraisal structure guided the evaluation of competencies, accuracy in assessment depended on the degree of error freeness achieved by the evaluators irrespective of the method used. Ferreira and Otley (2009) articulated subjectivity in performance assessments illustrating the results of criticism, favoritism, and ambiguity, which negatively impacted and rejected employees' support for the appraisal system. Although uniqueness existed in the various appraisal methods, errors, and biases resulted when the criteria involved judgment and predetermination of the employee's behavior.

Biases and errors in performance ratings. Research on performance appraisal included extensive studies on how bias emerged in the appraisal process (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015; Spence & Keeping, 2013; Turgut & Mert, 2014). Subjectivity in assessments was enunciated by Ferreira and Otley (2009), who expressed that subjective evaluations gave scope to favoritism and uncertainty and attracted criticism. Joseph (2014) discovered that bias influenced decision making, although regulatory procedures existed for measuring the productivity of the employee with the tool of performance appraisal. Spence and Keeping (2013) showed how bias or lack thereof defined the appraiser's attitudes in awarding fair or unfair performance ratings. Ismail and Gali (2017) proclaimed management decisions that constituted bias resulted in the allotment of low-performance ratings and caused employees to adopt a negative attitude with their work experiences. Despite its many critiques, performance appraisal continued to be a standard exercise practiced in many organizations to evaluate the performance of employees.

Theoretical and psychological constructs have marginalized the prominence of biases and errors in the performance evaluation process through awareness and methods for reduction. Kromrei (2015) researched various types of biases that impacted the evaluation process and the different types of training (e.g., rater error, performance dimension, and performance standards), which evaluators engaged for improvement in evaluating performance, thereby reducing the biases and errors in the process. Turgut and Mert (2014) researched biases and errors and claimed that the perceived meanings of performance standards were the notable difference, as the use of common measures do not result in appraisal biases, but result from appraisers' perceptions.

Performance appraisal format. Kell et al. (2017) declared the vagueness and ambiguity of the format used to capture information on performance, which resulted from the absence of narratives for performance scopes. This void in the narrative definition contributes to performance ratings awarded based on an opinion consumed with bias and errors by the appraiser. Turgut and Mert (2014) noted this lack of shared understanding of the appraisal dimensions on the format and suggested training on performance standards, while Ahmad and Bujang (2013) suggested user-friendly formats for appraisers and appraisees. The BARS appraisal method was cited by Kell et al. (2017) as being appropriate for the definition of the dimensions for performance, hence resulting in the minimization of bias and error.

Managerial decisions. Kim and Holzer (2016) cited performance appraisal as having a connection to the organization's reward system by which managers decide on the financial and nonfinancial rewards to offer employees for their performance. Ahmad

and Bujang (2013) cited that employees create impressions for undeserved performance ratings to enable the receipt of rewards. Poorly rated employees are unable to benefit from the financial reward system, as low or poor performance ratings negatively affect reward recognition. Researchers (Burdina et al., 2017; Davis & Stazyk, 2015; Miller & Weiss, 2015) claimed that this occurs because of the intrinsic link of performance to financial rewards. Ahmad and Bujang (2013), and Dias and Borges (2016) argued that the leadership style that permeates the organization also impact decision-making for performance appraisal activity. The autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles were identified as the most prominent, each having its unique characteristics that positively or negatively influence the performance-reward link.

Fairness of evaluation decisions. The literature on performance appraisal showed that purposefulness, impartiality and justice, and accuracy are three well-established criteria for performance measurement. Iqbal et al. (2015) advocated that purposefulness of performance appraisal indicated the “why” for conducting performance appraisals. Impartiality related to the policy and rules and ensured a system of justice. Accuracy aimed at the reduction of biases and errors that surfaced. Usually, appraisers encounter problems in measuring the performance of employees with accuracy and fairness much to the dissatisfaction of the employees who perceive appraisers as not sufficiently informed and possessing the required skills to conduct the evaluation. Consequently, this inadequacy impacts the evaluation process and engenders rater bias and error, which Văcărescu (2015) avowed could be minimized using universal

measuring criteria for evaluation of performance. Managers and supervisors must choose the appropriate method for evaluation, establish the evaluation criteria, and the principles as preconditions by which to measure performance.

Administrative burden. Managers and employees continue to view performance appraisal as an administrative burden with minimal value, and failure to meet its intended purpose (Pulakos et al., 2015). Universally, managers and employees dislike performance appraisal (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018) because of its insignificance to employees (Mihai et al., 2017), and disconnection from the broader comprehensive talent management strategies of organizations (Kamaara, 2017). Performance appraisal has become a time-consuming administrative exercise that engenders bias, which influences the performance ratings ascribed (Ismail & Gali, 2017). Appraisers played the role of a judge in the assessment process, which caused discomfort as every opinion shared on the employee was supported by facts (Khan, 2013). Delays result in the completion of the appraisal, avoidance of the performance-reward linkage, and consequently, employees become demotivated. The lack of appropriate skills by appraisers to provide feedback to employees on their performance results in employees' defensiveness when performance ratings obtained are lower than expected. This gives rise to a conflict that could be dragged on without an immediate solution.

Communication in the evaluation process. Performance discussion is an essential ingredient in the evaluation process and is the conduit for the transference of feedback between the appraiser and appraisee (Kolawole et al., 2013; Turaga, 2017). Communication is vital at every stage of the appraisal process (Kolawole et al., 2013).

The effectiveness of communication is not without barriers that are influenced by information overload and inadequacy, semantics, languages, perceptions, and emotions that impact appraisal efficiency. Through communication, performance appraisal links the individual and organization's performance. Javidmehr and Ebrahimpour (2015) claimed that the nonexistence of an appraisal system inferred a lack of communication that lead to the demise of the organization.

Rewards disconnect. The alignment of performance results to a rewards system represents a vital management decision (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Ferreira & Otley, 2009; Kampkötter, 2017). Objectives that align with organizational goals and achievement demonstrate the motivational efforts of the employees and produce rewards. Through increases in salaries, bonuses, allowances, promotions, incentives, and others, rewards play a significant role in organizations (Hamukwaya & Yazdanifard, 2014). As a type of compensation for employees' performance, the reward was articulated by Joseph (2014) to justify employees' motivation. Recognition of the contribution of rewards to the satisfaction of the job performed, Došenović (2016) alluded to the criticality of a reward system linkage to the performance evaluation system from a broader perspective of performance management. Reward serves as a tool for the enhancement of performance and improvement of organizational success, concomitant upon the talent management and acquisition strategies of the organization (Schleicher et al., 2018). According to Tanwir and Chaudhary (2015), with the performance-reward link, performance is rewarded, ineptitude discouraged, and poor performance identified.

Outstanding performance. Khan (2013) claimed that the results from appraising performance determined the outcome of reward for employees whose performance was exceptional. In recognition of high performing employees, Church et al. (2015) attributed performance appraisal as a conduit for a reward. In their research on evaluation practices on leadership advancement, the results illustrated that 75% of the organizations studied relied on the past performance of employees, and 73% used current performance for evaluating high-level potentialities. This view supported the evaluative purpose of performance appraisal (see Pulakos et al., 2015) through the recognition of achievement. Linkage of the results from the appraisal process to rewards motivate employees' preparation and participation in the appraisal system, yield satisfaction of the process and inspire lengthier tenure with the organization (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015).

Behavioral change. Rewards serve as a mechanism for increasing performance and behavioral change in employees who are dissatisfied (Mehmood et al., 2013). Management discriminates between performers through alignment of rewards to various degrees of production and provides opportunities for the best performing employees (Lee & Raschke, 2016). A reward is an element in performance management that inspires and compensates the work of employees (Došenović, 2016). Because of this, a system of reward is essential for employees who directly affect the standards of living and work environment that lead to goal achievement. In this way, employees participate in the success of the organization.

Dysfunctional. Rowland and Hall (2014) argued that because appraisals connected an incoherent group of multifaceted functions (individual development, career

development, training needs analysis, rewards determination, and promotions), the linkage of rewards to the performance appraisal system was dysfunctional. Mehmood et al. (2013) asserted that reward systems exasperated strategic plans and actions as the emphasis on the method of reward generally supersedes. The method becomes unmanageable as rewards offered, often ignores the decisive management actions. Excellent performance by an employee for the assessment period goes unrewarded due to financial and budgetary constraints and resources. Unrewarded performance results in disgruntled employees whose productivity levels reduce over time due to the nonrecognition of concerted efforts for increasing job performance. Rowland and Hall (2014) articulated that the multidimensionality of the appraisal functions gives credence to the skepticism and doubts of the varied experiences associated with the appraisal system, created perceptions of unfairness and untrustworthiness. As employees continue to provide the relevant knowledge, skills, and aptitude by which the processes of the organization have life, a fair reward system produces satisfaction and job behaviors consistent with procedures for appraising performance. In this regard, the method for managing performance brings a balance between the methods for reward and appraisal.

Development is disconnected. Aside from the financial rewards associated with performance appraisal, a system of compensation includes intangible elements such as respect, integrity, career development, job positions and design, style of management, flexible work programs, and others (Došenović, 2016). Appraising of performance facilitates the achievement of the intended purposes of performance appraisal, which constitutes development (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015). Information on the developmental

needs of employees provides feedback, an effective way of bringing about performance improvement, and an accurate perception by the appraisee. However, recent research showed that positive feedback lacked sufficiency in bringing about performance improvement through development, especially when there is positive feedback as opposed to suggestions focused on improvement (Schleicher et al. 2018; van der Leeuw, Overeem, Arah, Heineman, & Lombarts, 2013). Improvement of performance and development plans outputted from the appraisal system showed inconsistent leverage with the omission of performance ratings, useful for the provision of information on development and improvement plans (Schleicher et al., 2018).

Programs and activities. For organizations to be successful, employee development is a contributing factor measured through the appraisal and reward systems. Rusu et al. (2016) stated that the process of assessing performance facilitated the development of programs and activities that engage employees in the development of their competencies in the pursuit of performance improvement. However, Rowland and Hall (2014) found that the appraisal system hardly encouraged development as the appraisal system lacked commitment by employees resulting from the tensions of the multifaceted purposes of the appraisal. Mehmood et al. (2013) noted that employees required commitment to their jobs to venture into developmental training. Mehmood argued that although organizations emphasize developmental training and encourage employee development, the focus on growth during assessment fails to give suggestions for employee improvement. In this regard, employees perceive the appraisal process as one to inform only of inappropriate actions.

Learning. Rowland and Hall (2014) established that rewards unlinked to organizational and individual learning constituted unreliable measures and criteria for rewards benefit. The researchers opined that while evaluations acted as a channel for learning when ascribed the dual purpose of performance measurement and employee development, performance appraisals failed to inspire learning. Attempts to achieve the twofold objective of performance control and employee development resulted in skepticism of the performance measurement adopted for identification of areas for employee development (see Schleicher et al., 2018). Despite this, the extensive use of performance appraisal was beneficial to employee development through which organizations measured and rewarded performance. The creation of an enabling environment brought enhancement to the evaluation system in organizations by nurturing employees for improved performance (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015). However, objective and measurable criteria must be established and implemented, feedback provided, and goals clarified.

General Perceptions of Performance Evaluation

The performance of an employee is assessed and rated through the appraisal process (Ellington & Wilson, 2017). Organizations establish performance evaluation systems to achieve the evaluative, developmental, and informational purposes (Apak et al., 2016; Cappelli & Conyon, 2018; Joseph, 2014; Kampkötter, 2017; Kim & Holzer, 2016). One significant challenge faced with the system is that of the perception of employees (Aro-Gordon, 2016; Khan, 2016). The corporate procedures of procedural and distributive justice systems contribute to employees' perceptions of the appraisal system

(Kim & Holzer, 2016), to which the appraisers closely connect (Turgut & Mert, 2014). The appraisal process is perceived through the personality traits, characteristics, and interactions with appraisers, their attitudes with employees, and the willingness to support employee development (Ghauri & Neck, 2014). Employees believe that an evaluation system inundated with bias, misinterpretations, and misdoings premise dissatisfaction. Makhubela et al. (2016) argued that the perceptions about the appraisal system affect employees' performance, propelled by their commitment, dedication, and motivation to perform. Shrivastava and Rajesh (2017) advanced that perceptions have extensive effects on attitudes and behaviors in the realm of current and future satisfaction of the job. In this regard, Bekele et al. (2014) showed that with a perceived ineffective system, unproductive behavior, and negative attitudes result, while a good perception of the system creates a positive effect.

The acceptance or rejection of the evaluation system, therefore, is dependent upon the perceived satisfaction of the employees on the fairness and accuracy by appraisers (Sharma et al., 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017), linked to the organizational (procedural) and distributive justice systems (Bekele et al., 2014; Gangaram, 2017; Kim & Holzer, 2016). High dedication and motivation to perform result when employees perceive an accurate and fair evaluation by the appraisers (Aro-Gordon, 2016; Khan, 2016). Consequently, the appraisal system enables the achievement of the intended purposes.

Procedural and distributive justice. Fundamental to the approval of the appraisal system are the notions of procedural (fairness) and distributive (validity) by which employees perceive the process to sufficiently assess performance and institute

rewards (Gangaram, 2017). Procedural justice premises the belief of employees whose appraisers possess the capability to evaluate and award performance ratings in a fair manner. Distributional justice references a system of reward linked to performance outcomes for recognition of the efforts of employees. Makhubela et al. (2016) claimed that positive perceptions and experiences about the procedural justice of performance appraisals yielded positive effect, and negative perceptions of procedural unfairness hurt performance levels. The acceptability of the appraisal system is, therefore, perceived through the procedural and distributive justices engraved in the assessment process as determinants for appraisal efficiency.

Performance Evaluation in the Public Service

In public administration, the system of performance appraisal is core to performance improvement and accountability of governments (Makhubela et al., 2016). Public service organizations use performance appraisal to align with the performance of employees (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2014) who are intrinsically motivated to perform their duties because of their contribution to the broader society (Jensen & Vestergaard, 2017). In their contributions to the public good, employees engage in the delivery and productivity symbolisms through the New Public Management (NPM) concept (Purohit & Martineau, 2016). This concept envisages performance improvements, excellence, motivation, and capacity building, but Taylor (2015) alleged a disconnection between performance rhetoric and performance reality.

New Public Management (NPM). The origin of performance management in the public service emanated from the phenomenon of NPM with a results-oriented focus for

public services (Arnaboldi, Lapsley, & Steccolini, 2015). NPM give rise to the construct of doing “more with less” that permeates public service organizations with applied pressures to federal managers to improve the delivery of service. Cuganesan, Guthrie, and Vranic (2014) stressed that the riskiness for improvement of the delivery of service negatively outweighed the potentials for gain. NPM instituted audits and dictates for compliance (Funnell, 2015), invented the corporate jargons of vision, mission, strategic management, commitment that promoted disenchantment, activated cost minimization, augmented insecurity of jobs, demoralized employees that resulted in high attrition and turnover rates (Arnaboldi et al., 2015), engaged a combative job environment, marginalized thinking, and introduced analytics (Pettersen, 2015).

Performance appraisals. The use of PMSs in the modernization of the public service organizations complements the performance appraisal system for the collection of performance information (Ohemeng, Zakari, & Adusah, 2015). Research showed that performance appraisal is a valuable managerial tool for measurement of performance, provision of feedback, employee motivation, employee development, pay for performance rewards, reinforcement of values and supervisor-subordinate relationships (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Harrington & Lee, 2015; Joseph, 2014; Majid, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Despite these merits, however, the use of performance appraisal in the public service is negatively perceived and results in a lack of confidence in its efficacy, fairness, and trustworthiness (Kim & Holzer, 2016). Employees in the public service view the integrity of performance appraisal with negativity due to deficits in practices and implementation of the system.

