

**Justice Perceptions of Performance Appraisal among Workers in Selected  
Occupations in Maseru City**

**by**

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**A Master's dissertation submitted to the Department of Sociology and Social Work in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Science in Sociology degree.**

**National University of Lesotho  
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**May, 2019**

## **Certification**

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and supervised as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Social Sciences and National University of Lesotho for the award of Degree of Master of Science in Sociology.

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I declare that "Justice Perceptions of Performance Appraisal among workers in Selected Occupations" is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Lipalesa Mathe for the study. Her proactive directions inspired me greatly to this height.

I would also like to pass my heartfelt thanks to my family; they offered me unconditional love and support through the years that it has taken me to complete this degree. I wish to express my grateful sentiments and appreciation to my husband, Mr. Lejaka Letooane for his endless support throughout this degree. Special thanks also goes to my mother in law Mrs. 'Malejaka Letooane who have been with me and supported me through encouragement.

A great thank you to my mother, Mrs. Mamoeketsi Mphats'oane and my father Mr. Dlamini Mphats'oane who have urged me and gave me foundation to my studies. Without them, I would have not gotten this far. This dissertation is a culmination of extensive study, but not a solitary effort.

A big thank you also goes to my friends, Sula, 'Mapula and Nthabeleng, for their emotional support throughout this journey.

## Abstract

Employees are the recipients of performance appraisal; how they perceive this system or process within their organisation has an impact on the way they feel about it. Perceptions of fairness within performance appraisal systems also tend to have effects on employees' commitment, job satisfaction, job performance and intention to quit. Despite this, very little research has concentrated on perceptions of fairness of performance appraisals processes even though the system itself and its outcomes has important consequences for both employees and the organisation.

In the context of Lesotho, to date, there is no published empirical evidence found which investigates individual reactions to performance appraisals, especially one which focuses on workers from different occupations. Therefore, this study examined employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours with the aim of voicing the silenced opinions of workers from different occupations, to capture the personal experiences of undergoing performance appraisal.

Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange was used to theorise performance appraisal as a form of social exchange or a 'joint activity' of two or more actors; where each actor had something the other valued. Since it asked questions about experiences, meanings and perspectives from the standpoint of the participant, this study utilised phenomenology as a research design. The data was collected using in-depth interviews among 13 purposively selected participants from selected villages in Maseru City.

Thematic analysis key theme '*Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response*'. It showed that performance appraisal, as a form of productive social exchange, is affect laden due to the experiences employees had with regards to the task of appraisal (process), the interaction with the other during appraisal, involvement within the social unit during the setting up of appraisal standards and finally feelings towards own self as a result of the appraisal score attained.

Therefore, with regards to justice perceptions of performance appraisal, it was concluded that workers attached emotions derived from their perceptions of the task, the self, the other and the social unit.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Performance management is known as a continuous process of identifying, measuring and developing the job performance of employees and aligning it with set performance standards and strategic goals of the organisation (Sutton, 2018; Bussin, 2017; Akhtar & Khattak, 2013; Aguinis, 2009; Scheneir, Beatty & Baird, 1987). It is a proactive partnership that fosters common understanding about the goals and objectives of an organisation by specifying the level, quality, quantity and standards of performance expected from employees (Mizrahi, 2017; Bussin, 2017; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; De Waal, 2013; Moynihan 2008; Armstrong & Baron, 2005).

Accordingly, a clear responsibility and consensus structure is a necessity in performance management as it not only makes it possible to align performance with the responsibilities of the organisation's members, but it specifies who is responsible for what (De Waal, 2013:51). Even so, it makes no sense to try to develop good performance when everyone has a different picture of what effective or successful performance means for the organisation (Warner, 2002:9). Therefore managing performance necessarily involves changing attitudes, perceptions and motivation of employees so that they become sensitive to the goals and objectives of the organisations. It also involves removing various barriers to effective individuals' performance such as cumbersome procedures and emphasising productivity and quality (Deb, 2009:31).

Organisations should consider implementing performance management due to a number of benefits that it poses. According to Cadwell (2000:4) performance management brings about improved performance, communication, organisational alignment and capability, reduced supervision time and increased employee self-management as well as overall employee job satisfaction. It is not surprising then for Hale and Whitlam (2000:2) to state that performance management is about trying to improve the performance of individuals and as a result the performance of the entire organisation.

Performance management is thus a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organisations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors (Armstrong & Baron 2005:9). Hence, the overall mission and goal of performance management is linked to long term organisational strategy management (Aguins, 2009:2). Accordingly, the main building blocks of a performance management include the development of the organisation's mission and objectives, as well as enhancement of communication within the organisation so that employees are not only aware of the objectives, but they can contribute to their realisation (Fletcher & Williams, 1996).

As a subset of performance management, performance appraisal is a process of measuring and evaluating an employee's job related behaviours and their potential for greater contributions to the organisation (Andrews, 2009:152). Performance appraisal is defined as a discrete, formal, organizationally sanctioned event, usually not occurring more frequently than once or twice a year and has clearly stated performance dimensions or criteria used in the evaluation process (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). Performance appraisal is also described as a formal process of employee monitoring which usually involves the evaluation of performance based on the judgments and opinions of subordinates, peers, supervisors, other managers and even workers themselves (Jackson & Schuler, 2002)

According to Tripathi (2001), performance appraisal is one of the oldest and most ubiquitous practices of performance management and it includes all the systematic procedures used in organizations to assess the performance of employees. Appraisals are also among the most important human resources systems in organisations insofar as their ability to make the performance management process more effective and productive (Bhattacharyya, 2011:55). They represent critical decisions integral to a variety of human resource actions such as training and staff development (Gul & O'Connell, 2012:51). Further, appraisals may be used to assess staff members' range of professional knowledge, skills and attitudes which impact on their ability to fulfil work duties within the work environment (Lloyd, King & Deane, 2009:128). Appraisals may also be used for various administrative purposes such promotions, tenure, termination and salary determination (Levy & William, 2004). Besides this, performance appraisal may be used to assess an individual in relation to the objectives, activities, outputs, and targets of a job over a given period of time (Abraham, 2013:1).

According to Deb (2009:124), the above arguments relate to one of key aspects of performance appraisal; its ability to differentiate individual performance. These differentiations then become the foundation on which managerial actions are based and because of this employees may be classified into five categories, namely: (i) superstars; (ii) up-and-comer; (iii) benchwarmer; and (v) headed for the door. According to Sandler and Keefe (2003 cited in Deb, 2009) a 'superstar' is an employee who is categorised as extraordinary; this employee delivers outstanding performance with knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours that are far above the job requirements. Performance appraisal's role is therefore to reward, recognise and retain the talents of superstars for organisational effectiveness.

Conversely, 'up-and-comers' are employees who are above average; they have key knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours necessary for accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organisation. Such employees are potential superstars and the appraisal's goal in their regard is to ensure that they are developed through combination of training, career development and mentoring (Sandler & Keefe, 2003 cited in Deb, 2009:124). The third type of employee is the 'benchwarmer'; this is an average employee who fully meets the requirements of the job and produces good results for the company. Benchwarmers have the willingness and capacity to deliver consistent good performance in the organisation although they do not. The role of performance appraisal is then to support these individuals through a combination of performance counselling, training and motivation to enable them to become up-and-comer and eventually superstars (Sandler & Keefe, 2003 cited in Deb, 2009:124).

The last type of employee is the 'weak link'; this type of employee is said to be in urgent need of performance improvement as they fail to meet job requirements. This failure may be due to lack of knowledge, skills or abilities or both. The role of performance appraisal is thus to provide frequent performance counselling and a clearly devised and implementable action plan for performance improvement. If this employee does not improve, they may be categorised as headed for the door (Sandler & Keefe, 2003 cited in Deb, 2009:124). Employees characterised as headed for the door are exceptionally poor and show unacceptable level of performance despite numerous performance counselling, support and monitoring. In this case, the role of performance appraisal is to justify their dismissal from service on account of poor performance (Sandler & Keefe, 2003 cited in Deb, 2009:124).

Extant literature on performance appraisal states that there are different types of appraisal systems organisations may use either exclusively or in combination. According to Bussin (2017) one of the most widely known methods used by organisations is the 'goal-setting' or 'management by objectives' method. This approach requires that clear and precisely defined goal statements for how work should be done or recognised. This implies that managers and employers need to know what they are held accountable for, and based on this, they can then set up action plans for their own area of expertise (De Waal, 2013:51).

In this method, when conducting the actual appraisal, the appraiser needs to allow sufficient time for meetings, maintain confidentiality of results, clarify performance issues and deficiencies and offer improvement plans to the employee and provide ongoing feedback about performance (Bussin, 2017). Another popular appraisal method is the 'peer' or '360-degree appraisal' method. Here, performance appraisal is based on getting feedback from multiple individuals who provide a broader and more accurate perspective on the employee's work performance (Marquis & Huston, 2009:582). As a multi-rater appraisal system, this method allows employees to be assessed periodically by assessors such as managers, colleagues and in some cases customers (Rao & Rao, 2008).

Besides the above-mentioned methods, some organisations use the 'employee self-assessment' method where employees are required to complete a formal self-assessment as part of the performance management system. According to Pope (2005:56), the self-assessment method provides employees with an opportunity to participate more fully in the formal performance appraisal process. The self-evaluation aspect in this method also encourages employees to be active participants in the review process, rather than being more passive recipients of supervisory feedback. Therefore employees as self-evaluators, may find this appraisal method more acceptable, accurate, fair and, in general, more effective than traditional approaches to performance appraisal (Inderrienden, Allen & Keaveny, 2004 cited in Shield & Brown, 2007:143).

Despite the various types of performance appraisals available, Bhattacharyya (2011:57) opines that the main purpose of appraisal is either administrative or developmental. When aimed at administration, performance appraisal is geared to meet the requirements of human resource management activities and decisions such as

compensation, promotion, transfer, lay-offs, planning, job evaluation and recruitment validation. Conversely, when aimed at development, performance appraisal focuses on individual employees' development through training and other competency development initiatives which contribute to improve the future performance of employees. Therefore, managers must carry it out periodically. Because performance appraisal has a direct impact on members' psychological and motivational state (Chellandurai, 2006:212).

### **1.1.1 The Performance Appraisal Process and Methods**

Within any organisation professing to have a performance appraisal system, it is usually possible to discern three main stages; planning, managing and reviewing (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006; Scheneir, Beatty & Baird, 1987).

#### **1.1.1.1 Planning**

As a formal process, appraisal is part of a structured system of performance aimed at measuring and evaluating an organisation's human resources' job-related behaviours and its potential for greater contributions to the organisation (Andrews, 2009; Kusluvan, 2003). One of the first steps in achieving this, is determining the organisation's objectives, and then translating those into departmental, and, ultimately, individual goals (Bussin, 2017). As the first stage, planning involves the definition of job or role responsibilities, the setting up of performance expectations as well as goal/objective setting and agreements on them (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006:103).

Planning is said to be a continuous process in performance appraisal which encourages commitment and understanding by linking the employees' work with the organisation's goals and objectives (Scheneir et al., 1987). It also involves improving performance and preparing personal development plans to enhance knowledge, skills and competencies. Further, planning covers the 'what', 'how' and 'when' aspects of achievement of organisational goals. In this way, planning is forward-looking; it focuses on what people have to do to achieve their potential, and it stretches them to discover what they are capable of (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:24). Essentially, Armstrong and Baron (2005:26) state that planning involves agreeing to objectives and competency requirements, identifying the behaviours required by the organisation and producing plans expressed in performance agreements for meeting objectives.

Since one of the main goals of performance appraisal is the identification of areas requiring improvement, as well as identifying possible career directions for the staff member, it is clear that no appraisal is complete without a development plan. Thus, whenever possible, senior managers should set and agree on their own objectives before they discuss objectives with their direct subordinates (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006:105). Organisations with performance development plans therefore aim to improve the quality of the workforce, in order to turn them into enablers for organisational growth and development (Bhattacharyya, 2011:7).

Houldsworth and Jirasinghe (2006:105) opine that this necessitates what they term 'development planning', a process aimed at enabling employees to achieve the goals set out in the performance appraisal. In this sense, the development plan needs to be tied to and to support the performance appraisal (Lloyd et al., 2009:134). Another important aspect of planning is what Axson (2010) terms 'financial planning', a process of establishing financial plans and targets aimed at executing agreed performance targets and overall organisation's objectives and strategies. Financial planning includes preparation and consolidation of plans/target schedules, establishment of basic organisation and economic assumptions, developments of budgets and consolidation of plans for all major activities (Axson, 2010:26).

To summarise Bhattacharyya (2011:8) states that performance development plans need to be reinforced by continuous learning, professional growth, sustaining employee performance to meet or exceed expectations, enhancing job or career related skills, knowledge and experience, making employees understand the change, and motivating employees. Thus, performance appraisal process helps the manager to identify the development needs of the team as a whole and of individuals within the team (Hoban, 2003 cited in Lloyd et al., 2009:134).

### **1.1.1.2 Monitoring**

Monitoring is the next phase of the performance appraisal process; it facilitates continuous measurement of performance to provide feedback (Bhattacharyya, 2011:33). Essentially, this involves checking on progress in achieving objectives and responding to new demands and treating performance management as a continuous rather than finite process (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:13). However, continuous monitoring doesn't mean

watching every aspect of how employees fulfil assigned tasks and activities; rather it means focusing on achieved results, as well as individual and team dynamics affecting the work environment. At the individual level, monitoring involves reviewing the performance progress with the employees against job elements and standards. It also helps managers to understand how well employees are performing in meeting pre-decided performance standards (Bhattacharyya, 2011:33). According to Deb (2008:76) this relates to the monitoring or the control phase of performance appraisal. At this stage the focus of performance appraisal is to control behaviours and actions of employees through various rewards like compensation increase, promotions or awards.

Houldsworth and Jirasinghe (2006:105) contend that monitoring, taken separately, may be difficult to identify. This is because it is a jointly-owned process involving feedback and coaching, competency review and development discussion (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006:106). White and Druker (2004:138) concur and add that the coaching and mentoring aspect of monitoring is important as it involves developing employees' skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves. Further, it helps employees achieve organisational objectives; thus, coaching and mentoring thrives when managers identify and implement training and other actions necessary to improve individual employee performance.