Negativity underscores demotivation, lack of morale, and the different performance behavior of the employees whose knowledge and expertise are vital to public service development (Arnaboldi et al., 2015). Managers perceived as possessing inadequate grasp and aptitude for effective implementation of PMSs (Makhubela et al., 2016), goals viewed as ambiguous and influenced by political actors (Rainey & Jung, 2015), coupled with the complexed nature of public organizations (Arnaboldi et al., 2015). Employees perceive the developmental purpose of appraising performance as a guide for improving performance, and significant to the employees' performance and delivery of services (Kim & Holzer, 2016). The developmental utility of appraising performance merits communication of values to public service employees' contributions, motivating them through the provision of constructive feedback, making for enjoyable work. Arnaboldi et al. (2015) argued that these have unfavorable effects on performance rewards that caused performance appraisal to remain a challenge for public services in their pursuit of provision and delivery of quality services.

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system. I commenced Chapter 2 with an introduction of my approach for discussion on the research strategy used to garner information, the conceptual framework which comprised the PMSs framework and GST, and the expansion of the literature on various constructs of interest. The literature review captured sections on the Purpose and Benefits of the Performance Appraisal System, Methods and Ratings used for assessment of

employees, and the Evaluation Process as this relates to the steps and roles. Discussions emerged on the identification of challenges of the evaluation system, biases, fairness of assessments, the disconnection to reward and development. A further review encompassed discussions on general perceptions on the evaluation system that highlighted the justice theories which played significant roles in employees' perceptions and acceptance of the appraisal system.

The study focused on employees' lived experiences with the performance appraisal system within a public service organization, which formed the context of my field research. In this regard, I addressed the gap in knowledge on the employees' perspectives of the performance appraisal system (Panda & Pradhan, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017). This study was different from previous researches as a combined framework comprising PMSs, and the GST was used to explore the lived experiences of the appraisal system by junior employees and to understand the meanings ascribed. Despite previous research on the appraisal system, none showed a study on the performance appraisal system using this combined conceptual framework.

The literature review illustrated the applicability of the framework to performance appraisal in the broader context of PMSs and GST. The collection of data from the 15 participants facilitated the explication of the relevance of the structure to performance appraisal and an understanding of how employees internalized the evaluation system. I discussed the research method, including the research design and rationale, and other guiding parts in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Chapter 3 includes preliminary discussions on the research design that incorporated qualitative paradigms such as grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and case study, and the rationale for nonapplicability to my study. The purpose of the study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system. I accomplished this objective through a qualitative phenomenological study using semistructured interviews as the primary mode for data collection from a sample of 15 employees from the research organization, and a documentary review of organizational artifacts. The sample consisted of employees from the junior levels of the organization's echelon. Face-to-face or telephone interviews were the research design proposed, but the face-to-face method was the preferred technique used during the data collection period. Also included in Chapter 3 is an explanation of my role in the study and the rationale used for the selection of participants in the process, the recruitment procedures engaged, the instrument used, and how the data collected was analyzed. The chapter concludes with ethical discussions on trustworthiness, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and finally illustrate the alignment of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the RQ with the various elements.

Research Design and Rationale

The problem, purpose, and questions for the research phenomenon contributed to the choice for an appropriate method and design. Qualitative and quantitative inquiries

were the methods considered for data collection and analyses. The qualitative inquiry is consistent in its naturalistic approach embraced by a philosophical stance or paradigm that impacts the way researchers conceptualize the qualitative studies, categorized as narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, case study, and grounded theory (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Yin, 2016). Qualitative approaches use unstructured methods for data collection and fully explore the topic (Moustakas, 1994), whereas quantitative approaches use structured methods (Burkholder et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). The central phenomenon for the study was the performance appraisal system. Performance appraisal and performance evaluation represent an essential management tool for measuring performance and monitoring development and career aspirations of employees (Khan et al., 2017). The RQ was, “What are the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system?” I chose a qualitative design and selected participants through purposeful sampling.

The qualitative design has been noted as the preferred method by qualitative researchers to seek reality and experiences about participants on issues for understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, the use of the qualitative approach allowed me to interact with the participants and explore the complexity and subjectivity of the performance appraisal system. The purpose of the quantitative method is defined by prediction, knowledge extension, change measurement, and testing new ideas (Patton, 2015). The quantitative inquiry uses systematic, standardized approaches and techniques such as surveys, linked RQs to data collection through specific structural features, measurement of variables, and sampling strategy (Burkholder et al., 2016). I did not

intend to conduct a quantitative analysis of the employees' experiences as the quantitative method was not best for capturing ideas and behaviors of individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2006), nor did I engage the use of measurements and numbers on employees' experiences; hence the quantitative methodology was inappropriate. Further, the mixed method, with its blend of qualitative and quantitative methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007), was inappropriate as my study did not involve a "before" or "after" on the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system, a comparison which defines the mixed-method approach (see Johnson et al., 2007). The purpose of my research was to comprehend employees lived experiences with the performance evaluation system.

With underpinnings in the naturalistic philosophical paradigm, the qualitative phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994) was most appropriate for my study as it focused on human-related issues associated with an experience, placed the perceptions of participants of the phenomenon in a contextual framework and provided clarity in understanding. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the research design connotes the "blueprint" of the qualitative study as it combines the research purpose, framework, question, and methodology, the lack of which infers a waste of time for both researcher and participant. Specifically, the phenomenological design offered an exploration of how the participants perceived their lived experiences with the performance appraisal system. With the phenomenological design, Moustakas (1994) claimed that researchers became a part of the participant's worldview in how their experiences shaped their opinions of the world and themselves through their thoughts, values, judgments, expectations, meaning, assumptions, significance, and others. In this

way, the design facilitated the uniqueness of the study between participants and myself, where similar experiences shared on performance evaluation contributed to better comprehension. The phenomenological design paralleled the purpose of my study, whereby the objective was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences that aligned with the phenomenological tenet of understanding people and their experiences.

Additionally, rather than theorizing on meanings and experiences, the phenomenological design helped me to draw out the silent issues from participants. I listened and carefully observed the narration of their experiences during the process while having reflections on my experiences with the performance appraisal system. As such, my study provided for better comprehension of how the employees' perceived the performance appraisal system.

Moustakas (1994) dichotomized the descriptive and interpretive traditions of the phenomenological design, which helped in data reporting and analysis. The descriptive approach reduced the reported experiences into themes and patterns consolidating the commonalities, while the interpretive approach accessed the same data but searched for the factors that were psychologically and sociologically related to the responses. Unlike the interpretive process, which solicits profound interpretations of the experiences accounted, experiences of the participants are of value in the descriptive tradition (Agaard, 2017). The descriptive phenomenology refrains from supposition and preconceive knowledge about the phenomenon, contextualizes and amplifies the data which give meaning, structure and essence of the lived experiences of the appraisal

events and allowed for current perceptual, unadulterated findings (Aagaard, 2017; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2015).

Upon review of the descriptive and interpretative phenomenological traditions, and given the stated purpose of my research, I chose the descriptive tradition as my preferred method for the study. This tradition provided for a description of the experiences of employees on the performance appraisal system. I reduced the data into codes and themes that portrayed the common views shared by participants, hence providing for full comprehension of the performance appraisal system through the use of open-ended questions in the face-to-face interviews. The phenomenological design allowed for probing questions as a follow-up, where further details were obtained on the attributive meaning, structure, and essence of the performance appraisal system as perceived by the employees of the public service organization.

Other Research Designs

Apart from phenomenology, qualitative inquiry accords several research paradigms that researchers conceptualize for investigation. Grounded theory, ethnography, narrative inquiry, case study, heuristic inquiry (Yin, 2016), and phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) are the most prominent types of qualitative research designs embraced by researchers. However, for the below-stated rationales, these designs were not appropriate for my study, and I chose the phenomenological design, which offered a significant advantage in its use.

Grounded Theory. The grounded theory involves the generation of a new approach, emphasized through data collection on a phenomenon within the context of the

real world, and from which data, categories emerge for analysis (Yin, 2016).

Accordingly, this theory is unaffected by the researcher's preconceptions but found unsuitable for my research as its focus is on the generation of a new method, which was not the purpose of my study.

Ethnography. Ethnography refers to the uniqueness of the culture of the phenomenon studied. Through details of the norms, practices, and rituals of a protracted period, the study setting is in the real world (Yin, 2016). Although my research entailed the views and perceptions of employees on the performance appraisal, the ethnographic research design was not appropriate as the purpose of my research study was not to capture the norms, routines, and rituals of participants.

Narrative. The narrative research tradition was inappropriate for my study, as findings in such a design are constructed and reported in the form of a story from the real-world setting of the participants (Yin, 2016). The objective of my research was to capture the perceptions of the participants through the description of their experiences. I used semistructured interviews, transcribe and code the data, and analyze the emerging theme; hence the objective was not to relay a story.

Case Study. With this type of research method, researchers examine changes, complexities, and background conditions of the phenomenon, which could be a single case or multiple cases for an explanation (Yin, 2016). The case study methodology signifies a data collection strategy to gather historical data inappropriate to research employees' experiences. A case study is nonaligned to the purpose of my research, which is to understand the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance

evaluation system. Yin (2014) defined the case study paradigm as a pragmatic inquiry that examined an existing phenomenon with a focus on thoroughness, rationality, and consistency, bounded by time and place.

Role of the Researcher

The purpose of the researcher in a qualitative study is that of the principal instrument for the collection of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). As a researcher, I stepped out of my worldview and into the worldview of the participants. Stepping out enabled me to make sense of the realities and experiences of participants and to understand the specific phenomenological issues of the group (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the primary researcher, I performed a multiplicity of roles, namely, organizer, data collector, interviewer, facilitator, and analyst. As the interviewer, I facilitated the interviewing process and interviewed participants on their lived experiences with the performance appraisal system (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). In my role as an organizer, I engaged officials of the research organization for permission to conduct the study after I obtained the approval of my proposal from Walden University. I liaised with the focal point of the research organization on the planning and scheduling of data collection. I planned a presentation on the essentialities of the study to illustrate the greater good of the research for social change.

As a data collector, I obtained detail responses based on the interview questions from the sampled participants with whom I was not familiar (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) and whose experiences with the performance appraisal system I targeted. I collected data through semistructured face-to-face interviews and document reviews, described and

analyzed data for findings. The document review supplemented the interview and supported data triangulation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). I read and reflected on the data obtained for greater comprehension and emergence of themes before description and analysis (Aagaard, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). Engagement in member-checking allowed for an exploration of the accuracy of the data collected during the interviews by the recheck and reconfirmation of the meanings by participants (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I did not undertake member-checking for analysis of the data.

My positionality and identity influenced my opinions and values reflected in my findings and were central to understanding my role as a researcher (Galdas, 2017). I entered the research setting in a neutral position (Morse, 2015) and managed the noneliminatory feature of subjectivity in this descriptive phenomenological qualitative research through bracketing. This strategy barred my preconceived notions about performance appraisal and allowed the core of the phenomena to be examined and described as it appeared, enabling for a description of the lived experiences. With this strategy, my past knowledge was bracketed, and attempts to go beyond the data obtained from the interview transcripts were avoided, allowing for data collection to occur with precision.

A potential threat of perceived personal bias surfaced from my preconceived ideas on performance appraisal that could have caused data misrepresentation (Galdas, 2017). My experience with performance appraisal is rooted in prior functions related to training and development where I delivered training on performance appraisal, my role as an

appraiser for junior employees under my supervision in my current employment, and provision of advice to staff members who contested poorly-rated performance appraisal reports. Although researcher bias was inescapable, I engaged in reflexivity (Attia & Edge, 2017) through constant critiques of my bias considerations, actions, thoughts, and preconceptions. I articulated my writings with clarity for greater awareness for my readers. Notwithstanding, to play the different roles identified for the study, verbal communication was of significance for the process, specifically in interaction with the participants (Hazel & Clark, 2013). I built a trust relationship with participants that enabled for quality responses in communication as I was responsible for this study from data collection throughout to data analysis.

Methodology

The research was based on the lived experiences of the junior level employees with the performance appraisal system. I undertook a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study that defined the boundary of the research and facilitated data collection and analysis. First, I conducted a document review on the organization's structure, policy on performance appraisal, format, and procedures for appraisal administration. I estimated to complete this review in seven working days but achieved this in three working days. Next, I organized semistructured interviews with the 15 selected and consented participants. The interview comprised open-ended questions administered to participants, drawn from various sections of the research organization. An interview lasted for 45 to 60 minutes for each participant. After that, data transcription occurred, member-checked, coded, and finally analyzed using the Braun and

Clarke (2006) thematic analysis framework. The qualitative methodology allowed for interaction with the participants in the process of the interview, while the phenomenological design provided for a full understanding of the participants' world (Moustakas, 1994).

Participant Selection Logic

The overarching RQ was the premise for the selection criteria for participants. The purposeful sample of 15 participants characterized information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). The organization's staffing report was the source document for equally selecting participants from the lower level echelons who met the criteria of the participant logic. A homogeneous sampling strategy categorized participants according to the salary grade of the organization. The sample comprised employees who were active in employment for at least three years from the junior levels of the organization's hierarchy and appraised for at least two performance periods. According to Patton (2015), this technique was useful for discovering meaning from a natural position and aligned with the phenomenological nature of the study. Although there were no specific rules for the determination of the appropriate sample size, the sample was nevertheless affected by the time, resources, and objectives of the study.

The concept of saturation indicated the sufficiency of the interviews with information repeats from participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mason, 2010). The sample size of 15 participants was large enough for this phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) stated that the depth and not the breadth of the perceptions were important to phenomenological studies. Hence, the sample size ranged from 8 to 12. In my research, I

interviewed 15 participants who were appropriate for attaining saturation through in-depth interviews. The selection logic held that participants must (a) be in employment for at least 3 years, (b) be in the junior levels of the organization's hierarchy, (c) be appraised for at least two performance periods, and (d) be active in employment and not on special leave without pay, maternity leave, or administrative leave for disciplinary review.

While I did not target vulnerable populations, my recruitment method automatically excluded minors because participants were of the legal age of 18 years and above for employment. Facility residents were also automatically excluded, as I did not undertake the study in a hospice nor medical setting. Additionally, my research excluded automatically any person who was under my supervision and currently worked with the public service organization.

Instrumentation

In the descriptive phenomenological study, I was the primary researcher who collected data through an exploration of the experiences of the junior employees for comprehension of the meanings ascribed to the performance appraisal system (Ritanti, Asih, & Susanto, 2017). Semistructured interviews and document reviews were the primary methods for data collection. Field notes, interview protocol, and an audio recorder constituted the other instruments utilized for the collection of data.

Fieldnotes. Participants' demeanor and relative information, such as nonverbal cues during the face-to-face interviews, were documented through dictation and writing of summary notes at the end of the meetings (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). These contextualized the discussions undertaken and improved the quality of the findings.

Protocol. The interview protocol served as a guide for the semistructured interviews throughout the process. This guide was essential for ensuring consistency, dependability, and unforeseen problems arising during the process. The protocol contained a script and prompts that guided the interview process for the attainment of information for the questions. Open-ended questions allowed participants to provide responses based on their knowledge and experience about performance appraisal and enabled probing for further responses where participants offered the in-depth meaning of their responses (Yin, 2016).

Recorder. A Phillips voice tracer captured the interview responses from participants (Ritanti et al., 2017). I also used my Samsung phone voice recorder as a backup that ensured information was recorded by one or the other recording device, should a mishap result. I captured no personal information from participants. I ensured receipt of the consent form from the selected participants who displayed the willingness to participate, notwithstanding that during the interview process, a participant was free to withdraw (Patton, 2015). This ethical interview process undertaken aligned with the code of ethics of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Content validity. Through validation of the methodology, a researcher receives the authenticated feedback on the credibility of the design (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). The methodologist assigned for my research provided expert advice on the alignment of my interview guide and confirmed its validity and credibility. A second methodological expert on phenomenological studies from Walden University provided feedback and insights on the interview protocol, which confirmed the capability

of the questions for the desired responses. The interview questions originated from my central RQ, which stated: “What are the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system?” and from the conceptual framework, which illustrated the core elements of GST and the PMSs of which the performance appraisal system is a construct.

Procedures for Recruitment of Participants and Data Collection

I was the main conduit for the collection of data gathered from the website of the research organization, artifacts of the institution, databases from Walden Library, and the interview scripts of the interviewees. Leading up to the participants’ recruitment and collection of data, I:

1. Received IRB’s approval to conduct the research
2. Received IRB’s approval on the Letter of Cooperation for communication to the research organization.
3. Received approval from the organization to conduct the research
4. Received participants’ consent to participate
5. Arranged a schedule on time and dates to conduct recorded interviews
6. Engaged a company for the transcription of the interviews.
7. Conducted member-checking with participants who reviewed transcriptions for the accuracy of meanings and understanding of the responses.
8. Purchased and used NVivo for the importation of transcripts and analysis of data.

Procedures for recruitment of participants. I obtained a letter from the IRB on approval to conduct the research, approved criteria for the selection of 15 participants, and the method for collection of data. I communicated the IRB approval to the research organization. Following receipt of the organization's approval, I issued emails of invitation as a source of recruitment to the junior employees. The selected participants confirmed their interest in participating. Following, I communicated the consent form for their signatures as their agreement to participate in the study, noting that participation was voluntary, and incentives, not awarded. Ethical issues for the interviewees were considered in their agreement to participate through alignment to the moral principle of "respect for persons"; that the selection process was noncoercive, data collected handled with privacy, confidentiality, and security and any potential risk of conflict of interest addressed.

Procedures for data collection. The interview protocol comprised the invitation letter to participants, consent form, and interview questions used to guide the process for data collection via the interviews with consideration to language accents and the cultural setting.

Interviews. A schedule was prepared with the dates and times to conduct the interviews with participants. I allocated 45 minutes for each interview, with four participants scheduled for one day during work hours. I planned the completion of the 15 interviews within one 5-day workweek. All data were collected through interviews, captured on a recorder through face-to-face contact. The use of the in-depth interview technique created the trajectory for entrance into the world of the participant for

exploration of their understandings of the performance appraisal system while at the same time being insightful of how the meaning was constructed and contextualized (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Although an interview schedule guided the in-depth interview, I retained a high degree of flexibility, which allowed for movement between the unstructured and semistructured approaches and for open dialogue extended beyond the boundaries of the interview schedule. I held debriefs with participants before the interviews, but after, engagement in member-checking allowed for feedback on the data accuracy (Birt et al., 2016).

Document review. The review of artifacts such as the mission and vision statements, policy documents on the organization's PMSs, performance appraisal reports, and other relevant communication completed three days before the interviews. This action provided for a better understanding of the research organization's appraisal system (see Ravitch & Carl, 2015). I examined the documents against the constructs of the conceptual framework and constructed a database with information on the establishment and administration of the PMSs within the public service organization. Burkholder et al. (2016) referred to the document review as a retroactive source of existing information where no data collection is required and represented a low demand for logistics.

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected for the research was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. The thematic analysis represents a primary method for the identification, analysis, and theme reporting and description of rich data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of thematic analysis was consistent with the phenomenological

study as a critical element in the data analysis was the retrieval of the essential meaning of the experiences attained through the abstraction of themes.

A five-step framework to data analysis articulated by Yin (2016) comprised (a) compilation, (b) disassemble, (c) reassemble, (d) interpret, and (e) conclude. These steps were not linear but represented levels that were repetitive and recurring. Non-linearity, in the process of data analysis, was supported by Evans (2018), who used semistructured interviews for research on voluntary civic participation among adults with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach. This approach outlined the following steps for data analysis:

1. Familiarization with data.
2. Creation of initial codes.
3. Search for themes.
4. Review themes and interpret results.
5. Define and name themes.
6. Report production.

I used the thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) and analyzed the data collected from the semistructured interviews for my research. The choice of this method resulted from my RQ and the broader theoretical and conceptual assumptions of the study. Further, the thematic analysis allowed for an understanding of the meanings that the participants attached to the performance appraisal system and their lived experiences in the context of their employment (Evans, 2018). The schematic of the data

analysis framework (see Appendix C) depicts the process for data analysis and identification of themes.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step of the process was data familiarization. I achieved this through constant reading and familiarization of self with the contents of the interviews. I solicited a transcription company for the translation of the interview reports from the audio recorder. I engaged in member-checking for accuracy of descriptions on experiences and meanings. Secondly, I highlighted keywords and phrases, entered the data from the transcripts into NVivo, and created initial codes. Continuous evaluation for the identification of other codes led me to the third step of searching for themes. Areas of the data that were interesting and significant, short phrases or words considered captivating, cumulative, or outstanding were assigned (Saldana, 2013). Initial insignificant responses were also attributed codes. At this stage, extracts of data were combined or separated depending on codes collation and reviewed for the emergence of possible themes. NVivo was used to identify other potential themes. Fourthly, I reviewed the themes and assigned codes with a more in-depth examination of the emerging themes and recommendations. For the fifth step, I defined and named the themes through a mapping process and created a theme chart. I generated the theme report using NVivo. Finally, in Step 6, I analyzed the data and produced the findings of the research.

I used NVivo 12 Plus software as the preferred software with its easy to learn attributes for researchers who are new to qualitative research. NVivo has data management capabilities to manage, import, analyze, and organize data with codes and

themes using acoustics for emphasis and the ability to generate reports. This aspect was significant to my research for the volume of data collected through the interviews and transcribed for coding and thematization purposes. I used an excel sheet to consolidate the data coding from which themes emerged for analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness dates to the 1980s when Lincoln and Guba (1985) determined the relevance of the concept to qualitative studies. The terminology was used in quantitative studies to achieve rigor, reliability, validity, and generalizability (see Patton, 2015), but replaced with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for qualitative studies (Polit & Beck, 2014). Trustworthiness defines the rigor used to assess the quality of the inquiry through data collection, methodology, and interpretation (Connelly, 2016). In my research, I attained trustworthiness with the use of peer review articles, member-checking of transcripts, perspectives of the interviewees closely aligned to the purpose of the study, bracketing that barred preconceived notions of the phenomena, and reflexivity that critically analyzed my personal biases (Aagaard, 2017). According to Morse (2015), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability give the research its real value, usefulness, and authenticity to findings. Credibility refers to the outcomes of the study that reflect the reality and meanings experienced by the interviewees. Transferability signifies the application of the findings to other settings and groups. Dependability implies the stability of the data over time and conditions of the study. Confirmability infers the lack of bias in the viewpoints of the researcher's interaction with the data.

Credibility

Qualitative researchers apply credibility strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of research findings. Connelly (2016) alluded to several approaches for qualitative studies, which included participant engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, member checks, reflexive journaling, and examination of previous research findings for assurance of a thick description of the phenomenon. As a primary researcher, I maintained credibility through my participation, which ensured that the time spent with the interview process adhered to the attainment of quality data for understanding the perspectives of the employees. Credibility aligned with the emerged concepts from the interview responses of the participants, and not by my preconceived ideas about the phenomena. Member-checking ensured the accuracy of the meanings and essence of the events, and that participants' subjective assessments were not the basis for my findings.

To augment the validity of the research, the review of documents and interviews conducted formed the bases for triangulation. Field notes complemented the evidence of triangulation. According to Yin (2016), the use of triangulation as a strategy steers away validity threats from the varied sources for data conversion. With diverse sources, I optimized my comprehension and insight into the performance appraisal system. To strengthen the credibility, I engaged my methodologist with the interview questions to ensure that these conformed with my research design and allowed for the most likely and accurate responses. Member-checking ensured that there was an alignment of the interviewees' responses to the research question. The results reflected the positions transcended by the interviewees and the achievement of credibility

Transferability

This element of trustworthiness signifies the contextual application of the findings from the study (Connelly, 2016), the scope to which the results could apply to similar research contexts (Amankwaa, 2016). While transferability was synonymous with generalizability or the external validity in quantitative research, the focus of transferability in my qualitative research was on the applicability to other research settings. Strategies that supported transferability included information-rich data on the context, participants, and location. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to the “thick description” of data collected in qualitative studies that signified an extensive description of the phenomena within its setting. The findings from my research have transferability to similar organizational contexts as a public service organization. The meanings, structure, and essence of the performance appraisal system by participants may differ from other organizations base on the vision and mission and established goals. For example, while private sectors may have a goal of profit maximization, public service organizations may have a purpose for the public good (see Purohit & Martineau, 2016). My role is to provide the findings to the research organization for application and transferability.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and the conditions of the study (Morse, 2015). In this regard, the research illustrated that the sample represented appropriate participants for rich-data provision. This feature assisted me in illustrating the profoundness of the phenomena for increased comprehension by readers (see Polit &

Beck, 2014). Dependability is synonymous with reliability in quantitative studies achieved through a thorough examination of the processes used for the study.

Confirmability

It infers the degree to which consistency and repetitiveness of the findings exist, lacking bias (Morse, 2015), and is synonymous with objectivity in a quantitative study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Detailed record keeping of decisions taken was engaged as the analysis progressed. I used reflexive journaling to build my awareness on the development of the study by taking a step back from the activity, theorize and conceptualize the ongoing events surrounding the research, and, when possible, stepped in on the contextualized action (Attia & Edge, 2017). This strategy of documentation assisted in the alleviation of biases. Hence, I professionally immersed myself in the data and engaged in techniques that assisted in the transcription of the data, thematization, codification, verification, analysis, and reporting of the data.

Ethical Procedures

Approved research studies require adherence to ethical procedures. The pursuit of certainty and understanding of phenomenological research avail insight into the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experiences of the participants studied (Patton, 2015). Emphasis on the description of participants and their settings ensued a relationship between myself and participants. This relationship implied access to the participants' world to obtain information on their lived experiences. There were no ethical issues between the objective of the research and the maintenance of the privacy rights of participants (McDonald, Simpson, & Bart, 2014). I demonstrated respect for participants

in the research through an illustration of the ethical principles devised for observance by researchers. Hence while doing good for others, harm was avoided.

The IRB is responsible for ensuring that all Walden University research complies with the University's ethical standards. I completed and submitted my ethics planning worksheet with my proposal for review by my Chair, who submitted to the University's IRB as part of the requirement on the ethical procedures followed for my research. Following IRB's approval, I commenced the collection of data.

Consent form. The consent form represents the principal document used in the process of ethical considerations and comprises the exact verbosity provided by the IRB's Office of Research and Compliance to communicate with participants. I emailed to the participants, the consent form that included information on the rationale of the study, the purpose of the research study and interview, and procedures to follow. This communication also included time allotted for the meeting, information on member-checking of the transcripts, the voluntary nature of participation, and the ability to withdraw from the meeting at any time without penalty, if feelings of discomfort arose. The advantages of being interviewed, the privacy and confidentiality of the information provided, and the contribution of the study to positive social change constituted the other elements of the consent form.

Confidentiality. Maintenance of confidentiality for information collected from research participants is very important for the observance of the ethical principles of the study. It was necessary to record participants' names and contact information. This action helped to source the sample, and communicate with them for their consent to

participate in the interviews. Since I was the principal instrument in the collection of data, this meant that only I was able to identify the responses of individual subjects and to prevent external individuals from connecting the responses to the participants.

As a researcher, I abided by the IRB-approved researcher-participant agreement for the collection and protection of research data and to protect participants from harm that may result from breaches of confidentiality (e.g., psychological distress, loss of insurance, loss of employment, or damage to social standing). Participants were advised only to provide relevant information during the interview, and were assured of confidentiality through my engagement with the following points:

- Removal of face sheets with identifiers (e.g., names, functional titles, email addresses) from interview instruments containing data received from study participants and sent for transcription;
- Use of study codes on the interview protocols to keep participants' identity confidential;
- Restricted access to the papers (Use of the personal computer to store data and not office computer);
- Encrypted identifiable data where necessary;
- Proper disposal of study data on completion of the project through deletion

Following IRB's approval process, I obtained permission from the research organization to conduct the study.

Summary and Transition

The purpose of the study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system. In Chapter 3, I discussed various research designs and the rationale for using the phenomenological design when compared to the grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and case study research designs. The qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design underpinned the study due to its applicability to meanings and not numbers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Role of the Researcher section showed the multiplicity of functions performed and the specific stance taken related to the realities and experiences of the participants. The Methodology section detailed the participant selection logic, instrumentation, the procedures for recruitment, the sampling, and data collection methods. The thematic analysis framework outlined the procedures for data analysis. The research design and methodology were instrumental in the exploration of the primary RQ. Discussions on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability depicted issues of trustworthiness. I concluded Chapter 3 by discussing the nonintervention and avoidance of harm to participants as these relate to participants' respect. I present the data collection and analysis in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Introduction

In Chapter 4, I present data collection, analysis, and results of the interviews conducted, combined with a review of secondary data on the appraisal policy, mandate, mission, and appraisal structure of the research organization. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system. Corroboration of responses from semistructured interviews with field notes and document review of policy statements facilitated answers to the primary RQ. I audio recorded the interviews and used a single interview protocol that comprised main and probing questions to interview the 15 participants. I conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of the responses using the NVivo 12 Plus software to code, thematize, and organize the data. In parallel, a document review conducted on the contents of the policy statements assisted in understanding the research organization's performance appraisal process and alignment to the conceptual framework. In this chapter, I address the research setting, demographics, how data were gathered and recorded, procedures engaged for the analysis, codes, and themes identification. Discussions on trustworthiness include quality checks engaged for credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

Research Setting

The organization's geographical location was the research site, which remained constant during the data collection phase. My neutral disposition upon entrance to the organization enabled bracketing and omitted any state of mind that could influence the analysis of the data. I was assigned a focal person with whom I made contact for different

types of information and documents on the performance appraisal system. The planned presentation to the officials of the research organization on the study did not materialize since officials were engaged in other competing strategic priorities for the organization. I was offered the organization's boardroom as an office where I worked from and conducted interviews during normal work hours. The boardroom was a secluded and quiet place for the interviews with its office-like décor and plenty of space to work. Some interview recordings captured noise within the external environment from construction work. I signaled participants to speak up louder so that the noise from the construction site did not drown out their voices. Unfortunately, there was not another secluded place to conduct the interviews.

Additionally, on two occasions, interviews had to be rescheduled because of the unavailability of the boardroom, which the organization gave preference for the holding of meetings. In support of my research, the Under-Secretary for HR Management communicated an internal memorandum to all junior employees, informing them of my authority to conduct the research, and encourage their participation in the exercise should they be approached. Telephone calls to the provided contact numbers for the participants supplemented the internal memorandum to sustain decisions by participants to participate voluntarily.

Demographics

The purposive sample of participants was identified and distinguished by salary grade from the research organization's staffing table. Salary grades for the junior employees ranged from U4 to U8, with the letter "U" representing the salary scale of the

public service organization, followed by a number that categorized the level of the staff. The U4-U8 levels of staff represented 59% of the total workforce or 135 employees. Participant eligibility was considered for 123 employees, as 12 employees were not actively employed (e.g., away from the office on maternity leave, annual leave, or disciplinary action) and did not meet this selection criterion. Further review of the 123 junior employees resulted in the participation of 15 eligible employees who were (a) in employment for at least 3 years, as reflected in the date of hire column in Table 1, (b) assessed for at least two performance periods, verified through review of the appraisal records and reflected in the columns Appraisal 17/18 and Appraisal 18/19 in Table 1, and (c) active in employment, which was verified by their presence on the job; not being on annual leave, disciplinary action, or maternity leave; and their ability to be in attendance at the interview. The gender column is inserted only to illustrate the diverse participant sample.