Accordingly, at its simplest, monitoring typically embraces monitoring performance and achievement of objectives (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006:105). Monitoring also involves conducting competency reviews, where organizations attempt identify the key competencies their organizations need to be more competitive and successful in the future. Kessler (2009:12) defined competencies as written description of measurable work habits and personal skills used to achieve work objectives; hence competencies are characteristics which employees have, that help them to be successful. Therefore, competency-based performance reviews do a better job of addressing how employees do their work than other types of performance appraisal systems.

In summary, in order to be effective when conducting competency-based performance reviews, employees need to understand the organization's language, culture, and customers. In addition, competencies can help managers work with their employees to identify behaviours that need to be changed or improved to increase the employee's ability to be successful (Kessler, 2009:10).



### 1.1.1.3 Reviewing

The performance review stage involves the appraisal meeting between the employee and the manager to review their assessments. This meeting is important because it provides feedback a formal setting in which the employee receives feedback on his or her performance (Reilly & Aronson, 2009). Therefore, performance appraisal is largely about communication; as employees deserve to know how well or how poorly they are doing in their jobs. They also deserve regular and constructive feedback about how to succeed at work, improve their performance, and lead successful careers (MacLean, 2001:9).

As part of ongoing communication processes aimed at minimising chances of surprises for either managers or employees, it is important to hold periodic discussions or reviews (Bussin, 2017) resulting in ratings linked to rewards in terms of salaries (Houldsworth & Jirasinghe, 2006:106). Feedback is also an important ingredient of the review process as it helps employees to understand their performance gaps, to improve and to deliver better performance in future (Bhattacharyya, 2011:7). Since completed reviews play a role in any future ones, Lloyd et al (2009:135) further state it is important that employees are given plenty of notice that a review or formal performance appraisal is occurring.

Cardy (2011) argues that this is because at some point in time, workers may exhibit behaviours or achieve outcomes that are considered to be important in the workplace; thus, determining what exactly constitutes performance is important from the employee perspective as it can direct and clarify what needs to be done. However, it is not only employees who need to pay attention to review calls; managers also need to familiarise themselves with previous reviews and identify performance goals of staff members (Lloyd et al, 2009:135). Managers must also be aware of the impact of their own behaviour on subordinates, thus they are encouraged to identify and exhibit positive behaviours (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:16).

Since reviewing provides a feedback mechanism to employees, it is also important for managers to develop a fully integrated strategy which enables the different forms of communication to contribute to the success of the firm's mission or common goals (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:18). During the performance appraisal process, individual development is facilitated by the performance feedback. Feedback is defined as a

process of sharing the performance levels achieved by the employees, observing and verifying work related behaviours, actions, statements and results (Bhattacharyya, 2011:7). Appraisal feedback becomes the basis for discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of employees as focus can then be given to performance improvement (Bhattacharyya, 2011:57). Therefore, it is important for a worker to make sense of performance appraisal feedback, deal with emotional reactions that may occur, and interpret what the message is for him or her (Cardy, 2011:5).

This is because without feedback, employees cannot improve. Therefore, feedback is essential to correct and refine employee performance. It is also essential if workers are to understand their strengths and weaknesses or simply have an idea of how they are doing in terms of achieving organisational objectives. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to mention here that performance evaluation feedback may cause surprises such as anger or defensiveness. Thus, the worker needs to develop skills in dealing with possible emotional reactions to performance feedback (Cardy, 2011:75).

Cardy (2011:75) goes on and states that even if physical or objective characteristics of performance are known, it is the subjective assessment of evaluators that has the real feedback value for workers. That is, objective indicators of performance are not usually enough; people still want to know how their performance is subjectively valued. In addition to fulfilling a need to know how others evaluate their contributions, it is the subjective assessment and the consequent feedback can capture the performance picture better than objective measures of performance can among employees. Even so, it is commonly accepted that subjective judgements are susceptible to error and bias (Cardy & Dobbins, 1994 cited in Cardy, 2011:75).

Deb (2009) concurs and states that errors do occur in performance appraisal and these continue to be a concern because of the impact that perceptions of unfairness have on employees, work groups and organisations. Deb (2009:126-128) goes on and states that there are 10 common rating errors found in organisations practicing performance appraisal, namely:

1. *Halo effect errors*: in this error, the appraiser draws on one specific characteristic to excessively influence performance review or applies favourable ratings to all job duties based on impressive performance in one area. In this case, simply

because an employee has shown accuracy in work tasks, the fact that they lack initiative, drive or communication skills tends to be ignored. As such, the employee gets high ratings as the one thing he excels in eclipses everything else in the mind of the appraiser.

2. *Pitchfork effect*: the pitchfork effect arises when an appraiser dislikes a personal or particular trait of an employee. For example, if the appraiser dislikes the hairstyle or dressing sense of an employee, he may rate that employee lowly on performance in all other job related characteristics.
3. *Invalid criteria*: this error occurs when an appraiser uses criteria for evaluating employees' performance other than the criteria established by the job analysis process. In this case, managers tend to overlook the employee's job descriptions and unilaterally uses arbitrary criteria for performance appraisal.
4. *Recency error*: this error occurs as a result of occurrence of some event or behaviours closer to the time of performance appraisal of an employee. In this case, if the event or behaviour has been positive (e.g. an employee helped the manager with urgent work), then the manager gets influenced by recent occurrence and assigns higher ratings to employees' performance than warranted and vice-versa if the employee had a recent difference of opinion on an issue with the manager.
5. *Leniency error*: this error typically occurs when managers assign higher ratings to employees' performance than warranted by actual performance. This is done to avoid conflict; therefore, overly generous ratings are awarded in order for supervisors to project themselves as good managers. Such raters are reluctant to point out weaker areas of an employees' performance.
6. *Central tendency error*: this error occurs when managers choose to rate everyone as average instead of rating them individually based on merit. In this case, managers avoid the 'excellent' and 'needs improvement' categories altogether. This is done to maintain popularity of raters and to avoid confrontations with employees rated 'needs improvement'.
7. *Strictness error*: this refers to the tendency of rater to be overly harsh while judging the performance of employees especially in cases where the standards of performance may be unjustifiable high or unrealistic. Strictness errors can also occur when the manager's personality characteristics or experiences may set standards too high for employees. Such strictness results in lower ratings of all employees under this type of rater and causes frustration and anger in good

performers. This type of error may also result in demoralisation and compensation differentials from peer groups whose rater has rated subordinates more realistically.

8. *Spill-over effect*: this type of error when past performance appraisal ratings influence the current ratings even though demonstrated behaviour does not deserve that rating.
9. *Initial impression*: this type of error takes place when an employees' performance appraisal unjustifiably gets influenced by the first impression the rater has of the employee. In this case, first impression is the last impression.
10. *Sympathy effect*: this type of error takes place when an employees' performance appraisal gets unjustifiably influenced by sympathy factors such as marriage problems or hardships faced. As such, the rater tends to assign higher ratings to the employee than what is warranted by actual performance.

In summary, Deb (2209:128) acknowledges that rating errors are quite common in performance. Nevertheless, the above errors once again highlight the importance of feedback during performance appraisals; particularly the kind that is based on careful human judgement. The content of the feedback is also critical since employees might embrace feedback as an opportunity to improve or reject it and/or deny its validity (Cardy, 2011:77). Even so, Lloyd et al (2009:136) contend that when feedback is accurate and able to be backed up with specific examples, employees are more likely to trust and value the feedback and the manager giving it. This feedback also needs to be in line with feedback given between appraisals and reviews. This includes identifying the key objectives that are central to the organisation's overall future success and stipulating how it will go about evaluating its achievement for each of them.

Secondly, managers need to decide how those strategies and plans the organisation has adopted will be successfully implemented. Lastly, managers need to state how information (feedback) necessary to enable the organisation to learn from its experience and to adapt its current behaviour in the light of that experience will flow (Otley, 1999:365). In this way, improving performance is, or at least should be, the goal of performance management. It has been shown that effective performance management involves more than simply evaluating the past; emphasis needs to be forward looking on how performance can be even better in future (Cardy, 2011:121). Thus, managers should ensure that the appraisal process remains cyclical; that is, it continually occurs within the

workplace (Lloyd, King & Gournay, 2009:135). Nevertheless, managers may suffer from treatment bias by continuing to focus on a particular aspect or approach that led to performance improvement for another worker or situation (Cardy, 2011:123). Thus, managers are encouraged to adopt the strength based approach to improving employee performance. It focuses on how the employee can continue their work behaviour, enhance it, or change something that did not work. It also states that feedback can draw on what has happened in the immediate past as a basis; however, it should focus on how to do the same thing again in future, or change it for the future (Bussin, 2017).

Besides this, organisations may employ modern management practices that consider people as assets, that is, people are viewed as having the potential to add future value to the organisation (Bhattacharyya, 2011:6). Holbeche (2012:124) concurs and adds that when conducting appraisals, managers are also expected to determine appraisal frequency, identify appraisers and train them to feel confident about the process of appraising. Furthermore, they are expected to provide feedback to help employees understand their strengths and weaknesses (Bhattacharyya, 2011:55). Further, performance feedback allows employees to know how well they have performed in comparison with the standards of an organisation (Savage & Khatri, 2010). Even so, it is important to note that since performance appraisal allows an observer, often a supervisor or a peer, to rate the job performance of an employee (DeNisi, Cafferty, & Meglino, 1984:360), it continues to generate diverse reactions among employees.

On one hand, employees are more likely to be receptive and supportive of a given performance appraisal program if they perceive it as a useful source of feedback which helps them improve their overall job performance (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012:73). They are also more likely to embrace and contribute meaningfully to performance appraisal if they perceive it as an opportunity to network, be promoted and gain personal development or a chance to be visible organizationally or demonstrate skills and abilities (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012:73). On the other hand, if employees perceive performance appraisal as an attempt to exercise closer supervision and control, negative reactions may result such as dissatisfaction among employees and perceptions that performance appraisal is unfair and ineffective (Shrivastava & Purang, 2011). Narcisse and Harcourt (2008) state that performance appraisals often get rejected because their fairness is questioned; that is, employees have issues with 'organisational justice' or the perception that performance appraisal rewards are fair and justified (Akhtar & Khattak,

2013:508). It follows then that employees also scrutinise the credibility of performance management and appraisal systems in relation to performance related decision-making. This may include the trustworthiness of the system, methods of implementation, participation and involvement of employees in deciding their performance objectives. It may also involve whether managers were seen as fair in providing timely, constructive and effective performance feedback, counselling and supporting employees (Deb, 2008:189). Since perceptions influence people's judgement and attitudes towards particular phenomena, it is not surprising that employees hold diverse opinions about performance appraisal systems in their organisations (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

The above discussion has therefore shown the three stages of performance appraisal; specifically, 'planning' was shown as involving developing and planning performance which includes outlining development plans, setting objectives and getting commitment activities. Secondly, 'managing' was found to involve day-to-day coaching or interactions managers have with their subordinates, where they monitor performance and facilitate progress through coaching and feedback. Lastly, 'reviewing' was found to include assessing employees' job performance against objectives, seeking feedback, coaching and linking performance to pay.

Nevertheless, it is of import to mention that the goals of performance management cannot be reached if there is no common understanding of the organisation's goals or shared expectations of how employees can contribute; nor can it happen if employees with skills and abilities to meet expectations are not fully committed to the aims of the organisation. Thus, in managing performance, managers must be able to ensure that employees are appropriately focused into roles, they are developed and managed (Holbeche, 2012:126).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The importance of effective performance appraisal in organizations cannot be overemphasized as appraisals help develop individuals, improve organizational performance and feed into business planning (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012:74). Accordingly, performance appraisal has become a term used for a variety of activities through which organisations seek to assess employees and develop their competence, improve performance and allocate rewards (Bhattacharyya, 2011; Grote, 2002; Fletcher,

2001). Moreover, performance appraisal motivates employees, assesses their potential, improves working relationships, assigns work more efficiently and assists in long-range organisational planning (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013; Erdogan, Kraimer & Liden, 2001; Thomas & Bretz, 1994). Nonetheless, performance appraisal is said to be one of the most emotionally charged activities in an employees' life since; it is essentially a judgement of an employee's contribution and abilities within the organisation (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:507). Some consider it the Achilles' heel of management, as many managers often don't understand its benefits, but only view it as an annual human resources record-keeping exercise (Pulakos, 2009:3). Moreover, it is often implemented and managed poorly.

To illustrate, research has found that organisations do not conduct formal performance appraisals consistently. Even when they do, it is often rejected due to the perception that it is managerial, authoritarian, non-participative, unfair and ineffective (Shrivastava & Purang, 2011; Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008; Creamer & Winston, 1999). Nevertheless, owing to its prevalence and importance in organisations, performance appraisal is one of the most widely researched areas in industrial and organisational studies (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). For example, a vast amount of research has concentrated on methods to improve the reliability and validity of performance appraisal systems' in terms of the quality of appraisal practices with other organisational factors (Kaposambo, 2016; Mwale, 2016; Iqbal, Iqbal & Quibtia, 2015; Akhtar & Khattak, 2013; Thurston & McNall, 2010; Bernardin & Villanova, 1986). Research on performance appraisal has also traditionally focused on measurement-based issues such as rating error and rating accuracy (Keeping & Levy, 2000; Levy & Williams, 2004).

Despite this, very little research has concentrated on perceptions of fairness of performance appraisals processes despite that the system itself and its outcomes have important consequences of both employees and the organisation (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013). Research has also been unable to substantially study employees' affective reactions to performance appraisal systems since they are often embedded in psychometric processes of constructing tests (Folger, Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1992:130). In the context of Lesotho, to date no published empirical evidence has been found which examines individual reactions to performance appraisals, especially one which focuses on workers from different occupations (c.f. Tseisa, 2016; Sefali, 2010; Khachane, 2005; Khoeli, 2003).

Since performance appraisal is one of the most emotionally charged activities in an employees' life (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:507), this study heeds the advice of researchers such as Bretz, Milkovich and Read (1992) and Murphy and Cleveland (1995) who recognized that qualitative issues such as employee response to feedback are as important as quantitative issues for organizations to consider. Therefore, it aims to 'voice' the silenced opinions of workers from different occupations to capture the personal experiences of undergoing performance appraisal and how this influences perceived fairness of relations, procedures and outcomes involved and/or used in their organisation's performance appraisal practices.

### 1.2.1 Objectives of the study

Employees are the recipients of performance appraisal; how they perceive this system or process within their organisation has an impact on the way they feel about it. Perceptions of fairness within performance appraisal systems also tend to have effects on employees' commitment, job satisfaction, trust in management, intention to quit and job performance (Kaposambo, 2016; Dusterhoff, Cunningham & MacGregor, 2014). Since performance appraisal is a critical part of performance management in any organisation (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1999:389), it is important that employee's perceptions of it are known. Therefore the purpose of the study is to: **Examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours.** The specific research objectives are to:

- Describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems.
- Determine whether employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influences feelings of procedural fairness.
- Find out how perceptions of distributive fairness in relation to the actual work performed and the appraisal rating scored influence appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes.



### 1.2.2 Research questions

Emotions play an integral, inseparable part in our everyday lives; they influence our work and are in turn influenced by our work experiences, thereby making a case for the importance of their investigation (Mitchell, 2010:82). This is even more important to study given that performance appraisal relies on rater's subjective perceptions of the ratees. It follows then that ratees may question the credibility and trustworthiness of the system, methods of implementation as well as the fairness of the rater's feedback (Deb, 2008:189). Therefore the principal research question of this study is: **How do employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours?** The subsidiary questions of the study are:

- What are the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems?
- How does employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influences feelings of procedural fairness?
- How do perceptions of distributive fairness in relation to the actual work performed and the appraisal rating scored influence appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes?

### 1.3 Significance of the study

Performance management is believed to be the most crucial strategic human resource function to enable organisations to sustain in competition. Moreover, the aim of performance management systems is to support individual employees in contributing to the overall performance of the organisation (Sutton, 2018:111). There, however, seems to be a paucity of credible qualitative data on the perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal among employees in Lesotho. This poses a number of challenges; firstly, it makes it difficult to study the role of organizational justice in designing culturally-specific performance appraisal systems.

Secondly, it makes it difficult to develop interventions that can be used to address potential weaknesses in existing performance appraisals in Lesotho. Lastly, lack of reliable data makes it difficult to fashion appropriate management interventions to address any existing problems in justice perceptions of performance appraisal programs as the exact dimensions of perceptions in this regard and its causes are not known. Therefore, the contribution of this study is that it adds to the existing body of literature by linking emotional reactions to performance appraisal as a form of social exchange.

### **1.3.1 Research gaps**

Studies on performance appraisal in Lesotho have been conducted on public service (Sefali & Bekker, 2012; Khoeli, 2003), in higher educational institutions (Khachane, 2005), Ministry of Social Development (Ramataboee, 2015) and Ministry of Health (Tseisa, 2016). However, no studies in Lesotho focus on examining employees' justice perceptions of performance appraisal process and their effect on work behaviours and attitudes in-depth. Therefore this study underscores the importance of fostering perceptions of justice in the context of performance appraisal. Research (c.f. Basch & Fisher, 2000; Fisher, 2002) has suggested that it is important to recognize specific workplace events leading to the experience of distinct emotions among workers so that managers may effectively manage organizational behaviour.

Thus, the first contribution of this investigation is that it directly answers the call in that it identifies the performance appraisal for investigation as a precursor to behaviour and attitudes at work. Secondly, this study examines the social context qualitatively; regarding performance appraisal, this is recognized to be an important theme worthy of research (Bretz et al., 1992; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Accordingly, this study directly addresses social context issues by investigating the importance of perceptions of performance appraisal feedback to the experience of being appraised. The methodology of this study also aims to allow comparative analysis of participant viewpoints from different organisations (private and non-governmental organisations) that have ever undergone performance appraisal. Therefore the findings of the study provide multi-analysis of different organisations and how performance appraisal fairness is could be used to isolate potential problems with an organisation's performance appraisal process.

This study also aims to enhance existing theoretical knowledge concerning social exchange by examining several distinct dimensions of justice perceptions. Further, the findings of the study contribute to the knowledge in the field of organisational sociology (as a subfield of industrial sociology) by providing empirical evidence about employee's perceptions of justice about performance appraisal in Lesotho.

### **1.3.2 Theoretical value**

A review of the emotion, performance appraisal and organizational literature reveals that much of the research measuring employee reactions to performance appraisals appears to lack a theoretical basis (Keeping & Levy, 2000). Therefore, one of the contributions of this study is its originality in examining workers' perceptions of performance appraisal. This study also looked at justice perceptions of performance appraisal in terms of emotions attached to the entire process of performance appraisal, the procedures followed, interaction between managers and employees as well as the extent of employees' involvement in the appraisal process.

The research questions of this study imply that performance appraisal has been studied without focusing on emotional responses and perceptions of fairness. However, the aim of this study is not to designate which emotions or perceptions employees should have about performance appraisal practices in their organisations. Rather, this study focuses on the fact that little research has directly examined the influence of affect on social exchange (Foy, Freeland, Miles, Rogers & Smith-Lovin, 2014:309). Even when conducted, findings have shown that individuals in generalised exchange conditions experiences at least general positive affect, gratitude towards others and pride in self and the most anger at others and personal shame.

Conversely, those in productive exchange arrangements (where people create a collective good and directly receive benefits from it) such as those in performance appraisal, since they are in reciprocal and negotiated arrangements, the emotions created fall between the two extremes, that is, the emotions employee experience fall between gratitude towards others and pride in self, and the most anger at others and personal shame (Lawler et al., 2008 cited Foy et al., 2014:309). Therefore, similar to Molm et al (2007 cited in Foy et al., 2009) this study shows that emotions are tied to frequency of exchange and attributions regarding outcomes.

### **1.3.3 Practical value**

The sociological relevance of this study is reflected by the in-depth examination of perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal and how it influences employees' behaviours and attitudes at work. This study is expected to contribute and enhance the existing body of knowledge on fairness of performance appraisal and employees' reactions in the context of Lesotho. The study also bring to light employees experiences and appreciation of the performance appraisal and focused on improving strategies of the existing performance appraisal systems within organisations. Further, this study provides information for human resource practitioners on how rules and regulations regarding performance appraisal work in different institutions and develop the necessary programmes to address weaknesses and reward performance.

The practical value of this study is that it provide information for human resource practitioners on how rules and regulations regarding performance appraisal work in different institutions and develop the necessary programmes to address weaknesses and reward performance. The results of the study may persuade the managers and/or supervisors as well as policy makers to improve employees' participation in the appraisal process and allow the process to be flexible in that it should be done at least twice a year. The findings of the study may also help employees at work to understand the procedures and importance of performance appraisal system, especially in terms of the steps involved being; plan, act, monitor and review.

### **1.4 Theoretical overview**

Social Exchange is the theoretical framework of this study. As a framework, social exchange views exchange as a 'joint activity' of two or more actors; where each actor has something the other values. However, in any social exchange actors face substantial degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty about what potential partners value, the value of different exchanges to them, and/or what other exchanges are being made in the exchange network. Therefore, social exchange is essentially about how actors jointly deal with and respond to these uncertainties and ambiguities (Lawler, 2001:323). Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange focuses on the emotional attribution process that actors use to understand their positive feelings after successful exchange outcomes. It argues that people feel good if they participate in an exchange and it is

successful. These feelings are experienced as global emotions, or affect that has an ambiguous source. Actors can also experience emotions towards specific actors or objects through a process of attribution. Positive affect attributed to the self leads to a sense of pride, and towards others generates shared responsibility leading to more attributions to the group or social unit rather than to individual exchange partners (Foy et al., 2014:309). Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange has five assumptions: (1) Social exchange produces global emotions or feelings, along a positive-to-negative dimension; (2) Global emotions from social exchange are internal (self) reinforcing or punishing stimuli; (3) Actors strive to reproduce global positive emotions and avoid global negative emotions experienced as a result of social exchange; (4) Global emotions produced by social exchange trigger cognitive efforts to understand the sources or causes of global feelings and (5) During joint tasks, actors interpret and explain their global feelings partly with reference to social units (Lawler, 2001).

The first two assumptions indicate that social exchange generates global feelings and that these are special classes of reinforcement and punishment. The third and fourth assumption portray global emotions as motivational forces (Izard, 1991). When activated, they unleash cognitive efforts to interpret where they come from, with the potential sources being self, other, and the social unit. The fifth assumption indicates that in the context of joint tasks, actors interpret global emotions as produced in part by social units, and this is the foundation for stronger or weaker affective attachments in those units (e.g., relations, groups, networks, organizations) (Stets & Turner, 2014).

### **1.5 Methodological approach**

The study is qualitative in nature which studies social phenomena in their natural settings and attempts to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people attach to it (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007:5). In-depth interviews were deemed fit to be used to collect data and they allowed the participant to provide information while it allowed the interviewer, as a representative of the study, to direct the respondent to the topic that mattered to the study (Weiss, 1994:8 cited in Porta, 2014:228). Then, data was analysed using thematic analysis as it permits the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning in context. Thematic analysis also provides a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group of themes, within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008:83).

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken between March and April 2019 in selected villages in Maseru City. The researcher held two to three interviews during the weekend as participants were employed full time and they could only be available for interviews during the weekend. The advantage of not conducting interviews during the week enabled the researcher enough time during the week to transcribe interviews few days of their completion. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed manually using qualitative data analysis techniques. A more detailed description of the methodological approach of this study is presented in Chapter three.

## **1.6 Ethical considerations**

Research ethics are concerned with moral behaviour in research contexts (Wiles, 2012:4). With regards to this study, ethical approval was granted by the Department of Sociology and Social Work since this study is in partial fulfilment of Master of Science in Sociology degree. Before conducting the study, the researcher sort permission for gathering data from chiefs<sup>1</sup> of areas of interest. As suggested by Miller, Meuther and Maxine (2012: 61), the researcher ensured participants that they were free to exercise choice around whether or not to give their consent to participate in the study.

Participants were also provided with clear information about what participating in this research would involve, giving them the opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to participate. The researcher also guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity by ensuring the use of pseudo names so that the readers of the report could not easily identify participants as suggested by Klenke (2008:50). The researcher also explained to participants that if at any time during the interviews they felt uncomfortable the interview could be stopped, paused or they could refrain from answering particular questions (see Chapter Three: Methodology).

## **1.7 Definitions of terms**

This study adopts the following conceptualisations:

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<sup>1</sup> A village chief is a headman or a community leader.

### **1.7.1 Organisational justice**

Organizational justice refers to employee perceptions of fairness and evaluations concerning the appropriateness of workplace outcomes or processes (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). This study adopts this definition of organisational culture.

### **1.7.2 Perceptions**

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world (Lindsay & Norman, 1977). Sociologically, perceptions are influenced by definition of the situation or the context we find ourselves in (Andersen, Taylor & Logio, 2015:115). For purposes of this study, the definition of perceptions by Andersen et al (2015) is adopted.

### **1.7.3 Performance appraisal**

This study adopts Armstrong and Baron's (2005:14) definition of performance appraisal as a more limited approach to performance management which involves managers making top-down assessments and rating the performance of their subordinates at an annual performance appraisal meeting.

### **1.7.4 Workers**

Workers are individuals who are either employed full time and part time in that they are paid in return for their performance under an employer/employee relationship, or are seeking actual paid work (Kirk, 2018). This definition of workers is adopted.

### **1.7.5 Occupation**

This study adopts Otobo's (2016:32) definition of an occupation as an activity pursued as a livelihood and activity that serves as one's regular source of livelihood; a vocation; and activity engaged in especially as a means of passing time.

## **1.8 Overview of chapters**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides a contextual background on performance management system and performance appraisal. It also includes the statement problem. The importance of the research problem is explained and the research objectives and questions are introduced. It ends in stating the rationale for the study and definitions of terms.

Chapter two presents a literature review which is divided into theoretical literature and empirical literature. The theoretical literature introduces Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange. Empirical literature introduces previous studies about performance appraisal, the process of appraisal, effects of appraisal and some other factors that influence or affect fairness perceptions of the appraisal process.

Chapter three focuses on the methodological approaches of the study. The rationale for the selection of sampling procedures, methods of data collection and data analysis techniques used in the study are also reviewed and justification given as to why they were the most appropriate for addressing the study's research questions. Lastly, issues of ethical considerations for this study are explored.

Chapter four presents data analysis and presentation of findings. The factors that influence employee's perceptions of fairness of organisational performance appraisal in different organisations are also outlined in terms of the objectives of the study.

Chapter five is about the discussion and conclusion to the research questions. This chapter also outlines limitations, the validity and reliability of the study, and introduces recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

## **1.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter outlines the general direction of the study. It presents the study background information, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study and research questions as well as the rationale and operational definition of major concepts. The subsequent chapter presents the literature review of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of pertinent literature with regards to performance appraisal. The first part of the chapter focuses on the review of empirical literature in relation to the study objectives while theoretical framework is the last part in the same regard.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

A theoretical framework consists of concepts and their definitions and reference to relevant scholarly literature which is used to demonstrate an understanding of theories relevant to the study and relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. Based on this, the section on theoretical framework bases itself on Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange.

##### **2.2.1 Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange**

Social exchange is viewed as a 'joint activity' of two or more actors; where each actor has something the other values. However, in any social exchange, actors face substantial degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty about what potential partners value, the value of different exchanges to them, and/or what other exchanges are being made in the exchange network. Therefore social exchange is essentially about how actors jointly deal with and respond to these uncertainties and ambiguities (Lawler, 2001:323). Given the uncertainty built into social exchange contexts, actors also often face serious, irresolvable information shortages and it is such conditions that enhance the emotional reactions when they succeed or fail at using exchange opportunities to deal with these uncertainties (Lawler, 2001:324).

Lawler’s theory of affect in social exchange is intended to apply to a variety of social contexts (Lawler, 2001:326). Essentially, Lawler views social exchange as a joint activity between the self and others; therefore he connects the joint task of social exchange with a social unit (or a social object that is real to actors). To theorise this connection, Lawler came up with a framework aimed at identifying the main social objects in exchange and the emotions likely to be associated with each object and identified 4 social objects; (a) task; (b) self; (c) other and (d) the social unit (Lawler, 2001:329).