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of 15 Participants for the Study

Participants	Functional title	Salary scale	Gender	Date of hire	Appraisal 17/18	Appraisal 18/19
Participant 1	Personal secretary	U4	Female	8/11/2016	4	4
Participant 2	Driver	U8	Male	9/11/2015	4	4
Participant 3	Records assistant	U7	Male	11/30/2015	4	4
Participant 4	Records assistant	U7	Female	4/5/2009	4	4
Participant 5	HR officer	U4	Female	6/16/2011	4	4
Participant 6	Stenographer	U4	Female	5/26/1995	4	4
Participant 7	Records officer	U4	Male	2/6/2015	3	4
Participant 8	Records officer	U4	Male	8/18/2009	5	4
Participant 9	Secretary	U4	Female	9/8/2016	4	4
Participant 10	Inventory officer	U5	Female	4/19/2012	4	4
Participant 11	Office attendant	U8	Female	1/10/2013	4	4
Participant 12	Accounts assistant	U7	Male	6/12/1990	4	4
Participant 13	Assistant records officer	U5	Female	8/30/2004	4	4
Participant 14	Personal secretary	U4	Male	8/11/2016	4	4
Participant 15	Internal auditor	U4	Male	5/2/2000	4	4

Data Collection

Following receipt of Walden's University IRB approval (#06-14-19-0615932), I submitted the letter of cooperation on June 20, 2019, to the partner organization with the IRB approval. In parallel, I requested a change in procedures. I submitted the request to the IRB on August 15, 2019, for one criterion in the participation selection logic to be removed and for another to be modified. The research organization approved on August

8, 2019, following which I received full approval from IRB to proceed with the research. I received the approval of the change request from IRB on September 9, 2019. The preparation of a schedule of associated activities followed and data collection conducted during September 2019.

The Interviews

I conducted semistructured interviews for 2 weeks with 15 participants. This phase extended from the planned action to complete the interviews within one 5-day workweek. Before the interview commenced, I introduced participants to the purpose of the research, which was initially communicated by email through the consent form. I informed each participant of the selection criteria used for their inclusion in the study, the audio recording of the interviews, the transcribing of the interviews, member-checking of the transcripts, privacy, confidentiality, and security of the data, including archiving for the next 5 years. This discussion took place within the first 10 to 15 minutes before the start of the interviews in the research organization's boardroom; hence, this section was not captured on the audio recording. One reason I did not record the introductory remarks was to reduce the cost for transcription of the same introductory remarks for 15 participants, and only to record the responses on the participants' experiences. I allowed participants to share any concerns before recording the interviews to which I provided clarity in the responses. Some participants communicated their interests by email but did not sign and submit the consent form, but others signed the consent forms and returned by email. All participants signed the consent form in my presence, which served as a reconfirmation of their participation. I used a Phillips voice tracer to record the interviews

backed up by a Samsung voice recorder to which participants consented. The use of an interview protocol for the interviews ensured consistency in the process of collecting data.

Face-to-face interviews were planned for 45 to 60 minutes, as defined in Chapter 3. With the unrecorded introductory remarks, the actual interview times ranged from 35 to 50 minutes, totaling 275 hours. During the interviews, I strategically placed the recorders between the participant and me for distinct recordings. I observed and took notes on the participants' demeanor, intonations, interests, and gesticulations in the provision of their responses. Although some of the participants were comfortable expressing lengthy responses and had no objection in the provision of details, there were other participants who, though participating willingly, appeared reluctant to express details. In those instances, I heightened probing and, at points of deviation, redirected participants' attention to their lived experiences that encompassed the interview.

After interviews, I downloaded the responses from the audio device onto my personal computer and uploaded these for transcription on the website of the transcription company with which I entered into a nondisclosure agreement. I validated the transcriptions, which contained the interview questions and responses with the recorded audio to attest the transcription accuracy and participant intent, making amendments where applicable. After that, I sent the transcriptions to the participants for member-checking, where each participant reviewed and made contributions, edits, and established the precision of the content. As described in Chapter 3, I estimated member-checking with the participants to take 15 to 20 minutes with each participant. I sent the transcripts

by email and followed-up for the retrieval. I used an Excel spreadsheet to track the planning and organization of the interviews and stored the related events about each participant on an external hard drive. The Excel worksheet included information on scheduled interview dates and times, and dates interviews completed, returned dates of audio sent for transcription, dates transcripts sent for member-checking, and dates final versions of transcript received, ready for analysis. The member-checked transcripts, together with the interview recordings, were also saved on the external hard drive and are in a safe place.

Document Review on Policy Statements

Documents reviewed on the appraisal system of the public service organization included the mandate, vision, mission, structure, the results framework and strategic plan, performance appraisal reports of the interviewed employees, performance plan template, and guidelines for manager and staff on performance appraisal. Review of the contents of the policy documents resulted in three key terms or codes and 10 emerged policy themes for performance evaluation. The themes revealed an understanding of the research organization's performance appraisal process and how this process aligned to the constructs of the conceptual framework (vision and mission statements, success factors, organizational structure, strategies and work plans, KPIs, goal-setting, performance evaluation, and the rewards system). This information supplemented the interviews and supported the triangulation of data. Following the collection of data, receipt of the interview transcripts, and member-checking, analysis commenced. No deviation occurred from the data collection plan.

Data Analysis

This segment of Chapter 4 illustrates the process engaged for the identification of codes and themes from the interview transcripts and policy documents on performance appraisal. I used the six-step thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) for analysis of the data collected from the interviews.

In the primary step for analysis, I achieved data familiarization through summarization, transcription, member-checking, and reading over the transcripts for content familiarization. For the creation of initial codes as the second step of the analysis framework, I used NVivo 12 Plus software. A code structure comprising 10 major codes deducte from the interview questions was defined and consisted of (a) experience and knowledge with performance appraisal, (b) feelings and experiences with goals and work plans, (c) experience with achievement, (d) experience with non-achievement, (e) experience with appraisal interview, (f) positive feedback and expectations, (g) sentiments of negative feedback, (h) meanings and understandings, (i) structure and relationship, and (j) developmental opportunities. The major codes resulted in key terms from the interview questions. Each code was assigned a coding stripe with a colored bar that illustrated the content coded for that specific code. The related text was dragged and dropped in the specific code area. I auto coded each code that facilitated the identification of themes for the third step in the analysis framework in the search for themes. Several themes emerged, but this process enabled the merging, renaming, and separation of themes where applicable. I deduced 28 themes in this consolidation. Constant reviews of the themes facilitated renaming as per the criterion of the fourth step of the framework

and formed the basis for further discussion. I created a theme saturation map (see Appendix D) as the fifth step of the analysis framework and plotted codes relative to the resultant themes identified. I used the NVivo project workbook to organize and tabulate the codes and themes represented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Policy documents represented statements on the operational procedures for performance evaluation, such as the framework through which performance was managed and monitored, objectives of appraisals outlined, the format of the appraisal, and the processes undertaken for evaluation of performance. The documents showed a descriptive overview of the inner workings of the PMSs in the research organization. An examination of the key codes derived from the three subquestions, against the policy documents resulted in 10 emerged policy themes. These were corroborated with the interview themes and discussed in Chapter 5 to illustrate the interpretations of the result, which comprised the sixth step of the thematic framework.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The thoroughness applied to the analysis and explanation of the data collected gives the study its value, authenticity, and practicality of the results (Aagaard, 2017; Connelly, 2016; Morse, 2015). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability illustrated the evidence of trustworthiness, as outlined in Chapter 3.

Credibility

In Chapter 3, I refer to the diverse means by which the study achieved credibility and ensured for saturation of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In concurrence with Connelly (2016), I attained the credibility of the study through data triangulation of interview

transcripts, field notes, and document review in alignment with the conceptual framework of the study. As a strategy, triangulation prevented the threat of validity that resulted from the conversion of the various sources of data (Yin, 2016) and enabled optimization for understanding the performance appraisal system in the public service organization. The sample consisted of 15 junior employees with different functional titles and levels, which facilitated the sharing of varied experiences on performance appraisal. Specifically, I analyzed the results of the data from this diverse group for concurrence or nonconcurrence with the literature review and conceptual framework. Member-checking of transcripts enabled accuracy and verification of intent by participants whose identity remained confidential and to whom I offered no incentives for participation.

My Chair was my prime Methodologist and provided valuable insights into the construction of my interview questions. Expert validation was also carried out on the interview questions by another Walden Methodologist on phenomenological studies. Valuable insights were received for the improved formulation to align with my research design in the search for rich data. The use of the interview protocol facilitated consistency in the application of the interview questions to all participants; audio-recording and engagement with one company for transcription altogether brought trustworthiness in the analysis. These credibility strategies were further complemented by bracketing (see Aagaard, 2017), which facilitated my neutral approach to the interviews. The ability to identify the texts for the emerging themes through constant comparison of the interview transcripts enabled for a better understanding of the participants' experiences. I identified no discrepant data, and no new themes emerged from this data

set, which indicated the point of saturation (Mason, 2010). Accordingly, the choice to interview a homogeneous sample of 15 participants was adequate as I achieved the depth rather than the breadth of the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I used all the data from the interviews in the analysis.

Transferability

In Chapter 3, I refer to information-rich data from the context, participants, and location as transferability strategies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reference to the “thick description” of data collected from participants aligned to the elaborate descriptions of the information received on performance appraisal. In concurrence with Amankwaa (2016), transferability infers the application of the findings to other entities for which the research organization has oversight responsibilities in the administration and management of performance appraisal. Within those entities, the system of results-based management remained the foundation for the administration and management of the performance appraisal system. Hence, only within similar settings to the research organization, could the results be applicable. The findings cannot be generalized to other settings that are noncharacteristic of the research organization. For organizations external to this framework, the study findings provided information for understanding the lived experiences of the junior employees with the performance appraisal system, and the meanings ascribed to this phenomenon.

Dependability

A thorough examination of the processes used for the study characterizes the dependability strategy (Morse, 2015). In triangulating the process of the study, I

established dependability through the alignment of the interview transcripts with the coding structure created. Dependability was further amplified with participants successfully meeting the selection criteria, adequate representation of males to females with different functional responsibilities, participants re-signing the consent form on the day of their interviews, and the obtained consent to audio record and retain the responses. Member-checking contributed to data stability as interviewees had an opportunity through this process to edit the transcripts for the correctness of meanings and interpretations. Continuous reading of the texts and coding of the transcripts, stability in the codes and themes allowed for dependability. With data saturation occurring at 15 participants, all of whom had experiences with at least two performance periods and were at the lower echelons of the organizational ladder, it is likely that interviews conducted with the same participants in another three years, their responses would be the same, as the policy that guided the process remained unchanged for a lengthy period (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Confirmability

I described confirmability in Chapter 3 as consistency, repetitiveness, and lack of bias in research findings. I achieved confirmability of the study through neutrality, a disposition held when I entered the research location, and conducted the interviews. Neutrality was achievable as I engaged reflexivity and bracketing as strategies for any biases on performance appraisal (Aagaard, 2017; Attia & Edge, 2017). Documentation of the procedures used for checking the data collected for analysis facilitated the inability for misrepresentation of data. The interview protocol presented a pattern for

communicating the interview questions and prevented any opportunities for bias to creep in the process. The interview protocol remains available for another five years, should further research be engaged. Although alluded to in Chapter 3, there was no requirement for self-disclosure statements, as I encountered no biases during the research. I built a trust relationship with participants through telephone and email communications that enabled the provision of quality responses as articulated in my writings with clarity (Hazel & Clark, 2013). The unpredicted nature of qualitative research facilitated the achievement of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of this study on the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system.

Study Results

I organized the results from the research into two parts 1) results from document review on policy statements that consisted of three major codes and 10 emerged policy themes on performance evaluation, and 2) results of the interview responses to the supporting three subquestions, codified to illustrate 10 major codes and 28 emerged themes. I described each policy theme based on the organizational facts. When corroborated with the interview themes, further analysis showed the convergence or non-convergence with the literature review and conceptual framework. I discussed each policy theme using examples of relevant texts from the transcripts captured as references by different participants in the description of their lived experiences. I illustrated the policy themes in Table 2 with the column labeled “subquestion” referencing the three sub-questions; columned labeled major code indicating the key terms from the sub-question; column labeled “No” signifying the number of themes for each major code and

column labeled “theme” showing the emerging themes. I displayed interview responses similarly in Tables 3, 4, and 5 with the interview questions represented in the first column. I used different verbs to capture participants’ excerpts because of the observed intonations by participants in response to the interview questions (the pitch, low tone, emphasis, inflection, modulation).

Policy Themes

Table 2

Policy Themes on Performance Appraisal

Subquestions	Major Codes	No.	Themes
What are the Employees’ Experiences with the Performance Appraisal System?	The appraisal system	1	Organizational Structure
		2	Appraisal Framework
		3	Objectivity of Appraisal
		4	Goals and Plans
What meanings do employees ascribe to the performance appraisal system?	Understanding performance appraisal	5	Planning and Monitoring
		6	Assessment
		7	Appraisal Meeting
How can the perceptions and experiences count towards the effective administration?	Effective administration	8	Performance improvement
		9	Feedback
		10	Rewards and sanctions

The appraisal system. To learn of the employees’ experiences with the performance appraisal system, I reviewed the tenets of the policy and declared four themes aligned to subquestion one.

Theme 1: Organizational structure. The mandate, vision, and mission of the research organization indicated the format of the appraisal structure with a foundation on the wider organizational structure. The mandate captured the development, management,

and supervision of HR policies, management systems, procedures, and structures; the vision referenced an organization that was affordable, efficient and accountable in steering rapid economic growth and social transformation while the mission inferred the HR policies, management systems and structures for effectiveness and efficiency. The public service organization oversees the administration and management of the performance appraisal system and distribute forms electronically through the organization's website at the beginning of the financial year to all the entities within the organization's structure.

Theme 2: Appraisal framework. The appraisal system has a basis in results-oriented management (ROM) that comprised the mission statement, the objectives aimed for achievement, the outputs for delivery, and the KPIs used to assess how well the organization delivered its outputs. These elements flow into the organization's strategic plans and budget from which performance plans are developed and translated into actions. Monitoring and evaluation of performance is a key feature of the ROM framework. Identified gaps result in the generation of improvement plans, or performance rewards when achieved. The framework defines the appraiser as one who directly supervises an employee and is authorized to assess that employee's performance. Where direct supervision is inapplicable, a senior official provides authority to the appraiser who works closely with the employee, to assess that employee's performance.

The framework describes the documents used by the appraiser and employee in the appraisal process as (a) policy statement, strategic plan and performance plan, (b) ROM handbook, (c) guidelines for managers and staff on performance appraisal, (d)

performance plan for the assessment period, (e) quarterly performance review forms, (f) the performance appraisal forms, (g) previous year's completed performance appraisal forms, and (h) other documents the appraiser and appraisee found necessary in obtaining facts, for example, reports, minutes and memos. The process is conducted annually with quarterly reviews.

Theme 3: Objectives of the appraisal. The contents of the policy documents revealed that the performance appraisal system aims to (a) determine the extent for achieved performance targets, (b) identify the development needed of the appraisee to develop potential, (c) increase motivation, (d) provide constructive feedback on performance, and (e) improve staff performance.