Firstly, Lawler states that ‘tasks’ are embedded in the form of exchange structures take; this means that exchange structure could either be productive, negotiated (restricted), non-negotiated (reciprocal) and/or generalized (Lawler, 2001:329). Secondly, Lawler states that the ‘self’ is an inference one draws about oneself based on inferences from exchange structures while ‘other’ refers to inferences about the other person with whom one is attempting to exchange with (Lawler, 2001:329-330). Lastly, the ‘social unit’ refers to the social entity perceived by actors as the principal context for the exchange which can be in the form of relations, networks or groups (Lawler, 2001:330). Lawler (2001) also states that there are five foundational assumptions of his Affect Theory of Social Exchange which constitute a single explanation of how emotions generated by exchange may produce stronger affective attachments to relevant social units.

**Table 1: Emotions directed at each object**

Social Object	Valence of Emotion	
	Positive	Negative
Task	Pleasantness	Unpleasantness
Self	Pride	Shame
Other	Gratitude	Anger
Social Unit	Affective Attachment	Affective Detachment

Source: Lawler (2001)

Thus, the degree to which individuals engage in the social-unit rather than self-serving attributions should lead to pride in self and gratitude toward the other following successful social exchange and should lead to shame in self and anger toward the other following failed social exchange (Lawler, 2001). Therefore, “feeling good” and “feeling bad” about appraisal ratings can be interpreted as special lessons of reward and punishment, both internal and self-induced. It therefore be concluded that exchange generates emotions and that emotions are internal responses that reward and punish actors (Molm, 2006:24).

**Assumption 1: “Social exchange produces global emotions or feelings, along a positive-to-negative dimension”**

Lawler’s theory incorporates emotions and thoughts as central features of the social exchange processes; it conceptualizes actors as emoting (feeling) as well as cognizing (thinking); consequently it treats their emotions and thoughts as internal reinforcements or punishments (Lawler, 2001:321). Here Lawler focuses exclusively on the affective (emotional) process in social exchange (Lawler, 2001:322). In the first assumption, Lawler (2001) argues that emotions are an integral component of social exchange. He defines them as positive or negative evaluative states with physiological and cognitive components. Lawler further states that emotions may either be global (primitive with unambiguous sources) or specific (focused on given social thing), but whichever form they may be, they are feelings that create an internal response to an event or object (Lawler, 2001:325).

Primitive global emotions are internal, first-level, involuntary responses, felt and perceived by actors; yet they clear enough to motivate an interpretation process. Conversely, specific emotions (such as gratitude, anger, pride, or shame in self) are a result of efforts to interpret causes of global emotions. Thus, whereas global emotions are stimulus-based and not under the control of the actor, they unleash an interpretation process that generates more specific, object-focused emotions (Lawler, 2001:328). Accordingly, global emotions (or feelings) essentially involve either “feeling good” or “feeling bad”; they are immediate, internal, involuntary events produced by the outcomes an exchange process. Therefore if exchange is completed successfully, individuals feel good about solving a task. Conversely, if the exchange is unsuccessful, they feel bad about not solving it (Lawler, 2006:327).

**Assumption 2: “Global emotions from social exchange are internal (self) reinforcing or punishing stimuli”**

Lawler assumes a network context consisting of three or more actors who have an opportunity to exchange valued behaviors, goods, or outcomes. However, Lawler argues that exchanges as dyadic yet ‘connected’ to the network. That is, individual actors are able to make decisions about whether to exchange, with whom and under what terms with the same others, since the network structure creates recurring opportunities and/or

constraints on who can exchange with whom. Thus, exchanges are ongoing, recurring, and subject to renegotiation (Lawler, 2001:326). The obvious task in any social exchange is to generate 'benefit' for each individual through the exchange of behaviors or goods that actors cannot achieve by themselves (Lawler, 2001:322). Therefore Lawler recognizes that in any social exchange, actors are both 'backward' and 'forward' looking; that is, they respond both to past rewards, costs, and punishments and also to anticipate future rewards, costs, and punishments (2001:324).

Assumptions one and two of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depict **the cyclical relationship between social interaction and affect**; that is, social exchange (social interaction) brings out reactions and emotions (affect) from actors. Equally, reactions and emotions influence subsequent social interaction (Lawler, Thye & Yoon, 2009:34). For example, if the **task** (performance appraisal) brings about positive results, then it is perceived as pleasant; if it brings about negative results, it is perceived as unpleasant (see Table 1). This implies that employees' job performance (behaviour) increases since the task is perceived as pleasant, conversely, it decreases when it is perceived as unpleasant.

Assumptions one and two are also expected to answer the general objective of the study which is to **examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours and attitudes towards work**. The argument here is, employees' reflections on the fairness of their most recent performance appraisal produces global emotions which are involuntarily felt as the result of exchange. Thus, employees are expected to get global emotions that are immediately felt from the entire appraisal process and channel those to specific objects in their work due to the interpretations of those global feelings (Lawler, Thye & Yoon, 2012:64) as shown in Table 1 above.

**Assumption 3 - Actors strive to reproduce global positive emotions and avoid global negative emotions experienced as a result of social exchange**

To theorize emotions in social exchange, Lawler posed some theoretical questions. Firstly he asked, "Under what structural conditions will exchange produce emotions and feelings?" and "Under what conditions will this emotion be attributed to social units (relations, groups, organizations) and, therefore, generate collectively oriented behavior?" (Lawler, 2001:323). When answering these questions, Lawler (2001) stated

that it was the structural interdependencies among actors that produced joint activities which, in turn, generated positive or negative emotions. These emotions were then attributed to social units (relationships, networks, groups) under certain conditions, thereby producing stronger or weaker individual-to-collective ties. Lawler (2001:236) also asked, “When does social exchange lead actors to associate global emotions with specific social objects, such as self, other, a relationship, or group, and, as a result, develop more enduring positive or negative feelings about those social objects?”

When answering this question, Lawler simply stated that it is during social exchange when global feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction were produced (2001:326). However, Lawler’s theory recognizes the different emotions that may be generated by power or status differences in social exchange as these have important effects on the interaction between low and high status and/or power actors (Lawler, 2001:323). Thus, emotions produced by social exchange structures and processes are critical in trying to understand how and/or when social exchanges promote or inhibit solidarity in relations or groups (Lawler, 2001:322).

Assumption three of Lawler’s Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicts the **outcomes** of social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a product of exchange or social interaction (Lawler et al., 2009:34). For example, the reaction/emotion an employee gets is a reflection of the actual rating scored. Therefore, assumption three is focused more on the **self**; accordingly, an employee feels pride when he/she scored highly and shame when he/she scored lowly (see Table 1).

Assumption three is also expected to answer specific objective 3 which is to **find out how perceptions of distributive fairness of the actual appraisal rating scored, in relation to the actual work performed, influences appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes**. The argument here is, employees’ are the ones who are capable of suggesting ways in which existing appraisal scores and performance appraisal systems could be enhanced to help them reproduce positive emotions and/or avoid negative ones, thereby reducing appraisal discrimination complaints and ensuring appraisal satisfaction.

#### **Assumption 4-Global emotions produced by social exchange trigger cognitive efforts to understand the sources or causes of global feelings**

Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange analyzes how actors experience, interpret, and respond to their own emotions and feelings produced by successful or unsuccessful exchange efforts. Lawler also aims to explain a causal process through which the emotions generate order and solidarity at the relational, group, or network level (Lawler, 2001:323). Lawler further states that emotions are motivating because "feeling good" is positively valued in itself and "feeling bad" is negatively valued in itself (2001:327). Therefore, once an emotion is activated, whether physically (e.g. pain), mentally, or by an event, it then becomes an organizing and driving force in subsequent thoughts and actions as actors seek to understand and interpret the connections between their feelings and their experiences (Lawler, 2001:327-328).

Lawler's theory also states that emotions emerge from exchange because the goal of the actors is to generate more valued goods, profit, and utility than they currently have, which makes it possible for them to participate in exchanges that provide each with more benefit than they had before (Lawler, 2001:324). In this way exchange brings about outcomes in the form of rewards and punishments; which, in turn, bring forth emotional responses that vary in form and intensity. Thus, when exchanges occur successfully, actors experience an emotional 'high', and when they fail, they experience emotional 'downs'. Positive emotions include excitement, pleasure, pride, and gratitude while and negative emotions include sadness, shame, and anger (Lawler, 2001:322).

Assumption four of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicts the **context** of social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a build into cultural norms or structural positions (Lawler et al., 2009:34). For example, the reaction/emotion an employee gets is a result of his or her perceptions of the procedures followed at arriving at the rating; regardless of whether the rating is favourable or not. Therefore, assumption four is focused more on the **social unit**; accordingly, an employee feels affective attachment when he/she scored highly and affective detachment when he/she scored lowly (see Table 1). Assumption four is also expected to answer specific objective 2 which is to **determine whether employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influences feelings of procedural fairness towards appraisal ratings.**

The argument here is, the reactions/emotions derived from performance appraisal outcomes causes employees to reflect on the entire process of performance appraisal; that is, employees try to understand the role of their involvement (or lack of) in the ratings/scores they got. For example, high ratings when the employee has put in low effort trigger shame at the self when the employee realises possible flaws in the appraisal process. Similarly, an employee will perceive performance appraisal as unfair and suspect flaws in the appraisal process when he or she has put in high effort but was rated lowly. Equally, an employee will feel pride and have confidence in the appraisal process when he or she has put in high effort and scored high ratings.

**Assumption 5 – During joint tasks, actors interprets and explain their global feelings partly with reference to social units**

Lawler's theory states that social units (relations and networks) are potential objects or targets of the global emotions (2001:328). Interdependencies entrenched in exchange structures determine the jointness of the exchange task. Thus, depending on the exchange structure, emotions or feelings from exchange influence how actors perceive and feel about their shared activity, their relation, and/or their common group affiliations (Lawler, 2001:322). Thus, with higher degrees of jointness, the emotions experienced by actors in exchange should make the relational or group context more salient as a target for cognitions and feelings. Emotions, in this sense, contribute to the "objectification" of relations and groups (Lawler, 2001:322).

Lawler also argues that individuals' relational and group attachments are connected to their emotional experiences in social exchange (2001:321). This is because social exchange is quintessentially a joint activity. However, although emotions are an integral part of the normative context of exchange, they are often managed carefully by actors (Lawler, 2001:323). "In fact, emotion management accounts for why emotions are often hidden from view in social exchange contexts and, for that matter, other task-oriented, instrumental settings" (Lawler, 2001:323). Lawler also adds that emotions are subtle signals to actors about their own responses in interaction and when expressed, they provide information on the intentions or orientation of others (Lawler, 2001:323). Assumption five of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicts the **context** of social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a build into cultural norms or structural positions (Lawler et al., 2009:34).

For example, the reaction/emotion an employee gets is a result of his or her perceptions of the way the manager/rater feels about him or her; regardless of whether the rating is favourable or not. Therefore, assumption five is focused more on the **other**; accordingly, an employee will feel gratitude towards the manager/rater for a favourable score and anger towards the manager for an unfavourable one (see Table 1). Assumption five is also expected to answer specific objective 1 which is to **describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems**. The argument here is, the reactions/emotions derived from performance appraisal are caused by the rater's judgement of the employee; that is during the appraisal process the employee will interpret the scores they got to be an indication of the way the rater perceives him or her or the relations they have.

## **2.3 Empirical literature**

The aim of this section is to examine the existing research the links between employee work behaviour and attitudes and organisational justice. In this section organisational justice is explored in regards to interactional, procedural, distributive and interactional justice and its influence on impression management, job performance and attitudes.

### **2.3.1 Performance appraisal, employee's work behaviour and attitudes**

Since the turn of the millennium, the need for appraisal systems has increased, with the successful use and implementation of this system becoming of paramount importance to organisations (De Waal, 2013:320). Even so, the success of appraisal systems depends on loyalties, reactions of employees to important aspects of this process as well as how they perceive and experience the process (Jawahar, 2007). Thus, if employees are satisfied with their organisations' appraisal process, they will regard it in a positive manner and exert effort to carry out assigned goals (Fakharyan, Jalilvand, Dini, & Dehafarin, 2012). To illustrate, Brown, Hyatt and Benson (2010) examined the role of low quality performance appraisal on three human resources management outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to quit) among a sample of 2336 public sector employees in a large organisation with different performance appraisal experiences. The results of their study revealed that low performance appraisal (when compared to those with mixed and high quality appraisal experiences) were more likely



to be dissatisfied with their job, be less committed to the organisation and more likely to be contemplating leaving the organisation. Of equal importance is the delivery and reception of feedback during appraisals. It is argued that although this is usually an emotionally charged process (Fisher et al., 2006 cited in Hernandez, 2009:226), if used effectively, it can increase employee motivation and performance. Conversely, if used inappropriately, it can be disruptive, de-motivating, and frustrating to employees; it can also lead to low satisfaction and high turnover (Hernandez, 2009:226).

Performance management is also directly related to the level of energy and the specific form of action characterizing a worker's behaviour (Mitchell, Ortiz & Mitchell, 1987:31). Cardy (2011:10) introduces two major approaches to defining performance; the behavioural and the outcome approaches. The behavioural approach describes job performance in terms of behaviours that the worker should and should not do, while the outcome approach describes it in terms of outcomes achieved, such as amount of sales, number of new clients (Cardy, 2011:10). With regards to this, there is some criticism arguing that emphasizing performance management hinders creativity and encourages only the achievement of short-term (versus long-term) objectives (Walton 1985).

Instead, it is argued that it is more profitable for the organisation to develop a performance culture geared towards continuous learning as it ensures systematic updating of employees' skills and knowledge. In this way, the basic thrust for continuous learning is to help the employees develop and achieve results, and to nurture a compelling work culture (Bhattacharyya, 2011). However, it is not all organisations who view performance management in this way. According to Holbeche (2012:126), some organisations resort to handling poor performance by simply passing on underperformers to other departments. This is often a solution for managers who find it difficult to confront aspects of poor performance because they lack confidence in their abilities to handle the conflict which might arise.

Even so, there is a wide recognition that effective performance management can improve organisational effectiveness, particularly employee productivity. Therefore, it has been suggested that performance management is necessary in order to assess organisational progress towards goals (Chanda & Shen, 2009; Bhattacharyya, 2011). Even so, it has been observed that performance management hinders creativity and encourages the achievement of short-term (versus long-term) objectives (Walton 1985). Therefore, to

develop a performance culture in organisations, Bhattacharyya (2011) argues that it is important for organisations to focus on continuous learning as it ensures systematic updating of employees' skills and knowledge. Hornibrook, Fearne and Lazzarine (2009) believe that perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal by individuals can improve outcomes relevant for organizational commitment, job satisfaction and performance.

To illustrate, Kuvaas (2006) explored alternative relationships between appraisal satisfaction and employee outcomes in the form of self-reported work performance, affective organisational commitment and turnover intentions among 593 employees from 64 Norwegian savings banks. The findings of this study revealed that appraisal satisfaction was directly related to both affective commitment and turnover intention while the relationship between satisfaction with performance appraisal and work performance was mediated by intrinsic motivation.

Studies such as the one cited above highlight the significance of job satisfaction as a positive sentiment which employees have about a job, resulting from an assessment of its characteristics (Robbins, Judge, Millet & Boyle, 2014). Traditionally, job satisfaction has been defined as the subjective or perceived relationship between what an individual wants from a job which releases a pleasurable emotional state especially when it is viewed as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values (Mitchell, Oritiz & Mitchell, 1987; Fraser, 1983).

Recently, although the spirit of this conceptualisation is retained, job satisfaction is viewed as a function of the perceived relationship between what an individual wants from the job and what one perceives it as offering (Kronberg, 2011:5). It is also described as an affective response to one's job measured largely as a cognitive evaluation of job features (Fisher, 2000). Besides this, job satisfaction is viewed as an attitude which represents a positive emotional reaction to a particular job (Quah & Ong, 2012, Kronberg, 2011).

As an attitude, job satisfaction arguably contains at least two components: the affective component (emotions or feelings) and the cognitive component (belief, judgement, comparison) and these components contribute to the overall attitude and may be linked to behaviour (Kronberg, 2011:4). As shown above job satisfaction implies the 'favourableness' or 'unfavourableness' with which employees view their work (Goel,

2012:224). In terms of performance appraisal, the positive affectivity towards the job has been seen as resulting from the cognitive assessment of the actual job outcomes in comparison to those expected. For example, Agyare, Yuhui, Mensah, Aidoo and Ansah (2016) found that employees' job satisfaction is positively related to and impacted by fairness in the appraisal system, linking appraisal with promotion, clarity of roles and feedback about their performance. Schwepker (2001) also found that the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's job values leads to job satisfaction. Similarly, Tang, Baldwin and Linda (1996) found that elements of organizational justice were important in predicting the employees' satisfaction of the performance appraisal and commitment to the organization. They indicated that managers had control over the employees' perceptions of the organizational justice in order to give effect to their satisfaction in the organization they serve.

Besides job satisfaction, organizational commitment is also argued to be important for work behaviour. In the past, scholars have viewed organisational commitment in relation to whether an employee believes in and accepts the goals and values of an organization and is willing to exert effort on behalf of the organization or desires to maintain membership of the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974:604) explain organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with or involvement in a particular organization while Meyer and Allen (1984) describe organisational commitment as the strength of an individual's identification with and attachment to an organization.

Meyer and Allen (1984:374) further view organizational commitment as a complicated psychological state which develops through three main dimensions: (1) affective dimension; here the emphasis is the extent to which the organization represents a great personal meaning to the individual; (2) continuance commitment; it shows the extent to which an employee prefers to stay at work because of the security of available job choices. This in turn, can negatively influence employee performance and organizational effectiveness and (3) normative commitment; the degree to which an individual prefers to stay as a return of favour to the organization.

Recently, organisational commitment has been conceptualized as the attachment an employee has with their organisation and a desire to remain in the organisation (Greenberg & Baron, 2000). To illustrate, Agyare et al (2016) found that employees' commitment is positively related to and impacted by the linkage of appraisals with salary, identification of training needs, clarity of performance appraisal purpose and employee involvement in the formulation of appraisal tools. Salleh, Amin, Muda and Halim (2013) also found that perceptions of fairness illustrated that the organization was committed to its employees. Thus, if employees feel that the management decisions is fair, they respond with commitment and will be more willing to involve in 'extra-role' behaviour (Colquitt, 2001).

Further, employees who have strong organizational commitment are characterised as having strong belief in the values and goals of the organization (Salleh et al., 2012:122). Similarly, Guest (1987) asserts that individuals with high levels of commitment are more willing to devote greater efforts toward an organization's goals and objectives. Research also indicates that fair practices in human resource management, particularly in terms of performance appraisal have a predictive role in the employees' attitude such as the organization's commitment (Jehad & Farzana, 2011).

Another equally important element is that of employees' intention to quit. It has been cited as the opposite of organisational commitment. Vandenberg and Nelson (1999:1313) define employees' intention to quit as an individual's estimated probability that they are permanently leaving their organization at some point in the near future. The relationship between human resource management practices and employees' intention to leave the organization has been gaining increased attention among researchers and human resource practitioners (Warner, 2013:82). It has also been argued that the undesirable, unwanted, and voluntary attrition that organizations experience when highly valued employees quit is a much bigger problem than the frequency of corporate layoffs reported (Mobley, 1982).

Redman and Wilkinson (2001) concur and state that the issue on why employees quit their jobs is important because employees are viewed as invaluable assets of organizations. As such, their intention to leave is most likely to affect the organization's operation and effectiveness (Warner, 2013:82). According to Erdogan (2002:553), employees are likely to perceive the appraisal process as fair, if they are accurately rated

against the performance standards and fair actions are taken in accordance with the evidence of appraisal. Therefore, employees' work behaviour such as intention to stay in an organization can reflect in their performance appraisal and planning systems contributed to employees' perception of performance appraisal. Similarly, Dailey and Kirk (1992:305) found that effective performance appraisal and planning systems contributed to employees' perceptions of fairness and they were more likely to consider staying at the organization. Thus, employees who feel that they are being treated fairly by their employers are more likely to keep their job, compared to those who feel that they have been unfairly treated by their employer (Johair, Yean, Adnan, Yahya & Ahmad, 2012:405).

### **2.3.2 Organizational justice**

Research on organizational justice is concerned with employees' subjective fairness perceptions in their employment relationship. Greenberg (1990:400) describes organizational justice as a literature "grown around attempts to describe and explain the role of fairness as a consideration in the workplace". Citra and Rentsch (1993:211) portray organizational justice as the perceived fairness of the distribution of outcomes and procedures used to make these distributions. James (1993) defines organizational justice as individuals' and groups' perceptions of the fairness of treatment (including, but not limited to, allocations) received from organizations, and their behavioural reactions to such perceptions.

Beurge (1998:xiii) asserts that justice in organizations refers to the rules and social norms in organizations governing; (1) how outcomes should be allocated; (2) the procedures that should be used to make decisions; and (3) how people should be treated interpersonally. According to Bazerman (1993:189), justice is fundamentally a perceptual phenomenon. Thus, fairness is a perception. Therefore, an organizational setting that one employee perceives as being just may be perceived as unjust by another employee. However, despite this perceptual and subjective aspect of justice, it is possible to suggest a minimum standard of justice. Being treated with respect and dignity may be perceived as just by most people. For instance, an employee's perceptions of criticism emanating from his or her supervisor influences his or her own reactions (Beugre, 1998:xiv).

The existing literature categorizes perceptions of fairness as 'distributive', 'procedural', and 'interactional' based on the three dimensions of organisational justice, viz; distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice.

### **2.3.2.1 Distributive justice**

Performance appraisal is a procedure by which the organisation assesses the contributions of individual employees for allocations of rewards (Chelladurai, 2006:134). Socially, the distribution of resources among social units poses a fundamental problem, the solution to which determines the degree of social order and cohesion that will prevail. Sociologically this is termed the 'distribution problem' and it appears whenever resources are to be allocated between person and other, as well as between groups within a society or between nation-states (Sampson, 1976:47).

In the context of performance appraisal, "distributive fairness refers to perceived fairness of appraisal rating or outcome received in relation to the actual work performed" (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:508). For Suliman (2013 cited in Ololube & Nwachukwu, 2016:85) distributive justice refers to employee satisfaction with work outcomes; thus, distributive justice speaks to the perceived fairness of an actual appraisal rating in relation to the actual work performed (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). As a concept, distributive fairness originated from Adam's Equity Theory (1965). In his theory, Adams states that individuals formulate perceptions of fairness by comparing the ratio of their perceived work outcomes (rewards) and perceived work inputs (contribution) and then comparing those to their coworker(s).

Accordingly, employees are more likely to view their appraisal ratings and any rewards thereof as fair, if they reflect the individual's inputs and contributions (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:509). Once employees perceive injustice of distribution results, they express their dissatisfaction toward the organisation by lowering their working performances and changing their attitudes (Greenberg, 1993). Thus, decreased levels of performances can be attributed to defective performance appraisal systems. This occurs when appraisals are linked to rewards and a smaller number of employees get the reward and those who do not get rewarded feel de-motivated (Bhattacharyya, 2011:55). There are two factors that affect distributive fairness. The first is the perceived fairness of the appraisal rating in relation to employee performance and the second is the perceived fairness of the pay

increase, promotion or other administrative action related to the appraisal rating (Matlala, 2011). According to Suliman (2007), systems in which resources are distributed unfairly can become quite prone to disputes, mistrust, disrespect and other social problems. Thus, employee perceptions of distributive justice are based largely on comparisons with others that are in the workplace. For example, co-workers may compare their salaries, working hours and benefits. If the comparison is positive, then they feel positive toward the system but the reverse is true if the outcome is negative. A meta-analysis found that distributive fairness is a crucial predictor of job satisfaction (Colquitt, 2001). That is, distributive justice is regarded as being among various determinants of job satisfaction and commitment (Ololube, 2016:127).

Deb (2009:189) argues that how employees are expected to perform comes under the purview of distributive fairness. This perception of fairness is not simply determined by the amount received, but by what is received, relative to some referent other (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997 cited in Deb, 2009:189). It follows then, that the rewards and recognitions administered to the employees based on the outcomes of appraisal and managing performance of employees has important consequences in terms of organisational fairness (Deb, 2009:189). Thus, distributive justice is an important predictor of workplace attitudes and behaviours. It has a particular strong effect on workers' satisfaction with their pay and on turnover intentions (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Konovsky, Folger, & Cropanzano, 1987).

According to Welbourne, Balikh and Gomez-Meija (1995:885), literature suggests that the perceived fairness of outcomes exerts a strong influence on how employees react to a variety of aspects of organizational life, in particular an organization's reward system'. Harr and Spell (2009:1830) argue that this is because employees want fair and just treatment in their work places, and this applies to organization pay system. Greenberg (1990:399) agrees and states that understanding the links between organizational justice and the distribution of employee reward systems is vital for motivating employees (Haar & Spell, 2009:1830).

Overall, distributive justice studies suggest that in response to low distributive justice, employees are more likely to quit their organizations in order to end the inequality (Miller & Summers 1998 cited in Haar & Spell, 2009:1030). Research confirms this as unfairly treated people tend to have poorer work attitudes, higher levels of conflict, fewer

citizenship behaviours, and lower job performance (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Zerbe, 2000:49). Distributive justice perceptions were also found to possibly impact on future attitudes towards leaving an organization (Matlala, 2011; Haar & Spell, 2009).

### **2.3.2.2 Procedural justice**

In the context of performance appraisal, procedural justice relates to the fairness of the process by which employees feel their performance is measured (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). That is, procedural justice focuses on the perceived fairness of procedures used to determine the appraisal rating. Instrumental models of procedural justice focus on the expected and actual outcomes that people receive (Thibaut & Walker, 1975 cited in Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2015:17). During performance management, managers' roles include establishing specific job assignments, writing job descriptions and assigning responsibility for strategic initiatives. They also involve developing and supplying performance standards, providing feedback on the employees' strengths and weaknesses and conducting periodic performance evaluation to improve performance (Bhattacharyya, 2011:12). It is not surprising then, that procedural fairness focuses on the perceived fairness of procedures followed to arrive at performance outcomes or ratings (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:509).

Procedural fairness has long been recognised as a key determinant of people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. That is, in the organizations, people react to how fairly they are treated (Tornblom & Vermunt, 2016:91). One of the principles of procedural justice is 'correctability', whereby managers provide for correcting errors that might have occurred in the distribution of resources (Chelladurai, 2006:134). It can be argued then that procedural fairness fosters positive attitudes towards authorities and leads to more compliance with laws, while procedural unfairness diminishes satisfaction with the system and leads in the end to more breaches of the law (Tornblom & Vermunt, 2016:112). It has been shown that performance objectives and standards are the most common methods to define the basis for measuring performance results. Thus, by using these objectives and standards, managers can provide specific feedback to describe the gap between the expected and actual performance which might mitigate perceptions of procedural injustice (Bhattacharyya, 2011:13).



Performance appraisal is one of the most complex and controversial human resource techniques and that is why participatory performance appraisal is an essential and proven attitude of an effective performance appraisal system (Roberts, 2002:89). To ensure procedural fairness of performance appraisals, De Waal (2013:51) states that the roles and responsibilities of each management level must be clear and the chosen management style must be applied consistently throughout the performance management process. It should be understood by managers that the outset of performance management is an important part of their responsibilities, that these are the skills they must acquire and use, and that their performance will be measured by reference to the extent to which they are used effectively (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:19).

In terms of conceptualizing participation, the most pervasive distinction in the literature seems to be between participation that allows an employee to influence the outcome of the appraisal and participation that allows an employee to voice his or her opinions, without regard to influence (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). The idea of allowing individuals who are affected by a decision to present information that they consider relevant to the decision is known in the justice literature as voice (Lind & Tyler, 1988), and voice can lead to perceptions of procedural fairness (Kanfer, Sawyer, Early, & Lind, 1987; Tyler, 1987). Other ways that researchers have operationalized participation include the opportunity to self-appraise and the experimental manipulation of actual participation in the appraisal procedures (Cawley, Lisa & Levy, 1998:616).