Theme 4: Goals and plans. The Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART) criteria define the outputs measured by the established KPIs, classified as quantitative, qualitative, an element of cost, or of time. The appraiser uses a performance plan format to document the work plan activities, which are transferred to the performance appraisal form for assessment at the end of the performance year. The appraisal form is reflective of the graphic rating scale method. Ratings used for determination of achievement of the key outputs range from one to five, where five is excellent, four is very good, three is good, two is fair, and one is poor.

Understanding performance appraisal. This major code resulted from sub-question two that depicted the policy themes on employees' meanings of the performance appraisal system through their understanding of the process. Three themes emerged from this code.

Theme 5: Planning and monitoring. The performance plan serves as the basis for the measurement of individual performance outputs at the end of the assessment period. The appraiser and appraisee jointly develop and agree on the outputs at the beginning of the assessment period, using terms such as volume, time, units, cost, clients handled, reports, as measures for performance goals. The policy refers to the continuous, yearly monitoring of performance through quarterly reviews. In the reviews, discussions are engaged to ensure that activities align with the agreed performance. Work progress, competences, personal developments, and other issues related to performance constitute the discussions. The performance plan is used to keep track of the progress made, remedial action where necessary, and includes the plans in the subsequent year for the nonaccomplished targets.

Theme 6: Assessment. Base on the performance plan that outlines the achievements and challenges, evaluation of the employee's performance takes place at the end of the organization's fiscal year. The appraiser and appraisee complete the appraisal form and measure the key outputs for the assessment period based on the minimum level of agreed performance targets. Activities assigned to the appraisee during the assessment period are included immediately in the appraisal form, or before the end of the assessment period. A maximum of 10 recommended outputs is permissible for one appraisal period for the assessment of the employee's performance level, reflected as per the rating method, and supported by relevant comments.

Theme 7: Appraisal meeting. The appraiser conducts an appraisal meeting with the appraisee at the end of the assessment period. During the appraisal meeting, the

appraiser and appraisee discuss and review performance considering the outputs, indicators, and agreed targets. Strengths that enabled the attainment of targets, or weaknesses that hampered attainment are identified, and feedback provided. The identified strengths and weaknesses are taken into consideration while agreeing on outputs, indicators, and targets for the next review period. At the appraisal meeting, the appraiser endorses the appraisal form, which reflects a jointly agreed position on the assessment.

Effective administration. This major code emanated for subquestion three and illustrated three policy themes that were core to the effective administration of the evaluation system.

Theme 8: Performance improvement. With the nonachievement of the expected results defined in the appraisee's performance plan, the appraiser determines first, what was responsible for the nonachievement. Was it a result of appraisee's performance or general organizational factors, such as changes in priorities, reorganization, or restructuring initiatives? Nonachievement of results signals a performance gap and implementation of performance improvement initiatives where the performance gap results from the employee's performance when circumstances that impacted achievement were within the appraisee's control. Performance improvement initiatives are built into the performance plan for the subsequent year to address those challenges.

Theme 9: Feedback on completion of appraisal reports. At the end of the appraisal exercise, the reports are stored, and staff informed. The folders are accessed only when needed to analyze information for purposes of HR Development or any

followup action.

Theme 10: Rewards and sanctions. As a tool for rewarding good performance and disciplining poor performance, appraisers and line managers ensure that employees are provided with the resources to perform their duties with the highest standards of professional and ethical competence and integrity. This policy theme indicates that employees are rewarded for outstanding contributions towards the achievement of corporate goals or innovation as per the Reward and Recognition Scheme of the organization. Disciplinary action in line with the relevant regulations results for employees who performed below the agreed standards.

Interview Themes

Table 3

Employees' Experiences with the Performance Appraisal

Interview Question	Major Code	No.	Theme
Tell me your experience with performance management or performance appraisal system in the Public Service. What do you know about performance management?	Experience and knowledge with performance appraisal	1	Awareness of Policy
		2	Management Tool
		3	Appraisals are a Formality
		4	Appraisals are not Motivational
		5	No Promotional Opportunities
What have been your experiences with goal-setting? How do you feel about the establishment of work plans?	Feelings and experiences with goals and work plans establishment	6	Experience with Performance Planning
		7	Sentiments About Work Plans
Tell me about a time when you experienced the achievement of your work goals. How did you feel about your performance achievement?	Experience with achievement	8	Happy and Fulfilled
		9	Motivated and Encouraged
		10	Reduced Satisfaction and Motivation
		11	No Rewards
Tell me about a time when you experienced the non-achievement of your work goals. How did you feel about it? What decisions did you make?	Experience with non-achievement	12	Decisions to Improve
		13	Desire to Achieve
		14	Not Failing to Achieve
What is your experience with the appraisal interview?	Experience with appraisal interview	15	Performance Discussions
Tell me about a time when you received positive feedback. What did you feel? How did this align with your expectations?	Positive feedback and expectations	16	Appreciated and Encouraged
		17	Aligned with Expectations
Tell me about a time of your experience receiving negative feedback. What did you hear, feel, compare to your expectations? What decisions did you make?	Sentiments of negative feedback	18	Feelings
		19	Need to Improve

Experience and knowledge of performance appraisal. This code illustrated

participants' knowledge of the existence of a performance evaluation policy, its administration, and their overall experiences. All participants described varied experiences that led to their perceptions about the appraisal system. Four themes emerged from this code that alluded to policy awareness, formality, non-motivational, and lack of promotions.

Theme 1: Awareness of policy. Represented the first theme that emerged from the analysis of the interview responses, whereby all participants confirmed awareness of the existence of a policy on performance appraisal. Participants expressed knowledge of the yearly administration, specific dates for the appraisal exercise, need for performance planning, an agreement between employees and their immediate supervisors, performance ratings applied to the different levels of performance achievement, constraints for nonachievement, and the consequences incurred for noncompliance on the completion of the appraisal forms.

Theme 2: Management tools. This theme illustrated participants' knowledge of the use of performance appraisal as a management tool. Participant 5 recalled,

An appraisal system is a management tool appreciated by the organization, necessary and relevant for the discovery of performance gaps, skill gaps, causes for poor performance, and how to address these. It evaluated one's contribution to the success of the organization, skills, and competencies of an employee.

Participant 14 stated, "It is a tool for evaluating my performance annually or periodically, with recommendations for improvement. That is what I know about appraisals." Similarly, Participant 15 expressed,

It is a tool for monitoring performance. It is generally a way of assessing each staff's performance during a given period over the agreed targets achieved. So, it is just a way of assessing your performance, whether you have performed to the expectations, and you have achieved the expected goals. It is also a basis for promotion. They look at the appraisals and review to promote you. So, they look at your performance, and if you do not perform well, then do not expect a promotion.

Participant 7 declared, "Performance management is assessing how people perform in their offices. So, management comes up with several things to measure how people are performing to see whether they can achieve the desired goals."

Theme 3: Appraisals are a formality. Although participants were aware that the performance appraisal system existed as a management tool to measure performance, the experiences encountered caused the participants to view the performance appraisal system as a formality. The following excerpts described the experiences. Participant 15 stated,

The experience I have had with the performance appraisal system is that it has not been effective in terms of monitoring staff performance. We fill these forms every financial year, which begins from 1 July and ends on 30 June. People fill them, but at the end of the day, you find that it is almost not serving any purpose. It is just for formality; it is done and placed in your file. There is no follow up to get the feedback of really what to do.

Participant 7 expressed, “My experience is that it is something filled as a formality and unreliable for performance improvement. It is all about filling the appraisal form and submitting it. Nothing happens after that. Agreed action points and recommendations, never implemented.” Correspondingly, Participant 6 said, “For me, performance appraisals are too repetitive. You continue repeating yourself and too much work for nothing. It is a waste of time because they normally do not make it through and only complete for formality.”

Theme 4: Appraisals are not motivational. One of the highlights of performance appraisal was the shared experiences on its non-motivation. Participant 15 informed, Motivation is lacking in the organization. I work to achieve my targets, and my performance appraised, but there is no appreciation to motivate you to perform better. Work continues with low motivational levels impacted by other factors such as low salaries, the work environment, and poor staff welfare. So, the appraisal is just part of those methods for assessing our performance.

Participant 10 explained, “The whole process is quite demotivating, there being no functional reward system for those who put in much extra effort or have an outstanding performance. One wonders why overwork or stress if there is no recognition of talent.” Likewise, Participant 7 stated, “A recommendation for training followed my appraisal completion, but the recommendation did not materialize. Recommendations from performance reports are never implemented, and this is demotivating.”

Theme 5: No promotional opportunities. Overall, participants linked performance appraisals with promotion. Below are the excerpts from three participants.

Participant 12 recalled,

The completion of performance appraisal is to become eligible for future promotion. An expectancy never realized is created each year for promotion. At the end of every financial year, they inform me that I have achieved more; I need a promotion; I am under-utilized. The problem is that we have done that performance appraisal, but the promotion has not come.

Participant 8 discussed the experience of returning to school to become more academically qualified but was never given a promotional opportunity. Participant 13 described the use of performance appraisal for promotional opportunities as being best used for “promotional interviews,” without which an interview is invalid.

Feelings and experiences on goals and work plans. This code illustrated participants’ experiences with goal-setting as one of the elements of an evaluation system, how they felt about goal-setting, and the establishment of work plans. Two themes emerged from this code.

Theme 6: Experience with performance planning. This theme illustrated the experiences of participants with their immediate supervisors for agreement on the specific tasks which constituted the work plan. All 15 participants confirmed that they were not involved in the process of establishment of goals, which were perceived by participants to be formulated by senior management. However, when goals were established, participants indicated their involvement with their immediate supervisors for agreement on a work plan. All 15 participants acknowledged mutual agreements with their immediate supervisors on their work plans that formed the basis for appraising

performance. Participant 6 and Participant 14 described acts of preparing the work plans and signing these, before taking to their immediate supervisors for mutual agreement and signatures. Participant 15 described the experience of sitting with the immediate supervisor and having an agreement on the work plan. Participant 7 and Participant 8 discussed the experiences that they determined their work plans from the department's work plan and policy statements, respectively, before obtaining agreement from their immediate supervisors. Participant 14 best-described performance planning experience as "I know what I am supposed to do, so I plan that for the year. I list the activities down in my performance plan, I sign and take it to my immediate supervisor, who also signs."

Theme 7: Sentiments about work plans. This theme depicted the varied sentiments by participants on their agreement of work plans with their supervisors.

Participant 5 said,

I feel focused and remain on the right path with my work plans, especially when I look at the plan. If performing activities that are not on the plan, the plan helps to bring me back on track. I always ensure I have my performance plan completed at the beginning of the financial year. Here is where I know that this is what I am supposed to work upon as my targets.

Contrarily, Participant 6 explained, "The targets were given from the beginning of the performance year as agreed with my boss, but I do not have much zeal for the accomplishment because the process is repetitive." Participant 4 declared, "The plan can be demotivating because, at times, management may not release the resources, and technology may not be good enough to conduct some of the activities, so you cannot do

much.” Participant 12 and Participant 13 discussed being engaged with the work plans for the achievement of outputs and described their sentiments as performance-oriented.

Experience with achievement. This thematic code depicted the interview responses on goal achievements and plans, and what it felt like to have achieved. Participants expressed varied sentiments on how it felt to achieve the targets established in their work plans as follows:

Theme 8: Happy and fulfilled. This theme illustrated a feeling of happiness by participants on the achievement of when work plans. Participant 9 and Participant 13 indicated, “I feel good” about the achievement of their work plans; Participant 1 expressed fulfillment at the achievement of work plans. Participant 5 best described the feeling of work plan achievement as “I am very happy when I achieve my set targets. I go into the appraisal process, knowing that I have achieved ABCD. Assessment of my performance measures my achievement and non-achievement as per the performance plan.” Participant 8 informed, “It is nice when you achieve your target and expectations.” Participant 4 stated, “I am given credit for achieving. This credit is indicated in the performance report and counts at the time of promotion.”

Theme 9: Motivated and encouraged. This theme evolved from the reported experiences by participants who felt motivated and encouraged on the achievement of goals. Participant 12 declared, “My performance achievement surpasses 70%, and with that, I feel motivated because I have achieved, and I am motivated to perform.” Similarly, Participant 10 shared, “I am encouraged that I can fulfill my targets because then I am motivated to look for more challenges.” Participant 1 informed, “If I am supposed to do

XYZ and achieved them all, I am encouraged that I can fulfill my targets. Then, I am motivated to find more challenging tasks.”

Theme 10: Reduced satisfaction and motivation. This theme emerged as participants felt reduced levels for satisfaction and motivation with goal achievement because of the yearly repetition of tasks and lack of appreciation showed for achievement. Participant 1 expressed, “Although performance achievement could be motivational, the level of satisfaction reduces, and no value-added in achieving the same goals year after year. One is used to the repetition and must only adapt.” Participant 15 declared, “The level of satisfaction reduces as there is no appreciation. Management should do something to appreciate who achieved targets, and that can improve motivation.”

Theme 11: No rewards. This theme illustrated participants' perceived linkage of achieved targets with rewards. However, no experiences were elaborated on this theme, except recommendations for performance to be rewarded, as all 15 participants indicated that there were no rewards for achieving performance targets.

Experience with nonachievement. This code illustrated the responses from the semistructured interview on nonachievement of work plans, how participants felt, and the decisions they made. Three themes emanated from this code.

Theme 12: Sensitivities with improvement decisions. This theme depicted participants' expressions on the nonachievement of work plans and decisions made in this regard. Participant 5 and Participant 13 confessed a bad feeling for being unable to achieve performance targets but made decisions to perform better in the next performance

period. Participant 3 shared, “I feel unhappy, but I look for ways to improve.” Similarly, Participant 11 expressed feelings of discouragement when unable to achieve and make decisions to improve in those areas. Participant 12 used a “consult my boss” strategy when unable to achieve so that a teamwork effort undertaken on moving forward. Participant 6 expressed, “If I know I have been on the wrong side, I do not feel bad but work towards improving.”

Theme 13: Desire to achieve. This theme emerged from participants who possessed the desire to achieve but were unable, due to other mitigating factors. Participant 10 expressed, “I feel bad by not achieving because sometimes I try to achieve, and am told that nonachievement is due to the lack of funds.” In like manner, Participant 12 said, “I cannot achieve because of circumstances like constraints to carry out a certain activity and the lack of funding.” Participant 13 stated that the setback of targets is mainly due to the “lack of materials.” Participant 15 best explained the desire to achieve by stating, “in all circumstances the failure to achieve work plans was due to the limitations like the tools used to perform the job.”

Theme 14: Not failing to achieve. This theme emerged from the views of participants who could not yield to nonachievement. Participant 9 discussed the idea that it is hard to fail to achieve and shared the experience of never failing to achieve by stating, “I have never failed before to achieve because I perform the planned activities daily.” Participant 8 explained, “I have not had the opportunity where my boss came to me to say, you were supposed to do this in your work plan, and you have not achieved it.” Participant 1 described not failing to achieve by sharing the experience on the

immediate supervisor not directly asserting nonachievement but giving encouragement to put in more effort where there was an identified weakness.

Experience with appraisal interview. This major code captured the experiences by participants during appraisal interviews or meetings with their supervisors on performance discussions. One major theme exemplified the following excerpts.

Theme 15: Performance discussions. This theme illustrated the experiences encountered by participants in attendance at appraisal meetings. Participant 1, Participant 4, and Participant 13 confirmed meeting with the appraisers to discuss performance achievements. Participant 1 shared on sitting down with the supervisor and “reviewing target by target to see how I have performed.” Similarly, Participant 13 recounted sitting with the supervisor and “agreeing on the performance level achieved and rated accordingly.” Participant 4 explained that the meeting was to ensure that the appraisal was done. “We look at plans, discuss the key outputs, targets, and PIs, and complete the appraisal form.” Participant 8 shared the experience of meeting with the supervisor to discuss “what I did and did not do and performance beyond the tasks agreed upon in my work plan, remain unassessed.” Participant 2 recounted the performance discussions stating,

When my supervisor is appraising me, we sit together and discuss my performance. Questions arise about the challenges I faced with my job, and where my performance is not good, I receive advice for improvements. After that, my immediate supervisor gives me the marks according to our discussions.”

Positive feedback and expectations. This code portrayed the responses from the semistructured interviews converged into two themes. Participants expressed their feelings on the receipt of positive feedback during the appraisal meetings and how this feedback aligned with their expectations.

Theme 16: Appreciated and encouraged. This theme illustrated how employees felt when positive feedback was received. Participant 5 discussed that positive feedback is always received because of the ability to deliver, stating, “Positive feedback has always been a motivation to me, and this makes me more committed to my work. I become energized and encouraged to perform much better than I did previously.” Participant 15 said that appreciation is received for the satisfying performance, informing, “During the time of assessment, we discuss how I performed with my assignments. I show my supervisor my results, what I did, and if satisfied with my performance, appreciation is shown.” Participant 11 expressed, “Face-to-face, I am thanked for the good work I have done.”

Theme 17: Aligned with my expectations. This theme emerged to describe how participants compared positive feedback with their expectations. Participant 5 informed, “I already knew how I had performed on the evaluation of my performance. I expected the ratings obtained.” Participant 12 quantified the achievement at the end of the performance year, stating, “I have achieved more than 70%, which surpasses my expectations.” Participant 13 expressed,

On the appraisal forms right from the time I started work, my supervisors have been giving me good feedback, from the immediate supervisor to the responsible officer. I have not had a bad comment, so I got rated at my expectations.

Sentiments of negative feedback. This code exemplified the experiences of participants with the receipt of negative feedback. The responses converged into two themes.

Theme 18: Feelings. This theme illustrated the varied responses on how participants felt on the receipt of negative feedback. Participant 1 and Participant 9 indicated feeling "not good" when negative feedback was received. Participant 1 stated that negative feedback "makes me know that I must improve." Participant 9 explained that the supervisor "tells me what should be changed." Participant 6 expressed, "I do not feel bad with negative feedback because I want the truth. If I know, I was wrong, and then I would not take it badly."

Similarly, Participant 4 did not feel back about receiving a negative comment, explaining, "I receive supervision as I work, and my mistakes normally pointed out by my supervisor." Participant 5 also did not feel bad about negative feedback, but articulated,

With negative feedback, I do not feel bad because I knew that I had not achieved due to ABCD. I did not feel so bad because I expected it, and the feedback communicated constructively. I receive constructive criticism, not in a negative, harsh manner. It enables me to appreciate where I went wrong, did go right, or

what I did not do right, and I can also find ways of achieving the set targets the next time.

Theme 19: Need to improve. This theme illustrated the decisions taken by employees on the communication of negative feedback. Participant 9 said, “I feel bad when told what I did not do right and what should be changed but try to work on it and improve in the next budget year.” Similarly, Participant 13 felt bad when negative feedback was received, stating, “At times I must understand to wait for the next financial year for things to work out.” Participant 15 expressed, “Where I have not performed well, my supervisor tells me to improve, and this I try to do in the next performance period.

Table 4

Meanings Employees Ascribe to the Performance Appraisal System

Interview Question	Major Code	No.	Theme
Tell me about your understanding of performance appraisal. What does it mean to you?	Meaning and Understanding	20	Important Exercise
		21	The formality of Form Filling
		22	Not Purpose Driven
		23	Non-Rewarding

Meanings and understanding. This code illuminated the interview responses from participants who expressed their feelings and understandings of the appraisal system through their experiences from which four themes derived.

Theme 20: Performance appraisal is an important exercise. This theme captured the responses verbalized by participants on their experiences that led them to view performance appraisal as an important exercise. Participant 5 declared that by conducting performance appraisal annually, it “indicates that the organization takes it as an important

exercise to assess performance.” Participant 15 said that performance appraisal was important because “it is a way of assessing performance during a given period over agreed targets that should be achieved and used as a basis for promotion.” Similarly, Participant 12 indicated that performance appraisal is important as it is used to assess the performance of staff, but “the problem is that the promotion does not occur. It would be good if they were following what it meant to do.” Participant 1 reported that performance appraisal is “an assessment of myself on the way I do my job, or perform my duties, vis-à-vis what I am supposed to do, and this is important to know.” Contrarily, Participant 9 articulated, “Not everybody appreciates the performance appraisal exercise; we have not yet appreciated the importance of the appraisal system, but will.”

Theme 21: Formality of form filling. This theme depicted another aspect that participants understood of the appraisal system. Participant 7 recounted,

I sit down and fill out the appraisal forms and submit these, but after that, nothing happens. It is a good thing to carry out performance appraisal, but as things are currently, I cannot believe in its output since the filling of the forms is a formality, and nothing is taken seriously from it.

Participant 11 declared that filling of the appraisal forms are of no use and “it is like a waste of your time because ever since I started filling these appraisal forms, I’ve never received a promotion.” Participant 13 narrated, “I ensure I fill the forms each year. I’m not going to wait when I’m going for an interview, and then I begin filling appraisal forms for the last three years.” Participant 4 felt that there was no way the employer could know that employees were consistently working or achieving goals unless “you

keep filling the forms.” Participant 15 discussed that the appraisal is just part of those methods for assessing performance, but “it is not a good tool to confirm that someone has performed. Sometimes it is just for formality, not doing any good” Participant 10 reported,

You fill the form because it is a requirement, and someone has to fill it. However, there is a need for clarification in understanding how it helps. We have seen advantages from it, and we gained from it. You see, when you are going for an interview or promotion, interviewers are looking for the report to see the performance. However, as for me, it does not have much impact apart from that.

Theme 22: Performance appraisal is not purpose-driven. Experiences from participants were accumulated and expressed as followed in the excerpts. Participant 14 verbalized, “I look at the performance appraisal system as a procedure designed to do staff assessment, but it is not necessarily doing its intended objective to provide for performance improvements and career growth of individuals.” Participant 8 expressed, “There is no consideration of the recommendations from the appraisal process. The completion of the forms is a mandate to be filled yearly.” Participant 5 discussed the high ratings that are awarded to staff, even when performance is poor, stating,

I realized that whatever the assessment on the appraisal, even if I am a good performer, the Commission may not trust everything that is within the performance appraisal folder. The Commission has an issue at the back of their minds that appraisal of staff is for the sake of giving high marks, and yet they are poor performers. I realized that the Commission might not take the information on

the appraisal forms as important for promotion considerations. This practice has contributed to the appraisal system not being trusted at all and not fulfilling its purpose.

Participant 1 stated, “No one goes back to get that feedback from the appraisal forms and implement these at the end of the day. I have not benefited from the appraisal system, although completed at the end of the financial period” Participant 6 informed of the linkage of performance appraisal to payments of some allowances, stating, “unless you have done your performance appraisal, you will not receive the payments at a certain period, although the purpose of the performance appraisal is not to receive allowances.”

Theme 23: Performance appraisal is nonrewarding. The accumulation of participants’ responses showed their understanding of performance appraisal, not being a reward. Participant 15 recounted,

The challenge with the performance appraisal system is its nonlinkage to rewards. Management should do something to appreciate those staff who achieved the targets that could be a motivation. I performed, putting in extra hours, and achieved performance over and above the expectations, but there is nothing like a reward for that. You work, and you achieve, even beyond, but this achievement is unaccounted for in the appraisal system. However, there is nothing, nothing, not even an appreciation to say thank you for this. Maybe the only appreciation is when you hear on the media when they are saying that the public service has greatly improved in this area, but for you as one of the people who have

performed, no appreciation. There are no appreciations for the achievements, nothing.

Participant 5 expressed that the biggest reward is “thanking me verbally, but for all the efforts I put in for the particular financial year, there is no promotion.” Participant 12 described performance appraisal to be a good system, but “the problem management should investigate, is to see that more posts are created at the higher level for the promotion of staff members at the lower levels as a reward. We are all stuck.” Participant 8 expressed bad feelings about the appraisal system “because of the lack of implementation of the rewards and sanctions that are theoretically in place.” Participant 14 felt that a reward mechanism should be in place for “the recommendations made of my performance.”

Table 5

Appraisal Structure and Contribution to Employee Development

Interview Question	Major Code	No.	Theme
What are your thoughts about the structure of the appraisal system?	Structure and Relationship	24	Appraisal Structure and Reporting Relationships
		25	My Appraiser
		26	Structure not Followed
What are your feelings about the contributions of performance evaluation to your career, personal development, learning opportunities, motivation, and job performance?	Developmental Opportunities and Rewards	27	Contributes to Weaknesses and Gaps
		28	Never Benefitted from Appraisal Recommendations

Structure and relationship. This code elucidated participants’ responses that exhibited their feelings and thoughts on the structure and reporting relationships for the

appraisal system. Three themes emerged.

Theme 24: Appraisal structure and reporting relationships. This theme depicted the experiences of participants on the appraisal structure of the reporting relationships. Participant 4 expressed that the appraisal structure is “one way in which the employer knows about the supervision of the staff.” Participant 5 discussed the experience with the alignment of the appraisal structure, stating,

I have no problem with the structure. The structure is well aligned. When you look at the way evaluations are carried out, your immediate supervisor, the one you report to, is the one that is supposed to assess your performance. The immediate supervisor knows your strengths and weaknesses since you report directly to him or her. So, I see no problem with the structure.

Participant 15 emphasized the appraisal relationship within the structure, stating, “The head of the unit supervises the subordinates under that unit. The supervisor will appraise the subordinate under that business unit, in that order of hierarchy. The immediate supervisor appraises your performance.” Participant 9 shared on reporting to the immediate supervisor who “sits with me and supervises me daily.” Contrarily, Participant 11 informed of being supervised by different individuals, stating, “The previous year was one officer, then this year, it is another officer.”

Theme 25: My appraiser. This theme showed the experiences of participants on the completion of their appraisals with their appraiser. Participant 6 stated, “My immediate supervisor appraises me, and is endorsed by an official from a higher level. My boss evaluates me, and if he is unavailable, you take it to the next person because you

do not work for one person.” Participant 13 informed me that the immediate supervisor is the appraiser as this is “ someone I work with daily who sees and knows how I work and progress.” Participant 4 verbalized that it is the immediate supervisor who appraises, but stated that,

While it is your immediate supervisor to appraise you, some of them did not remain in employment for a long time, and hence I had to be appraised by new entrants who are not usually conversant with what I am doing. They are not even conversant with the appraisal system in use. They will read but may not understand the uniformity for handling the appraisal form. At least a senior official should conduct the assessment in those times until the new supervisor is aware of the procedures.

Participant 7 expressed working in one department of the organization, but “ the person who appraises me sits in another location.” Participant 1 said, “I have to go to another department for the senior official there to appraise me, which is quite odd because that person does not know what I do, while at the same time, I report directly to another official.”

Theme 26: Structure not followed. Participants shared feelings on anomalies with the appraisal structure. Participant 10 described a structure that indicates the reporting relationships but not correctly aligned, stating that “Some functional titles have a line of authority to a different office. Hence the staff must report to another official, although working with another supervisor. I think it is not a rightful immediate supervisor.” Participant 5 expressed that the appraisal structure follows the documented

policy, but stated that,

There are isolated cases where the structure is not followed. There have been incidents where people appraised some members of staff that they do not report to directly. Well, I will give you an example. Recently I was interacting with some colleagues who claimed to be in a dilemma with their performance appraisal reports. Here, they are working directly and reporting to an official but asked to be appraised by another within the same profession. Nevertheless, he or she does not work with or report to that person. So here, they were told that it is not proper for someone you do not work for, to appraise you. That person does not know your weaknesses, strengths, and do not know of your work habits. The person you work with knows what time you'll come to work; are you always attending to duty; is this person having integrity, ethical enough? Does he or she relate well? If someone is in another office and does not interact with you, it is very hard for them to know who you are and what your work ethics are. So, the officer will end up going to someone senior, but not necessarily one who has been working closely with the staff.

Developmental opportunities. This code captured the responses of the 15 participants who shared their feelings and experiences on contributions that performance evaluation made to their career, personal development, learning, and job motivation. Two themes emanated from this code.

Theme 27: Contributes to weaknesses and gaps. This theme depicted that performance appraisal contributed to weaknesses and gaps in performance that

subscribed to its objective. Participant 5 expressed positive feelings about the appraisal process and stated that,

Appraisal of my performance has helped me discover my strengths, weaknesses, skills, and gaps. Each time I discovered gaps in my performance, I have been able to find ways of improving, especially through consulting with supervisors on how to become better and accept challenging tasks. The performance appraisal process has always kept me focused and on track.

Participant 15 reported on the learning opportunities that result from the performance gaps, stating that “When any performance gaps result, management is requested to fill that gap through training. Hence, training opportunities or learning opportunities that are received results directly from the performance appraisal.”

Contrarily, Participant 2 said, “You must apply for the training, and if funds are available, it is approved. The recommendation for training made for me was not from the appraisal recommendation.”

Theme 28: Never benefitted from appraisal recommendations. This theme emerged from participants who have not benefitted from any developmental opportunity from appraisal recommendations. Participant 8 vocalized,

I received a promotion, but I would not assert that I got it through performance appraisals. No. It is not the appraisals, because I have studied on my own accord and not educated through the organization’s funds. It is on my own. So, I cannot say that performance appraisals have helped me. I cannot.

Participant 7, Participant 11, and Participant 14 shared experiences on never benefitting from the appraisal exercise. Participant 7 emphasized, “I have never benefitted from an appraisal exercise. It is a good thing to carry out performance appraisal, but as things are currently, I cannot believe in its output.” Similarly, Participant 11 expressed, “I have never benefitted. I entered the service for long years, and there is no action after filling so many appraisal forms.” Participant 14 shared, “I have not benefitted from developmental training resulting from appraisal recommendations. I have not had that, but of course, the appraisal form has it written.”

Summary

In this research, my pursuit was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of the performance evaluation system. In Chapter 4, I detailed the study setting, demographics, the processes engaged for data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results. I worked in a stable research setting for data collection. Demographics displayed data on participants who met the selection criteria. Discussions on the strategies engaged for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study amplified trustworthiness and facilitated data triangulation. The data analyses revealed the reviews from policy documents and interview responses of 15 junior employees regarding their lived experiences with the performance appraisal system. Twenty-eight themes emerged with examples of supportive verbalism in the textural descriptions. Simultaneously, 10 themes emanated from the review of policies and documents on performance appraisal with organizational facts in their structural

descriptions. The document review enhanced comprehension of the internal procedures of the organization in the administration of the appraisal process.

The three subquestions that formed a nexus to support the primary research question triggered the interview questions that aligned with the conceptual framework to challenge the sufficiency of the current performance appraisal policy and procedures of the research organization. The three subquestions were as follows:

1. What are the employees' experiences with the performance appraisal system?
2. What meanings did employees ascribe to the performance appraisal system?
3. How can the perceptions and experiences count towards the effective administration of the appraisal system?

Each subquestion was aligned to interview questions that formed the basis for the emergence of codes and themes, totaling 10 major codes and 28 themes. The first subquestion addressed experiences and knowledge with performance appraisal, the feelings, and experiences with goals and work plans, experience with achievement and non-achievement, appraisal interview, and feedback. The second subquestion addressed participants' meanings and understanding of performance appraisal, while the third subquestion addressed the appraisal structure and contributions to employee development.