In terms of self-appraisal, it has been suggested that self-appraisals may increase ratees' participation in the appraisal interviewer (Farh, Webel & Bedeian, 1988; Latham & Wexley, 1981). According to Tyler et al. (1985) employees perceive the chance for self-expression as procedurally just, regardless of the final decision. According to this explanation, attitudes are affected because the opportunity to voice one's opinions is a desired end in itself (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). Tyler and Lind (1992) continued that people value voice in its own right because it validates their self-worth and their feelings of belongingness to a valued group. The responsibility structure also posits that the roles and responsibilities of each management level must be clear, and the chosen management style must be applied consistently throughout the appraisal process. Further, managers and employees need to know for what they are held accountable for (Roberts, 2002) and based on their accountability, they can then set up action plans for their own area of expertise.

Therefore, it is equally essential that there is a consensus throughout the organisation on who is responsible for what as a clear responsibility structure makes it possible to align performance with the responsibilities of organisation members (De Waal, 2013:51). To gain acceptance from the employees, organisations should develop performance standards collaboratively (Bhattacharyya, 2011:6). According to Mello (2014:522) this will provide employees with a voice into the appraisal process. Then, if employees are confident in the fairness of the appraisal process, they are more likely to accept performance ratings, even adverse ones. Moreover, employee participation generates an atmosphere of cooperation and employee support. Thus, in better performance management situations, employees are responsible for monitoring their own performance and for asking for help as needed, empowerment rather than domination (Bussin, 2017).

Whatever the manner of deciding performance standards is, communicating the same to the employees is very important. For newly recruited employees, organisations may familiarize performance standards through induction programmes. Then individual-level performance is compared with standardised and recognised performance to measure the extent of performance achievement (Bhattacharyya, 2011:7). However, even the most well-developed performance system is predisposed to problems, especially if it is viewed negatively by employees. Thus, it is clear that assessment of reaction to the performance appraisal instrument and interview process is important (Mello, 2014:522).

Perceptions of procedurally unfair treatment can also lead to the development of the deviant identities and oppositional cultures (Myhill & Bradford, 2013 cited in Ololube, 2016:85). Van Prooijen (2009:1176) indicates that people assign much value to procedural justice, which is reflected in findings that designate fair decision making procedures influence a wide range of human perceptions, emotions, and behaviours, and do so across diverse social settings. Perceptions of procedural justice enhance perceptions that outcomes are also fair, create more positive attitudes toward authorities and produce a variety of positive behavioural reactions (Collett, 2008:270). In other words, it is suggested that if individuals think the process is fair, the way that the agreement was reached was fair, then they will likely think of the final decision as fair (Collett, 2008:271). This is an imperative for any performance management system, especially during a performance appraisal.

Procedural justice has been found to increase feelings of being respected; extent to which individuals identify with institutions of authority and the subordinates' willingness to voluntarily display behaviours that benefit these institutions (Roberts 2002). It is therefore crucial for procedural justice to be perceived positively if an organisation wants to achieve full productivity and execution of its strategic objectives.

### **2.3.2.3 Interactional justice**

The perceived fairness of the rater's interpersonal treatment of the ratee during the appraisal process indicates interactional justice. Interactional justice is defined by Chelladural (2006:134) as the extent to which the managers give a clear and correct explanation regarding the distribution of resources and the procedures employed to arrive at such distribution. For Ololube (2016:85), interactional justice is focused on the treatment of individuals by decision makers and whether they show respect, sensitivity, and explain decisions thoroughly. Interactional justice also examines the nature of the relationships between supervisors and subordinates.

According to Wankel (2008:227) perception of interactional justice occurs when employees perceive that they are treated well in the organisation. It has been found to strongly impact perceptions of leader-member exchange and other evaluations of authority in organisations (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001 cited in Shipp & Fried, 2014:163). Two types of interactional justice are informational justice and interpersonal injustice (Greenberg, 1993; Wankel, 2008:227). Interpersonal justice relates to the degree of fairness people see in how they are treated by others in their organization. Perceptions of interpersonal justice will mostly affect how individuals feel about those with whom they interact and communicate (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011:395).

Interpersonal justice acts primarily to alter reactions to decision outcomes because sensitivity can make people feel better about an unfavourable outcome (Greenberg, 1993). Examples of interpersonal justice include treatment with respect and dignity, politeness, courtesy, and apologies etc. If workers experience interpersonal justice, they are likely to reciprocate by treating others with respect and openness. But if they experience interpersonal injustice, they may be less respectful in turn, and may be less inclined to follow the directives of their leader agree with the decisions (Greenberg, 1993).

Informational justice refers to the perceived fairness of information used to arrive at decisions (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011:395). If someone feels that a manager made a decision based on relatively complete and accurate information, and that the information was appropriately processed and considered, the person will likely experience informational justice. But if the person feels that the decision was based on incomplete and inaccurate information and/or that important information was ignored, the individual will experience less informational justice (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011:395).

A few researchers have suggested that treating an employee fairly is just not enough to increase performance; managers or leaders should also consider the fair treatment perceived fairness of the rater's interpersonal treatment of the ratee during the appraisal process. The perceived fairness of the rater's interpersonal treatment of the ratee during the appraisal process indicates perceived interactional justice. MacLean (2001:9) contends that the single most important factor in constructing a fair and useful appraisal system is the development of job-specific performance criteria that constitute the critical mass of what is evaluated.

Thus, in order to obtain accurate performance appraisal information, managers or raters must provide objective (information) and unbiased ratings of employees although this is often done under subjective opinions (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012) which sometimes result in victimisation of unfavoured employees (Bersin, 2008 cited in Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012). However, this is not the only challenge of encountered; on the side of managers the biggest complaint is that they are not given sufficient guidelines to assess subordinates while for employees the biggest complaint is that the process is not equitable and fair.

Impression management, also referred to as self-presentation, originates in the sociological work of Erving Goffman (1959). Goffman (1959) suggested that social interaction was like a 'play', with people engaged in 'performances' for and with an audience (Beard, 1996:2). Impression management refers to the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions (Beurge, 1998:xiii). For Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) impression management consists of behaviours displayed by individuals with the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions formed of that person by others.

Beard (1996:2) states that impression management is primarily concerned with the behaviours people exhibit for others to create and maintain the desired perceptions of themselves. Thus, people are all motivated to manage impressions and frequently do so to achieve important outcomes such as decreasing intent to turnover, raising performance appraisal, and reducing job stress (Mohamed, 2017:217).

Today, many organisations face challenges in developing accurate performance checklists, therefore managers' subjective opinions are frequently relied upon. This suggests that performance appraisals may be fraught with biases or errors, resulting in compromised evaluations of employees' accomplishments and capabilities (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012:74). The errors and the desire of individuals to avoid the biases of perceivers sometimes causes them to engage in impression management, a process of editing, packaging, and communicating information to control one's own image as perceived by other people (Zoogah & Beugre, 2012:38).

Impression management not only has application to interpersonal relations and interaction, but also to interaction among teams and departments within organisation (Beard, 1996:4). In the workplace, impression management occurs during job interviews, performance appraisal, or job promotion decisions (Zoogah & Beugre, 2012:39). DuBrin (2010) outlines contextual variables influencing impression management as follows; firstly, power relations in the organisation, which stipulates that the more power managers have over workers in the organisation, the more likely the workers are to engage in impression management.

Secondly, limited economic and political opportunities of subgroups, which explain that impression management may be more common in societies with limited economic and political opportunities. Thirdly, the culture-specific codes which content that a national culture that emphasises harmonious interpersonal relationships may encourage members of that culture to management their impressions and lastly, occupational status which explains that individuals in low-status jobs are more likely to use impression management toward their superiors in order to improve their condition.

## **2.4 Chapter summary**

Chapter two examined Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange as a Theoretical Framework of this study. It also focused on the three pillars of organisational fairness being interactional fairness, procedural fairness and distributive fairness. The chapter concluded with the literature on performance appraisal as a concept of performance management. The subsequent chapter presents the methodology of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of research methods that were used in the study. It focuses on the research design, study site, population, sample and sample selection strategies as well as methods of data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations of this study.

#### 3.2 Methodological approach

The study is qualitative in nature. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) state that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, adopting an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means qualitative research social phenomena in their natural settings and attempts to make sense of or interpret it in terms of the meanings people attach to it (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007:5). Thus, qualitative research is a form of inquiry which allows researchers to make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand (Creswell, 2007:37). For Bryman (2008:366) qualitative research is a research strategy that emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Qualitative researchers are therefore interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences, as well as how they understand, interpret and produce the social world (Merriam, 2009:13).

Qualitative research has been criticized for its unreliability as a predictor of the population (Nykiel, 2007:56). It is stated to have difficulties in generalizing the findings to a larger population (Gramatikov, 2010:48), it was chosen as this study's research design since it provides a complex, detailed understanding of issues. It also studies the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue (Creswell, 2007:40). Secondly, qualitative research allows the researcher an interaction with participants, thereby allowing a deeper focus on the meanings that participants hold about the problem or issue (Creswell, 2013; Nykiel, 2007).

### **3.2.1 Research design**

The purpose of this study is to examine employees' perceptions of fairness performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours. Since qualitative research methods are used to answer questions about experiences, meanings and perspectives from the standpoint of the participant (Hammaberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016), phenomenology research design was selected. A phenomenological study describes lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. Thus, phenomenologists focuses on describing what all participants have in common (Creswell, 2007). Manen (2016) also contends that the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence.

Moustaas (1994 cited in Creswell, 2014) posits that understanding the "lived experiences" marks phenomenology as both a philosophy as well a method. It involves studying a small number of subjects through engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. Phenomenology is thus not only a description, but is also seen as interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation. That is, the researcher mediates between different meanings of the meaning lived experiences (Manen, 2016:26). Although phenomenological research is sometimes identified with other descriptive and qualitative approaches, it differs from them because its focus is on the subject's experienced meaning instead of on descriptions of their overt actions or behaviour. Phenomenology maintains the critical distinction between what presents itself as part of a person's awareness and what might exist as reality outside of our experiences (Valle & Halling, 2013:44).

### **3.2.2 The study site**

The study was conducted in Maseru City. This is to depict the various perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal from diverse organisations. Maseru is a capital city of Lesotho and also the capital of Maseru district. It is situated on the Caledon River, which separates Lesotho from South Africa, and is Lesotho's only sizeable city, with a population of approximately 519, 186 (Lesotho Census, 2016). The researcher chose to focus on various communities around Maseru City that she assumed workers from organizations conducting performance appraisal could be located. These communities included Naledi, Ha Thesane, Maseru West, Abia, Ha Nelese and Masianokeng as the



researcher wanted to capture views representative of individual's in different socio-economic strata and who worked in different organizations and positions.

### **3.3 Population**

A population is defined as a totality of objects or individuals which serves as a basis of a research study (Jha, 2014:183). A study or target population is defined as any set of elements or cases that the researcher actually studies or focuses on and from which the results obtained by studying the sample should be generalized or derived (Neuman, 2014:247; Jha, 2014:183; Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:99). Cargan (2007:236) concurs and defines a study population as a collective consisting of all possible elements which the researcher can generalize or apply the results beyond those being studied.

For Neuman (2014:247), a population is an abstract idea of a large group of many cases from which a researcher draws a sample and to which results from a sample are generalized. Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe population as 'an aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected, and may include individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events (Welman & Kruger, 2003:46). However, Loseke (2013:100) cautions that a population is a concept; as such researchers can and should define it to suit their purposes, especially more so in qualitative research studies that employ the insider-perspective that seeks to understand people in terms of their own definition of their world (Mouton & Marais, 1996:70). Thus, the population of the study is comprising all formally employed individuals working in the private, and non-government organisations that reside in Maseru City.

#### **3.3.1 Sampling procedures**

Sampling is "the design task of deciding which elements in a population will be chosen and how those elements will be chosen". Thus, sampling is the work of deciding which people, places, time, questions and documents will be part of the study (Loseke, 2013:101). A sample is also a small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool and generalizes to the population (Neuman, 2014:246). Thus, a sample is a subset of the population as researchers are often unable to examine each and every element in a population Loseke (2013:101). Bryman and Bell (2007:182) concur and states that a sample is a segment of the population that is selected for investigation.

Neuman (2014:273) states that purposive sampling uses judgemental of an expert in selecting case, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. In this study, this type of sampling was deemed to fit because the study sought to identify employees from private and non-governmental organizations who have ever undergone appraisal process for in-depth investigation, to gain a deeper understanding. Macnee and McCabe (2008:122) explain that purposive sample in a qualitative study actively seeks to enrich the data by including participants who have a particular type of experience, characteristic, or understanding to share. Purposive sampling also demands that the researcher should think critically about the parameters of the population they are studying and choosing the sample of the study carefully (Silverman, 2013:141). The researcher may also use his or her own judgement about which research subjects to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purpose of the study (Bailey, 1994:96).

When selecting the study sample, the researcher followed the steps below as articulated by Daniel (2011:88). Firstly, the researcher came up with a recruitment plan that was culturally sensitive and allowed individuals from different ages, genders, health status, and income to participate as long as they satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria. According to Tappen (2011:191) recruitment requires a 'plan; of accessing the population and identifying potential barriers to participation. It also involves being able to contact potential sources to find out if they are willing to participate and starting the process of consent to explain the study purpose as well as its risks and benefits when recruiting participants for the study.