The results illustrated the details of the policy and interview themes. While the policy themes described the organizational facts on performance appraisal, the interview themes epitomized participants' excerpts from interview responses. I synthesized Chapter

5 with the discussions and analysis of the findings, supplemented by recommendations, and a conclusion for scholarly communication.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance appraisal system. The appraisal system is generally perceived by employees to be ineffective (Iqbal et al., 2015; Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The literature revealed that although the perceptions of the performance evaluation system from the appraisers' perspectives have engendered substantial attention in academia (Lin & Kellough, 2019), the perceptions of the junior employees have rarely received consideration (Kim & Holzer, 2016; Panda & Pradhan, 2016; Sharma et al., 2016; Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The research was conducted in response to this recognized knowledge inadequacy in the literature to understand the meanings ascribed to performance evaluation through participants' lived experiences.

In Chapter 5, I illustrate interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for social change. Interview themes matched with the policy themes identified commonalities, interpreted in line with the literature review in Chapter 2.

Interpretation of Findings

The policy and interview themes were matched with the conceptual framework and literature review to determine the alignment and nonalignment of the themes that constitute the findings of the study. Overall, I deduced nine findings from the study, of which three depicted commonalities between the policy and interview themes supported by the constructs of the conceptual framework and the reviewed literature. Six findings

showed deviations between policy and interview themes and hence were not in concurrence with the literature review. The strength of alignment of the commonalities rested in the positive responses from the interview themes. The adverse interview responses indicated nonconcurrence to the specific policy theme and deviated from the tenets of the literature review.

Concurrence of Findings

The three findings that showed concurrence between the policy and interview themes and literature review were organizational structure, appraisal framework and goals, strategies, and plans.

Organizational structure. The appraisal structure of the public service organization premised the reporting lines on the wider organizational structure aligned to the mandate, vision, and mission. As elements of the PMSs framework, vision and mission statements guide and influence employees with their responsibilities (Taiwo et al. 2016), and are strategic to perpetuating performance (Kirkpatrick, 2017). The mandate, mission, and vision of the public service organization serve as guides to employees for the administration of performance evaluations. Mission and vision statements were visible around the offices of the research organization and aligned to the shared vision concept of Saratun (2016), where employees were made aware.

The interview theme on the structure and reporting relationships aligned to the views of Setiawan et al. (2016), Gurianova and Mechtcheriakova (2015), and Hunter (2015), who asserted that in its design, the organization's structure influenced the administration of the performance evaluation system. The experiences shared by the

participants on the structure and reporting relationships reflected the general organizational, administrative landscape for performance appraisal, which comprised three levels of individuals (a) appraisee, (b) appraiser, and (c) the appraiser's supervisor. The experiences shared concurred with the literature review in terms of the different roles in the evaluation process (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018; Urbancová et al. 2017). In most instances, the immediate supervisor is responsible for conducting the performance assessment of an employee, except for a few isolated cases where another official conducts the performance assessment. In these cases, there is no consistent reporting relationship between the employee and the appraiser.

Appraisal framework. From the perspective of the appraisal framework, the research organization instituted ROM to assess the delivery of the organization's outputs, translated from the established goals to work plans. The performance measures of quantity, quality, cost, and time are the KPIs used to measure the achieved goals. Star et al. (2016) emphasized the criticality of performance measures and the role played in performance appraisals for measuring organizational success. Baird (2017) related performance measures to the success factors engaged in monitoring and assessing performance. Monitoring and evaluating performance are key to the ROM framework of the public service organization. Through their research, Ferreira and Otley (2009) have illustrated that performance appraisal was critical to the determination of progress. In their development on performance appraisal, Ismail and Gali (2017) linked progress to the performance assessment standards used to review individual and organization's objectives.

Responses from participants indicated their awareness of the organization's policy on performance evaluation and its yearly administration. Participants confirmed their knowledge of performance evaluation as a management tool for measuring performance for the organization's contribution to the greater good of society. Aro-Gordon (2016) and Khan (2016) pronounced that the inability to bring about common knowledge and understanding of the appraisal system challenged employees' perceptions of the system. Through policy initiatives on performance appraisal, the issuance of booklets on the subject, reminders communicated for its completion, and its linkage to some paid allowances, employees gained a basic understanding of the importance of performance evaluation. Participants attributed the interview theme of "important exercise" to performance appraisal as a method for assessing performance. With its consistent yearly administration, participants perceived performance appraisal taken seriously by the leadership of the organization. This attribute by participants aligned to Sharma and Sharma's (2017) who asserted that the perceptions of employees matter on performance evaluation.

Alignment occurred between the policy theme on the appraisal framework and the interview themes on policy awareness, management tool, and important exercise. This alignment further supported the findings of Cappelli and Conyon (2018), DeNisi and Murphy (2017), Harrington and Lee (2015), Joseph (2014), Majid (2016), Sharma et al. (2016), and Sharma and Sharma (2017).

Goals, strategies, and plans. In the development of GST, researchers (Arnăutu & Panc, 2015; Kromrei, 2015; Locke & Latham, 2002) have determined that the

establishment of work plans were critical for discussions on employees' performance and the process of appraising performance. In the case of the public service organization, the goals synonymously refer to as performance plans or work plans are established at the beginning of the financial year with the planned delivery of outputs, KPIs for the measurement of achievement, and the targeted contributions by the employee. The policy further indicates the mutual development and agreement by the employee and supervisor on the outputs. The policy theme aligned with the views of Ferreira and Otley (2009), who asserted that strategies and plans were the required actions for goal attainment. Participants confirmed engagements with their immediate supervisors on work plans, which corroborated with the claim of Tanwir and Chaudhary (2015) on the engagement of the supervisor and employee in the establishment of goals and work plans for the performance year. In their research, Kim and Holzer (2016) determined that employees accepted the appraisal system when there was clarity on how their performance contributed to goal achievement.

Nonconcurrency of Findings

Six findings showed nonconcurrency between the policy and interview themes, and literature review: (a) an approach to performance planning, (b) inability to monitor performance, (c) lack of objectivity, (d) unrewarded achievement, (e) feedback not actioned, and (f) perceptions and meanings.

Approach to performance planning. The delivery plan of the research organization emanates from its operational goals and relate to the strategic objectives, responsibility, and available resources. Junior-level employees formulate their work plans

from the developed goals. Participants' experiences demonstrated a lack of involvement in organizational planning. At the individual level, participants wrote their plans despite the routine and repetitive nature, which added no value to performance achievement and sought only for concurrence with their immediate supervisors. The approach used by the research organization for work plans establishment signaled a traditionalistic approach. This approach was articulated by Babafemi (2015), De Waal and Van Der Heidjen (2015), and Sophia and Owuor (2015), as possessing inflexibility and preventing development, as these researchers argued for approaches that involved participation from all levels of the organizational hierarchy. The researchers proclaimed that such involvement connected the strategy of the organization with the employees who became empowered to deliver and embraced the performance appraisal system used to measure their performance.

The policy theme on the appraisal framework illustrates the construction of performance plans after consideration of strategic plans and budgeting. Participants' experiences showed their inability to achieve work plans due to the lack of resources. Bryson et al. (2018) noted that the thoughtful efforts in defining action-oriented plans shaped the very existence and operational status of the organization. However, while participants expressed feelings of being focused on work plans and stood ready to achieve, the physical resources for goal achievement were unavailable. These views opposed the tenet of the policy theme on goals and plans where the research organization indicated use of the SMART concept to define outputs that were specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound for conveyance to work plans for employees.

Inability to monitor performance. Kromrei (2015) claimed that among others, the process of appraisal required monitoring of performance through persistent communication between employees and supervisors. The policy of the public service organization indicates the intent for performance monitoring through quarterly reviews. Participants' experiences have shown performance appraisal as a tool for monitoring performance for the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and performance gaps. However, although plans were jointly agreed and engaged at the end of year appraisal meetings, participants had no experiences of quarterly reviews undertaken. Participants shared experiences on their engagements with their supervisors in discussing achievements, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses and performance ratings at the end of the performance year. Participants had no experience with quarterly reviews for the monitoring of their performance plans. In their research on performance appraisal, Modipane, Botha and Blom (2019) articulated not only for continuous monitoring of employees' performance by their supervisors but also for the provision of continuous feedback that was constructive. Arnăutu and Panc (2015), Kolawole et al. (2013), and Kromrei (2015) emphasized the criticality of appraisal meetings for continuous monitoring of performance. These researchers illustrated that the appraisal meetings signified collaborative efforts between the employees and supervisors for periodic discussions and engagements on performance. This finding could not be substantiated by the participants' responses and does not concur with the literature on performance monitoring as enunciated by Arnăutu and Panc (2015), Bitici et al. (2016), Kolawole et

al. (2013), Kromrei (2015), and Urbancová et al. (2017) where there must be continuous monitoring of employees' performance with agreed work plans.

Lack of objectivity. Researchers have shown the associated significance of the developmental, educational and managerial purposes of performance appraisal to the employee and supervisor (Apak et al., 2016; Joseph, 2014; Kampkötter, 2017; Kim & Holzer, 2016; Turgut & Mert, 2014). The policy theme on appraisal objectives indicated five purposes of the appraisal system, three of which the lived experiences of the participants have demonstrated variations in the policy's operationalization. These were the identification of developmental needs with a view to developing potential, increase motivation, and improve performance. Participants' experiences with the appraisal system have created the perceptive themes of *formality*, *non-motivational*, and *lacking promotional opportunities*. Participants viewed the completion of the appraisals as a formality. The forms, when completed, were placed in the appraisal file with no followup on action points, recommendations for training unrealized, and no promotions obtained. Although outputs surpassed planned targets, participants verbalized demotivation with the appraisal system with no appreciation nor rewards. These responses illustrated a misalignment to the policy theme on performance improvement and objectives of the appraisal process. Rowland and Hall (2014) found that the appraisal system rarely encouraged development.

The policy theme on performance improvement outlined steps only for nonachieved results due to lack of performance by employees. Participants' experiences have shown feelings of discouragement, sadness, unhappiness, a desire to move forward,

improve, and achieve, supported by the supervisor's encouragement. Although participants expressed these feelings, claim to nonachievement resulted from the inability to attain the resources required to complete the tasks and not from their inability to perform. In this manner, employees were not held responsible for the nonachievement but made attempts to achieve in the next performance year.

Further, Arnăutu and Panc (2015) posited that with an intent to improve performance, the developmental function of performance appraisal facilitated the process for employees' personal and career development. However, responses gathered from the participants showed that performance appraisal enabled the identification of weaknesses and gaps, which recommendations for development and improvements remained inactivated. The participants' views supported those of Kim and Holzer (2016) and Arnaboldi et al. (2015) who substantiated in their research, the negative connotation ascribed by employees to performance appraisal because of its failure to achieve its intended purpose.

Unrewarded achievement. The policy theme on reward indicates recognition for outstanding contribution towards the achievement of corporate goals, or innovation, as per the reward and recognition scheme. Participants shared experiences on their unrecognized and unrewarded performance when targets are achieved. In their research, Modipane et al. (2019) observed that employees performed for goal achievement when performance and rewards were linked. However, Rowland and Hall (2014) argued that this linkage was dysfunctional as the excellent performance continued to be unrewarded, resulting in increased levels of employees' dissatisfaction and reduced productivity.

Participants confirmed the nonlinkage of performance to reward and lack of appreciation for achievements. Extra hours worked that resulted in achievement over and above the required, go unrewarded. The rewards referred by the participants not only had a financial connotation as in promotion but also a nonfinancial one, for example, not hearing a “*thank you*” for the job well done. Moreover, participants were knowledgeable of a rewards and sanctions program within the organization, but which lacked implementation.

Ferreira and Otley (2009) posited that employees felt a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment when performance achieved, is rewarded. The findings on unrewarded performance lacked concurrence with the thrust Ferreira and Otley, and those of Lee and Raschke (2016) and Salah (2016), who asserted that besides being a tool for managing employees’ performance, the reward is a motivator for optimization of performance. The participants’ through sharing of their experiences, expressed yearnings for a fully operationalized rewards and sanctions system.

Feedback not actioned. Researchers (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Miller & Weiss 2015; Schleicher et al., 2018; Shrivastava & Rajesh, 2017) suggested that feedback was essential in the appraisal process as it facilitated reliable communications, among other benefits. These researchers have shown that as a management tool, performance appraisal fostered feedback, motivation, development, rewards, reinforced performance values, and the relationship between the employee and supervisor. Participants shared experiences on positive and negative feedback that occurred during the end of year appraisal meetings. With the receipt of positive feedback, participants felt appreciated, encouraged, and

imbued with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that their perceived expectations were realized, despite no rewards. With the receipt of negative feedback, participants informed that the comments served as lessons learned for improvement, and decisions for corrective actions with their performance behavior. Bekele et al. (2014) asserted that positive and negative feedbacks impact the perceptions of the employees who are receptive and supportive of the appraisal system if the feedback is perceived to improve performance.

The organizational policy theme on feedback only facilitated comments during the appraisal meeting, which experiences have shown, occurred only at the end of the performance year. There are no other interactions between employees and their supervisors on their work plans during the performance year. At the end of the appraisal period, following the appraisal meetings, the appraisal reports were filed and retrieved if needed for analysis or follow up. Moreover, feedback served as notification to employees from a macro-level on the completion of the appraisal process. The lack of concurrence between the policy and interview themes on feedback demonstrated a lack of implementation of appraisal recommendations for the employees by the research organization. In their development on performance appraisal feedback, Miller and Weiss (2015) endorsed the valuable information resulting from feedback, which allowed for corrective actions that created an avenue for improvement of performance. However, van der Leeuw et al. (2013) have shown that positive feedback lacked sufficiency in bringing about performance improvement. This view was confirmed by Schleicher et al. (2018),

who asserted that there was inconsistent leverage on the performance improvement and development plans outputted from the appraisal system.

Perceptions and meanings. Employees' comprehension of the essentiality of the performance appraisal system was postulated by Makhubela et al. (2016), Sharma et al. (2016), and Sharma and Sharma (2017) as significant to their perceptions about the system. The 15 participants attributed the themes of formality of form filling, not purpose-driven, non-motivational, and nonrewarding as their perceived understanding and meanings of the appraisal system from the experiences encountered. Participants shared that the appraisal system was not achieving its intended objective; that it was not a trusted system and only exercised because it was mandatory. Miller and Cockrell (2015) alluded to the appraisal process being constructive when views of the system's administration, which are fundamental to the employees' meanings, were favorable by the employees.

Aro-Gordon (2016) and Khan (2016) enunciated that the employees' perceptions of the appraisal system challenged its effectiveness. Comprehension of the meanings employees attributed to the performance appraisal system is important to the efficiency and objectives of the appraisal exercise. The conferral of participants' perceptions and meanings about the evaluation system showed a misalignment between the policy theme on the appraisal objectives perpetuated by the organization and the interview experiences shared by participants.

Limitations of the Study

Cypress (2017) advocated awareness by researchers on the limitations of a study. Kornbluh (2015) claimed limitations to be significant for enabling trustworthiness in research. Morse (2015) asserted trustworthiness as giving value and authenticity to the findings of the research. I attained the trustworthiness of the study through several strategies incorporated for credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. One limitation recorded in Chapter 1 was the possible withdrawal of qualified participants, as I derived the purposive sample of 15 participants after several declines from the larger population of junior employees. I overcame this limitation because of the large population from which I identified the final 15 participants. The nature of the study presented another limitation. A qualitative design has advantages to understanding the experiences of the participants with the performance appraisal, which experiences could not be quantified. Generalization was another limitation because the findings of the study could not be generalized from the experiences of 15 participants. This may not have been a representative finding, and this study may need to be quantified with a larger population and be validated by a quantitative method. The semistructured interview with open-ended questions was the primary data collection method. I undertook to probe to facilitate the collection of rich data. I recorded the interviews, analyzed the responses, and interpreted the findings. I managed my personal biases through bracketing that prevented any misrepresentation in the data analysis (Aagaard, 2017). Data saturation occurred at 15 participants from whom no new themes emerged (Fusch & Ness, 2015). While this event

may not fully be considered a limitation, Moustakas (1994) suggested that saturation could be reached from a purposive sample with fewer participants.

Recommendations

The study on the lived experiences of junior employees with the appraisal system has scholarly and practically extended the scholarship on performance appraisal with the findings. Recommendations for practice relate to the internal workings of the appraisal system by the public service organization, while the recommendations for research relate to the theoretical issues garnered from and through the study.

Recommendations for Practice

Participants confirmed their knowledge of the importance of performance appraisal. However, the performance appraisal system was cited with negative experiences for the appraisal objectives and the rewards system. Despite this, without fail, the appraisal exercise continues yearly, signifying continuance of the negative perceptions by the employees. Managers of the public service organization could use my study findings and contrast their perceptions of the appraisal system with those discovered by the employees, and facilitate corrective actions on shortcomings acceptable to appraisers and appraisees. The findings present information access to practitioners, and the opportunity for the current appraisal system to be tweaked with interventions for effectiveness. This opportunity could facilitate the understanding of the meanings employees ascribe to the appraisal system. Below are areas in which the research organization could take corrective actions for improvement.

Performance plans alignment. During the performance planning stages,

consideration must be given to the availability of resources required by employees for the completion of their work plans. Achievement of outputs must align with the resource allocation. If resources are not available for the achievement of a specific task, then that task should not be recorded in the work plan only to indicate at the end of the performance period that the resources were not available. The policy theme on goals and plans referred to the use of the SMART concept. Managers must utilize the elements of the SMART concept when establishing work plans. Additionally, the public service organization should consider a paradigm shift from the traditional approach to establishing work plans and embrace an approach that is more participatory and engaging with employees from the junior levels.

Monitoring of performance. Continuous interaction with employees by their supervisors must be engaged to fulfill the tenets of performance monitoring. The special form designed for progress checks on plans is only used at the end of the performance year to measure outputs achieved, which does not improve performance monitoring. Weekly or monthly reporting on plans at the individual level could endorse the accountability principle validated by the organization's appraisal structure for feedback that serves to contribute to the broader organizational plans. Development of simple reporting formats using online applications (word, excel, charts) should be engaged to capture valid information and achievements from work plans. This development would facilitate the constant interaction with employees on performance and contributes to the larger organizational plans. Unactionable quarterly reviews are recommended to fulfill the policy theme on planning and monitoring.

Realization of appraisal objectives. Establish strategies for the realization of the stated objectives of the appraisal exercise. From the interviews, objectives of appraisals were the most concerned area for employees as it lagged efficiency in operationalization. Specifically, the developmental function of appraising with regards to the development of potentials and improving performance must be improved whereby the recommended actions resulting from appraising are actualized. The information recorded as developmental needs can be captured in a consolidated report, aligned to the strategic plans of the organization and the requisite development facilitated. Engagement in an assessment of the skills and abilities of the employees relative to the tasks to be performed could determine better utilization of employees' talents. Enhance performance through job rotations, which could maximize intrinsic motivation in the absence of extrinsic motivators and minimize the perceived repetitive nature of work and work plans.

The interest shown by the organization for employee development could also enable higher levels of motivation, achievement, and commitment. This interest could strengthen the feedback mechanism, communicate the positive and negative feedbacks to participants, and aid in the development of improvement strategies. Currently, the feedback received remains unactioned. Develop feedback into action-oriented plans for the employees' growth and improvement. Feedback requires the development of strategies to illustrate actions that nurture positive feedback and bring about a change in negative feedback. The perceptions of the employees further challenge the objectives of the appraisal system. Address the negative perceptions formulated about the appraisal

system by the redefinition of the organization's procedures for rewards and development, the two tenets of appraisal objectives for which experiences were negative. A redefinition of these procedures could minimize the negative perceptions of the appraisal system.

Invocation of rewards. Establish and implement a framework with strategies for recognition and reward of outstanding performance. The policy on reward states that good performance is recognized and rewarded. Experiences from participants illustrate indifference to the policy and hence rendered the established reward system futile. Organizational strategies such as long service awards, the best employee for the month, or year, certificate of appreciation can be formalized as nonfinancial awards and offered to qualified employees. Strategies for the invocation of financial rewards include bonuses, salary increments, performance-related pay, and promotions. Research has shown reward to be a motivator for performance optimization, and employees linking reward to performance. Hence, managers of the public service organization should develop and implement strategies that recognize and reward employees' performance achievements for organizational success.

Recommendations for Research

The findings show that the junior employees in my study ascribed negative perceptions to the performance appraisal system based on their lived experiences. The study on employees' lived experiences with the performance appraisal system expanded the panoramas for future research. First and foremost, there is a need for further theory building on employees' perceptions of performance appraisal. The perceptions of the appraisal system are directly derived from the experiences of the employees. My study

demonstrates intuitions for the building of conceptual frameworks for this extension. The study results provide opportunities to future researchers for the extension of the research in different organizational contexts for further validation of employees' perceptions to support theory building. The scholarship on performance appraisal could benefit from mixed methodology research on employees' lived experiences that tests the effectiveness of a policy change intervention for performance appraisal. This recommendation is supported by the themes that emerged from the data analysis, which illustrate appraisals are a formality, appraisals are not motivating, there are no promotional opportunities from appraisals, and there are no rewards. Another research could unravel the relationship between employees' perceptions of the appraisal system with the development-reward tenets of the objectives of appraisals. This recommendation stems from the findings on the invocation of rewards and realization of appraisal objectives where responses from participants illustrate the negative meanings ascribed to the appraisal system due to lack of rewards and objectives that are not purpose-driven. Extend this current research to explore the strategies employed to bring about a change in the employees' perceptions of the appraisal system. This recommendation supports the finding of perceptions and meanings ascribed to the appraisal system. A study of this nature would illustrate efforts made for performance appraisal to be positively perceived.

Implications

Potential Impact for Positive Social Change

Findings from my study show the potential to impact organization, theory, and practices of the performance appraisal for positive social change through awareness. The

study findings have shown that junior employees give a voice to the appraisal system through the sharing of their experiences that revealed an understanding of their perceptions. The findings present data that could contribute to the scholarship on performance appraisal to address the knowledge gap on employees' lived experiences with the appraisal system. The findings also show the importance of enabling organizational policies on performance planning and monitoring, rewards, and development that comprise the fabric of the objectives of the appraisal system. These findings will be shared with the research organization and published in the scholarship of Walden Dissertations.

Organizational Implications

At the organizational level, the study findings could help in the refinement of policy statements on performance appraisal and development of strategies from the critical information received on the employees' experiences. The developed strategies should address the objectives of the appraisal system, which is core to the perceptions exuded by employees. Emphasis on the developmental tenet of the objectives could increase self-motivation of employees who are motivated inherently to make contributions to the greater good of their society (Jensen & Vestergaard, 2017).

Emphasize recognizing and rewarding employees for good performance through the achievement of realistic performance plans where employees connect with the organization and link performance to rewards (Davis & Stazyk, 2015). These implications could result in performance enhancement for individual employees leading to increased productivity for the organization. Fulfill appraisal objectives with motivated

and developed staff, whose productivity transitions to the beneficiaries of society through positive social change.

Theoretical Implications

Very few research engaged studies on the lived experiences of junior employees with the performance evaluation system (Adler et al., 2016; Mihai et al., 2017; Pulakos et al., 2015). Inadequate representation of this group resulted in research with theoretical frameworks that focused on the management and administrators of the appraisal system by organizations (Sharma et al., 2016). My research and findings contribute to the advancement of the literature on performance appraisal by extension of the literature to include the lived experiences of junior employees with the appraisal system. The findings of this empirical study present qualitative information that is original to the conceptual framework advanced. The results confirm that through the lens of the appraisees, the appraisal system was negatively perceived (Kim & Holzer, 2016). My study results also confirm that the lens of the appraisees and their perceptions of the procedural and distributive structures form a basis for the acceptance of the appraisal system (Makhubela et al., 2016). The negative perceptions of the appraisal system were confirmed by participants in my study when themes such as formality of form filling, not purpose-driven, non-motivational, and non-rewarding attributed meanings to their understanding. My study has protracted the combined theoretical lens of the PMSs framework and GST to address appraisal efficiency from the perspectives of the lived experiences of the junior employees. The inclusion of the perspectives of employees who provided crucial

information on the appraisal system contributes to positive social change by giving a voice to performance appraisals.

Practical Implications

The findings have implications for practitioners. Developing scholar-practitioners could find the study results valuable to the scholarship of performance appraisals. The results of the study show that junior employees have negative perceptions of the appraisal system. My study also has implications for the development of training programs on the appraisal system aimed to challenge the criticism of the lack of objectivity. The participating employees could benefit from internal training, focus on developed and actionable strategies that enable the appraisal system to be well-perceived. The awareness created through knowledge of the employees' experiences could enable procedural guides with a greater focus on development and rewards (Mihai et al., 2017), best practice initiatives for system improvement on performance planning and monitoring, feedback, and a redefinition of the rewards framework. Strengthen awareness of the understanding of employees' experiences through purposeful action with strategies to bring about a change in the employees' negative perceptions. Engagement in purposeful actions to bring about shifts in the negative perceptions could have an impact on positive social change, such as actioning recommendations in appraisal reports that could demonstrate organizational interest for employees.

Conclusions

Many research studies exist on the performance evaluation system, but very few focused on the perceptions of the appraisees (Sharma et al., 2016). Understanding

employees' perceptions through their lived experiences are concomitant to the realization of the objectives of the appraisal system (Kim & Holzer, 2016), the lack of which engenders the system's invalidity and uselessness (Harrington & Lee, 2015). This study aimed to understand the meanings of the lived experiences of junior employees with performance evaluation. I collected data through semistructured interviews and document reviews for this qualitative phenomenological research design. I used the NVivo 12 Plus software for data analysis. The findings reveal that the junior employees are knowledgeable and aware of the procedures for the appraisal system, but exude negativity about its objectives. Employees' experiences illustrate the nonrealization of appraisal objectives; the appraisal exercise is not motivational, there are no promotional opportunities, no appreciation and reward for achievement, the system is unable to monitor performance, and hence perceived that it is a formality. Managers must develop initiatives that enable the appraisal system to be positively perceived. Junior employees must confirm the validity of the policy statements through their experiences. An exploration of strategies employed to bring about a change in the employees' perceptions of the appraisal system could further this current study from which valuable insights could be drawn specifically on the performance and rewards blend, and how these could bring about a shift in employees' perceptions of performance appraisal. Future suggestions for further studies are discussed under recommendations for research.

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Background

1. How long have you been employed with the Public Service?
2. Please describe your current job role (title) and responsibilities.

Experiences with Performance Appraisal

1. Tell me your experience with the performance management/performance appraisal system in the Public Service. What do you know about performance management?
2. What have been your experiences with goal-setting?
3. How do you feel about the establishment of work plans?
4. Tell me about a time when you experienced the achievement of your work goals. How did you feel about your performance achievement?
5. Tell me about a time when you experienced the non-achievement of your work goals. How did you feel about it? What decisions did you make?
6. What is your experience with the appraisal interview?
7. Tell me about a time when you received positive feedback. What did you feel? How did this align with your expectations?
8. Tell me about a time of your experience receiving negative feedback. What did you hear? What did you feel? How did that compare to what you expected? What decisions did you make?

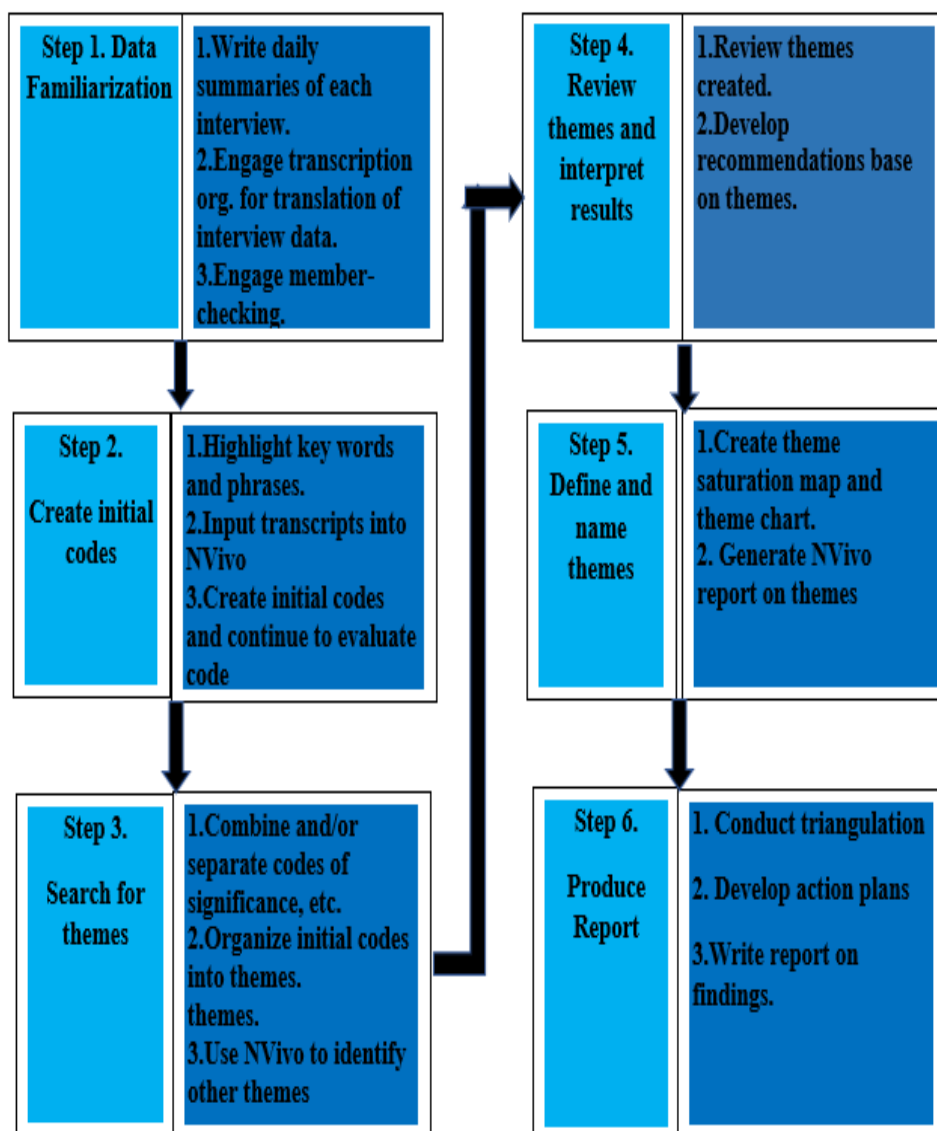
Meaning of Performance Appraisal

1. How do you feel about the appraisal process used for the evaluation of the performances of staff members?
2. Tell me about your understanding of performance appraisal.

Structure, Contributions, and Rewards

1. What are your thoughts about the structure of the appraisal system?
2. What are your feelings about the contributions of performance evaluation to career, personal development, learning opportunities, motivation, and job performance?

Appendix C: Schematic of Thematic Framework for Data Analysis



Appendix D: Theme Saturation Map