Secondly, the researcher took time in learning about the type of organisations that potential research participants worked in to find out whether they were suitable for the study or not. This is because it has been suggested by Visorsky and Morrison-Beedy (2012:195) that when conducting research in the community, it is essential that the researcher becomes familiar with the area's stakeholders. Consequently, the researcher sought permission from the village chief and explained the purpose of the study briefly. After the researcher was allowed to recruit, she visited households and screened participants to ensure their eligibility (on the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria) and then when they agreed to participate they became part of the sample. According to Visorsky and Morrison-Beedy (2012:195), the best way to do this is through face to face recruitment; although this might be time consuming, it helps to build rapport and trust with potential participants. This was also done because the researcher was ethically

bound to provide an accurate depiction of the research to be conducted while balancing the need to make the study more appealing to the target population. The next step involved designating the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study; since the researcher had already defined the target population, she identified inclusion and exclusion criteria for sampling. The inclusion criteria was participants who worked for formal organizations for more than two years and had undergone performance appraisal recently (i.e. at least in the last six months but not more than two years) while the exclusion criteria was never being part of performance appraisals or having the last performance appraisal being more than two years ago. Thus, participants were purposively selected based on knowledge being employed by organizations that regularly held performance appraisal for their employees.

Lastly, the researcher determined the sample size while keeping in mind that qualitative research does not require having a representative sample from huge number of cases as espoused by Neuman (2014:273). Rather, the sample size was determined by data saturation, which led to a total sample of 13 participants for the study. The researcher interviewed these participants keeping in mind that the purpose of qualitative research is to generate rich data from a small sample group as stated by Gratton and Jones (2004:53).

### **3.4 Data collection procedures**

The type of methodology adopted by any research depends on the central research objectives and questions (Crabtree & Miller 1999:35). According to Creswell (2007:75) data collection in phenomenological research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information. In this study data was collected using in-depth interviews. In-depth as they are they are most common source of qualitative data that lets researchers enter the world of their participants and learn rich and valuable information about their experiences (Kinetic, 2009:45). In-depth interview is a method that is based on direct intervention by the observer and on the evocation on the evidence (Yow, 2005:4). For Guest et al., (2012:113), an in-depth interview is a conversation designed to elicit depth on a topic of interest that when done competently, it is a highly effective method for obtaining data for social research (Morris, 2015:5). In-depth interviews allowed the participant to provide information while it allowed the interviewer, as a representative of the study, to direct the respondent to the topic that mattered to the study (Weiss, 1994:8

cited in Porta, 2014:228). During the interviews, the interviewer is responsible for judging when a response is sufficient, and when specification is required, while not normally offering his or her opinion (Porta, 2014:228). The inductive probing at the heart of in-depth interviewing also require that the interviewer shapes the probing questions in a dynamic fashion, keeping in mind both the objectives of an interview and the substance of the participant's previous answers (Guest et al., 2012:113). Any planned questions in the discussion guide for in-depth interview were designed to lead the conversation into the topic of interest and is constructed so as to maximize the opportunities for discursive, detailed, and highly textured responses (Guest et al., 2012:114).

Nevertheless, in-depth interviews have been criticised for their high cost and heavy time commitments, difficulties in gaining access to the interviewee and the vast amount of historical research necessary to conduct a good in-depth interview (Stacks, 2010:174). Even so, in-depth interview was chosen for this study based on the merits it had. For example, it allow the interviewer to; (1) explain or help clarify questions increasing the likelihood of useful responses, (2) it affords the interviewer the opportunity to experience the effective as well as cognitive aspects of responses, (3) it allows the interviewer to be flexible in administering interview to particular individuals or circumstances, and (4) it provides the interviewer the opportunity to explore topics in depth. Lastly, in-depth interviews (5) yield the richest data, details and new insights (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997:3-7). Further, in-depth interviews were chosen because they allow the researcher to focus precisely on the content of the interviewee's responses, paying close attention to tone, content, and body language (Guest et al., 2012:113).

In-depth interviews enable the researcher to give the research subject leeway to answer as he or she chooses, to attribute meanings to the experiences under discussion, and to interject topics (Yow, 2005:5). It also allows the researcher to analyse those meanings individuals attribute to the external world and their own participation in it (Parton, 2014:228). In-depth interviews were also selected for this study as questions of the study are distinctively open-ended (Guest et al., 2012:114). The qualitative interview has also been considered pertinent for a naturalistic vision, oriented towards rich descriptions of people and interaction as they exist and unfold in their native habitats (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997:6). The interviews were conducted on a face to face basis and the researcher recorded the interviews while also taking notes. The duration of interviews

ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were held at household level and were conducted from the hours of 10 am to 3 pm.

### **3.5 Data analysis techniques**

The study employed thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008:79). As a technique, thematic analysis permits the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning in context (Marks & Yardley, 2004:59). Thematic analysis also aims to provide a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group of themes, within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008:83). Thus, themes have been analysed, interpreted, made sense of, rather than just paraphrased or described. Thematic analysis involves the six phases as articulated below:

#### **3.5.1 Familiarisation of data**

Familiarization refers to immersion in the new data or a pragmatic selection of the data by studying notes in order to list key ideas and recurrent themes (Natee, Low & Teo, 2015: 64-65). Srivastava and Thomson (2009:75), opine that data familiarisation is a process during which the researcher becomes familiarized with the transcripts of the data collected and/or gains an overview of the collected data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). For Braun and Clarke (2008:87) it is ideal to read through the entire data set at least once before the researcher begins coding. In familiarisation of the data, the researchers immerse themselves in the data by transcribing it, reading and re-reading it, noting down initial ideas, and then searching for meanings and patterns.

#### **3.5.2 Generating initial codes**

After familiarising themselves with the data, the researcher identified preliminary codes, which are features of the data that appeared interesting and meaningful. Coding in thematic analysis involves noting patterns in the data and dividing up the data to give greater clarity regarding its detailed content. After this, distinctions are drawn between different aspects of the content by organising the data into a set of categories (Marks & Yardley, 2004:59). The researcher is then required to work systematically through the

entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item. Next the researcher identifies interesting aspects in the data items that formed the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2008:89). Then data item is given equal attention in the coding process.

### **3.5.3 Searching for themes**

When all data has been initially coded and collated, the researcher sorted the different codes into potential themes, and collated all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researcher then started to analyse the data by and considering how different codes could combine to form an overarching theme. The researcher then ended this phase with a collection of sub themes, and all extracts of data that were coded in relation to them. For example, for the question on whether participants thought the performance appraisal rating they got was fair or not, the data was categorised and coded based on positive and negative responses as well as similarity and the reasons advanced for such responses. This system enabled a comprehensive analysis of similarities and differences in the data.

### **3.5.4 Reviewing themes**

After devising a set of sub-themes, the researcher reviewed themes which involved their refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2008:91). This phase involved two levels of reviewing and refining the themes. The first level involved reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts. This meant that the researcher read all the collated extracts for each theme, and considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. The second level involved considering the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2008:92). At the end of this phase, the researcher had a fairly good idea of what the different themes were, how they fit together, which shaped how the overall story could be told about the data.

### **3.5.5 Defining and naming themes**

After having a satisfactory thematic map of the data, the researcher then evolved to defining and refining the themes that will be analysed. By 'define and refine' it means

identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2008:92).

### **3.6 Issues of authenticity and trustworthiness**

The issue of rigor in qualitative research is important to the practice of good science (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011:93). Strauss and Corbin (1990 cited in Klenke, 2008:38) suggest that adhering to the practice of good science often requires redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research. Accordingly, it is expected that qualitative studies be conducted with extreme rigor because of the potential for subjectivity that is inherent in this type of research. In addition to addressing ethical issues, such as informed consent and use of data, qualitative researchers are guided by the requirements for establishing trustworthiness of the study (Schmidt & Brown, 2011:354). Essentially, there are two strategies for ensuring rigor in qualitative research; by considering the data's authenticity and trustworthiness.

Firstly, authenticity refers to the use of appropriate strategies to represent participants in a fair way (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (1986 cited in Fortune, Reild and Miller, 2013) identify fairness and ontological authenticity as forms of authenticity as appropriate standards for appraising the validity and constructivist research. For (304) a study is authentic when the strategies used are appropriate for the true reporting of the participants' ideas, when the study is fair, and when it helps participants and similar groups to understand their world and improve it. Accordingly, in ensuring authenticity, the researcher was fair to participants and gained acceptance throughout the whole of the study as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1989). By ensuring ontological authenticity, the researchers ensured that all those involved, readers and participants, will have been helped to understand their social world and their human condition through the research as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1989).

Trustworthiness as the second aspect of rigor in qualitative research refers to the quality, the authenticity, and the truthfulness of findings in qualitative research. It relates to the degree of trust, or confidence, readers have in the results. (Schmidt & Brown, 2011:354). To ensure trustworthiness of the study, the researcher ensured that the questions asked participants tapped into their experiences of performance appraisal apart from their theoretical knowledge of the topic as espoused by Colaizzi (1978 cited in 93). According

to Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness can be established by meeting four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

### **3.6.1 Credibility**

To ensure credibility in qualitative studies, the research must be shown to be authentic and truthful and results should make sense and be believable (Schmidt & Brown, 2011:354). That is, the results the results must be credible or believable from the standpoint of participant (Klenke, 2008:39). In an effort to maximise credibility of the study, the questions that were asked participants were specific to ensure that they are giving truth and not misleading the researcher during the interviews. The researcher also ensured credibility by ensuring that all responses from different participants were captured as they were presented during the interviews. Further care was taken in coding of data to ensure that all responses to questions asked are captured to enable a distinction between different perceptions presented by the respondents.

### **3.6.2 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study (Poliot & Beck, 2014). For Conrad and Serlin (2006:416) dependability involves accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself. To ensure dependability, the researcher made notes of all activities that happened during the study decisions about aspects of the study, such as whom to interview, when and what to observe as suggested (Connelly (, 2016).

### **3.6.3 Conformability and Transferability**

Pilot and Beck (2014) opine that conformability refers to the extent to which findings are consistent and could be repeated. To ensure conformability, the researcher kept detailed notes of decisions and analysis as it progressed (Connelly, 2016). Equally, transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of qualitative study can be applied or generalised to other context or to other groups (Arvy, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2009:501). For Fortune, Rield and Miller, 2013:17:17) transferability refers to the applicability of findings and conclusions derived from one setting or context to other settings or context (Fortune et al., 2013:17). The researcher ensured the study's



transferability by providing a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and people studied, and by being transparent about analysis.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Research ethics are concerned with moral behaviour in research contexts (Wiles, 2012:4). According to Hammersley and Traianou (2012:16) research ethics are a set of principles that embody or exemplify what is good or right, or allow us to identify what is bad or wrong. Ethical behaviour is essential to the appropriate application of research to revealing new knowledge and evaluation to solving specific problems and must be applied throughout the research or evaluation process (Wallace & Fleet, 2012:69). Completing an ethical form at the beginning of a study and or obtaining ethics approval does not mean that ethical issues can be forgotten; rather ethical considerations should form an ongoing part of the research (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:17). The role of ethics in research is to ensure honesty and to protect the rights of all individuals and groups affected by the research (Wallace & Fleet, 2012:69).

#### **3.6.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Accessing potential participants not only requires providing information about the research, but also that individuals are in a position to exercise choice around whether or not to give their consent to participate (Miller, Meuther & Maxine, 2012:61). According to Wiles (2012:6), informed consent involves providing participants with clear information about what participating in a research project will involve giving them the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to participate. Wallace and Fleet (2012:74) explains informed consent as a fundamental principle that human participants in research projects should know and understand that they are research subjects and should be aware of the nature, extent, and the likelihood of any risks to them as a result of their participation (Wallace & Fleet, 2012:76).

For Klenke (2008:50), voluntary participation means that participants are not coerced to participate in the study and at any time during the research, may withdraw their participation with penalties. A major tenet of research ethics is that participation must be voluntary. To ensure that participation was voluntary, the researcher made all participants to be aware that they are participating in a study voluntarily. The participants

were informed of all the consequences of the study, and consent to participate (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:257). The participant ensured that there is no element of coercion, either explicit or implied, or of undue influence (Wallace & Fleet, 2012:76).

### **3.6.2 Confidentiality**

The duty of confidentiality is taken to mean that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed. Additionally, confidentiality means that specific information provided in the process of research will not be used at all if the participant request for it not to be used (Wiles, 2012:7). By ensuring confidentiality, the investigator agrees not to report private data that identify participants (Klenke, 2008:50). According to Hammersley and Traianou (2012:123), the commitment on the part of qualitative researchers to maintaining confidentiality is manifested in a number of ways of which will be employed in this study. The concern with protecting confidentiality also extends to the storage of data: filed notes, other documents, audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure manner that makes it difficult for others to access it (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012:124). Thus, after recording data in the field the researcher kept what was recorded safe and after transcription the recordings were destroyed.

### **3.6.3 Anonymity**

Anonymous communication occurs when the identity of a sender of a message is not known or specified for the receiver of that message. It is based on people's perceptions' (Salmon, 2015:306). Salmon (2015:307) goes further and states that there is some evidence in the organisation literature that anonymity may be particularly valuable for encouraging participation among certain marginalized groups. The primary way that researcher aimed to protect research participants from the accidental breaking of confidentiality was through the process of anonymisation, which occurs through the use of pseudonyms applied to research participants organisations and locations or other ways of not revealing participants real identities as suggested by Wiles (2012:7). As one of the ways to ensure anonymity, the real names of participants were or their place of employment were not recorded in the field notes.

### **3.6.4 Risks and Benefits**

One of the principles involved in discussions of research ethics concerns harmful consequences that could result from the actions of researchers. Therefore, ethical research requires careful examination of the risks and benefits research as well as an effective assessment of the balance of risks and benefits as they will affect the outcome of the whole study (Wallace & Fleet, 2012:76). Hammersley and Trainou (2012:57) concur and recognise that research may generate benefits as well as harms; hence they argue that they need to be weighed against one another. To ensure participants' protection from harm, the researcher explained the purpose of the study as well as potential risks and benefits during informed consent.

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

This study involved 'justice perceptions of performance appraisal' a research aspect that has never been explored in Lesotho. Nevertheless, it is impossible for this study to provide all the answers related to justice perceptions of performance appraisal in Maseru City specifically and Lesotho in general since it has some limitations in scope and design as discussed below.

#### **3.7.1 Participants' viewpoints**

This study focused exclusively on workers from private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The researcher found out at the recruitment stage that performance appraisal was not typically done in public organisations unless public servants were applying for promotions, staff development leave or were being redeployed to other Ministries. Another study limitation is that this study did not focus on workers from a single organisation nor did it consider the influence of gender in justice perceptions of performance appraisal. Although the participants' views on experiences of being appraised were given, there was no way of controlling for personal bias in the data. For example, it could be that the ratings scored in the most recent performance appraisal were particularly good or poor; thus, participants' views were informed by their emotional reactions to those situations. Further, language was a barrier since all the interviews were held in Sesotho and the researcher had to transcribe and translate

interview transcripts<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, although there may be some ambiguities in the data, the researcher attempted to clarify them.

### **3.7.2 Methodological design**

Although qualitative methodological designs have strengths in allowing the researcher to examine meanings, describe and interpret what behaviour means as suggested by Atieno (2009:14), this study still has three main methodological limitations. Firstly, this was a cross-sectional study of justice perceptions of performance appraisal. However, unlike other cross-sectional studies, this study considered the impact that past, present and future appraisals are likely to have on work behaviour. Secondly, this study did not focus on an organisation and its performance appraisal processes; thus, the views of participants do not have any counter opinions from management. Lastly, since this study collected information from a non-probability sample, methodologically, generalizability is a challenge. Thus, its results may not be generalised to the entire population of workers who have ever undergone performance appraisal in their organisations. This is because the findings of the research were not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance as stated by (Atieno, 2009:17).

### **3.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach of the study. It conceptualised the research design and the study site. The research method was explored in establishing population, sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concluded by explaining the study's ethical considerations. The subsequent chapter is on data analysis and interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup> The researcher took extra care to ensure that data complexity and content were preserved; allowing for complete and detailed description of justice perceptions of performance appraisal.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and interpretation of the study. Firstly, it focuses on interpreting the characteristics of the participants and it analyses and interprets data based on the objectives of the study.

#### 4.2 Characteristics of participants

The study participants; 13 participants comprising eight females and five males. The females were aged between 27 and 41 years while the males were aged between 27 and 39 years; two males and females were single respectively, while six females and three males were married. With regards to highest levels of education, seven females and five males were Bachelor degree holders; one female had a diploma while one male had a Master's degree. Four participants resided at Naleli and Ha-Thetsane respectively; two resided at Maseru-West while one resided at Ha-'Nelese, Masianokeng and Ha-Abia each. Six participants were employed at private organisations while seven were from non-profit organisations (NGOs). In terms of occupations, one participant was an auditor, debt collector, teller, records assistant, HIV testing as prevention (HTS) senior counsellor, senior administrator, HTS counsellor, sales manager, marketing officer, finance officer, information technology (IT) specialist, accountant and sales representative each. (see Appendix C-Demographic Characteristics).

#### 4.3 Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response

The findings of the study unearthed the key theme '*Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response*'. It was based on four themes: (1) 'Appraisal is fine, but also quite stressful'; (2) 'Some of our views are not taken into consideration; (3) 'Our supervisors should open doors for us', and (4) 'It is not easy to achieve every single goal that you set for yourself'. Therefore the key theme '*Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response*' describes the

full context of experience and emotions attached to performance appraisal among workers from different occupations and organizations.

#### 4.3.1 'Appraisal is fine, but also quiet stressful'

The general objective of the study was to 'examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours'. The participants were asked how they felt about '**the entire appraisal process**' and how this affected their work behaviour. It emerged from the findings that participants were familiar with the appraisal process in their organisations. They reported it was communicated well in advance to them and that they worked throughout the year with the knowledge that their work was going to be assessed:

Normally you get warned that you are going to be put on the appraisal process. We are told about the performance plan with a letter. So that we are aware that we are soon going to be appraised (Elsie, HTS Counsellor).

It also emerged from the findings that participants understood performance appraisal's various intentions within their organizations. For some, performance appraisal was viewed as beneficial since it helped both the employee and the organisation to reach their goals:

We do performance appraisal based on our job description. We look at our job description and then align them with the goals set by our organisation. I can say performance appraisal motivates...because after the appraisal, one is given a bonus. At the beginning of each year, there are set goals that are set as a guideline to what one is intending to achieve, so the bonus is given with regard to what one has achieved. One is always trying to look back to check on their progress. Where there are failures, appraisal helps to clearly define which area one should improve at (Rosie, HTS Senior Counsellor).

As stated above, performance appraisal is based on the actual work that one does within the organisation. Thus, it is a reason for one to improve their job performance as there is a monetary reward if this is done. Besides this, performance appraisal is viewed as a guide to achieving set goals which allows employees to check on their progress in terms of achieving the goals of the organisation. Further, it helps employees to know their shortcomings at work and improve on them. Thus, performance appraisal is viewed as

something that gives employees an honest analysis of their job performance. Besides this, performance appraisal process is seen as necessary to inspire employees to perform their jobs well as they work harder when they know their jobs will be assessed, “When there is a process such as one of appraisal, one works hard to achieve their goals because they know they will be appraised” (Mary, Auditor). However, it was realised that some participants did not pay so much attention to their work and its implications on performance appraisal excerpt towards the beginning of the appraisal period:

I should tell you, I don't even think about appraisal. The only time I remember it is around the time that we have to be appraised. But other than that, it is not something that is always in our heads per se. We do remind ourselves in the meetings about it when the time is approaching (Hope, Senior Administrator).

As shown in the quotation above, some employees have internalised appraisal to such an extent that it has become part of their work environment; they no longer work towards the process, but rather within it. Even so, it emerged that other participants had issues with performance appraisal. They felt like it was ‘set in stone’ with very little room to change; once one had already indicated what they wanted to achieve within the year, they were bound to achieve it as they would be assessed on it:

Well, for me I think, because it is made once a year, at the beginning of the year, I might have set goals that may change somewhere. But because I set them, sometimes it's very difficult to go back and revise them...rather than if we were allowed to revise them every six months. Meaning, I can take six months knowing that I am working towards not achieving other goals. But I can't review them...but wait for a year to review them (Peter, IT Specialist).

As shown above, although employees do set goals themselves at the beginning of the year, the appraisal process itself is rigid and inflexible and this causes employees to become frustrated by their inability to amend or change their work plans even though they might be aware that they need to be changed. This leads employees to wish their organizations could shorten appraisal timelines to allow for any amendments in employee work plans. The importance and challenges attributed to the performance appraisal process were found to lead them to develop ambivalent perceptions towards performance appraisal in their organisations, “Appraisal is fine, but also quiet stressful” (Caroline, Debtors Clerk). The interview continues:

Interview: In which way? How it is both?

Caroline: It's important because it allows you to check on progress in your work, to check whether you are still in line with the goals that the manager has set for you. But it is also stressful now because you will work very hard because of fear of not meeting your goals as that could lead to demotion, or worst case scenario, expulsion.

Interview: So with all this did you score high or not? What can you tell me about your appraisal results?

Caroline: Yes, I got a high score...but it also says that I had worked my lungs out to get that score. It means that I have undergone a lot of stressful things to get there, including to be rude to people. For example, there was one client that did not seem to be willing to pay within the times schedule I was expecting them to make payment, so I even went to an extreme of going to their place and taking their furniture. All in the name of securing high ratings (Caroline, Debtors Clerk).

The above view indicates that performance appraisal is perceived as necessary but demanding. That is, although performance management lets employees gauge their work, it is also taxing since not meeting set goals threatens one's job security. It also emerged from the findings that performance appraisal lead may employees to adopt discourteous behaviours towards customers, especially if they were perceived as obstacles in achieving employees' set appraisal goals. Besides this, there was a feeling that performance appraisal benefited management more than employees since it left them feeling the pressure to perform to meet expectations.

I think it is helpful to us employees...but also very stressful as we work very hard to try to satisfy our employer. It is a process that is meant for us employees to gauge our work and check if we are still on the right tract to commit to our goals, but at the same time it benefits the employer more than it benefits us employees because we work for an employer (Alex, Finance Officer).

Here it seems that although performance appraisal is recognised for being beneficial to employees as it allows them to weigh whether they were working towards achieving their goals or not, the perception that it is biased persist since improved performance ultimately serves the employer not the employee. That is, employers get to implements the process for the interest of organisations achieving their goals not for the employee.



Overall, the subtheme '*Appraisal is fine, but quiet stressful*' showed that participants were familiar with the process of performance appraisal and understood its various intentions within their organizations. Some felt that it was beneficial to both the employee and the organisation as it helped the organisation to reach its goals and allowed employees to check their progress in terms of achieving the goals of the organisation. Further, performance appraisal was seen to help employees to know their shortcomings at work and improve on them. However, in some participants' view, performance appraisal had very little room to change; once one had already indicated what they wanted to achieve within the year, they were bound to achieve it as they would be assessed on it. The findings of the study also revealed that some participants' focus in the organisations was not on performance appraisal, rather it was seen as a process that was part of the job.

#### **4.3.2 'Our supervisors should open doors for us'**

The first specific objective of the study was to describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems. In this regard participants described their feelings about the '**interaction**' between themselves and their supervisors during performance appraisal. It transpired from the findings that participants understood the role of their supervisors in the appraisal process, "During the year when we work, the manager is looking at how we perform our job and how serious we are about it...a part of rating comes from that" (Mary, Auditor). It also emerged from the findings that supervision played an important role in performance appraisal especially in ensuring that employees' jobs were done to meet organisational expectations:

Performance appraisal process is where our job performance gets evaluated. It helps...especially for me in my department where we do a lot of tasks...to have our supervisors guiding us in what we have to achieve at the end of the year. Supervisors get to see if we do our job well (Hope, Senior Administrator).

From Hope's view, supervisors are seen to be responsible to check on the performance progress of employees. However, some participants did not share the same view; rather, they saw performance appraisal as a tool supervisors used to punish subordinates:

The supervisors spend the whole year without disciplining employees and then at the time of appraisal, it is then that they want to discipline us. You can't

wait to discipline a person until appraisal time. Appraisal is supposed to be a process, not a thing to be done once a year when someone is disciplining others (Phillo, Records Assistant).

Here Phillo views performance appraisal as punitive; a 'time' for disciplining way-ward employees by supervisors who in her view also neglect their duties of ensuring that work is being done according to specifications. It also emerged from the findings that some participants believed their supervisors were biased in the interaction that led to scores they handed to subordinates. For some this perception was brought by the experience of supervisors showing sympathy for low performing employees, thus giving them higher ratings than they ought to have scored:

From what I have experienced, I had one colleague of mine that we were paired with, she did not do any work and I used to do most of the work. But our supervisor pitied her because even though she was not meeting any goals she seemed to be working hard, so she would always get higher ratings than she actually deserves. We would sometimes get the same marks (Phillo, Records Assistant).

From Phillo's statement it is clear that some employees got appraisal scores that they did not deserve by either claiming they had done the work when they did not or by gaining their supervisor's understanding even though they failed to meet set goals. Other participants added:

Those people who like to appear to be more hard-working than others do get higher ratings and yet at some things they are not really that good...but the fact that they are all over makes them to seem like they are hardworking (Alex, Finance Officer).

There are those employees we know well that they are playful, but in the presence of managers they appear to always be busy with some work. At the end of the year, some of these employees get higher scores than us (Evelyn, Sales Manager).

Here the above excerpts highlight the perception that there are employees who are seen to score high appraisal scores and yet they do not actually do the work. Instead, they employ strategies such as 'appearing busy' and 'being all over' when managers are present. These behaviours seems to convince their supervisors that they are performing highly while in actual fact they are merely pretending to work hard. As much as these

statements seem to highlight that some employees receive unwarranted praise for work well done, they could also be an indication of poor relations between employee and managers especially as neither Phillo, Evelyn nor Alex seem to be capable of expressing their grievances about this situation. Nevertheless, it seemed not all supervisors had total say in the scores that subordinates received. For some, appraisals were done by the organisation's online appraisal system based on an employee's actual work done:

The only score that I can say my manager has an input in terms of viewing me, would be a small percentage because his only score comes to the score that is not captured by the computer (Caroline, Debtors Clerk).

For me and my manager we hardly see each other. We hardly communicate. Most of the time when she receives an output from our computer systems she is fine. So my appraisal is based on the output stored in the computer while I do my work (Jeff, Marketing Officer).

As shown, using electronic performance appraisals eliminates the human factor in appraisal scores thereby ensuring that appraisals are honest, detailed and useful. This then induces employees to view this type of appraisal as fair as they are calculated electronically without employees having appraisal interviews meetings with their supervisors. Even so, it could be argued that Jeff's view that he and his manager 'hardly saw each other' was worrying in terms of the daily supervision of work at his organisation.

The same thing could be said for Caroline who seemingly enjoys the fact that her manager appraisal score had minimal impact on her overall rating as it was not even captured by the system. Nevertheless, it emerged from the findings that the use of computers was not the only way to ensure appraisal impersonality. The interaction between manager and supervisee during appraisals could be controlled by the use of organisational guidelines which eliminates non-performance factors like favouritism, "The appraisal document is clear on what is expected of me and the score is clearly defined. Appraisal in our organisation is not based on whether your manager likes you or not" (Rosie, Senior Counsellor).

From Rosie's statement above, having organisation's appraisal document that is clear on each goal that employees have to meet, makes it easy for one to not only understand what each goal carries and thus have a clear understanding of its expectations, but it

eliminates any perceptions of unfairness on the side of the rater. However, it was realised that some participants harboured feelings of resentment towards their managers after the appraisal process since they felt their performance ratings were unfair:

I have so much anger towards him. I feel like the score I got in January did not match the amount of work I put in. I was not expecting such a low mark. I was given the lower score than one of my colleague whom did not work as hard as I did (Phillo, Records Assistant).

Here it seems dissatisfaction with the managers emanates from comparing own scores with colleagues whom they believed did not work as hard as they did. This leads them to having a negative attitude towards their manager. Some participants added: "I see her as someone who is not fair. I am no longer looking up to her" (Elsie, HTS Counsellor). Thus, the perception that the supervisor is not objective in their dealings with employees leads them to either suspect unjust treatment from their supervisors, and/or to feel like they cannot rely on their managers anymore for their professional growth within the organisation. This perception was so deeply held that some stated that the changeable nature of their supervisors' eroded meaning for their work to such an extent that they now worked for the pay check:

To be honest, I no longer love my job. The thing is, our supervisors change, and we now come to work just because of pay on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Even if I may realise that my performance is decreasing, I have now developed an attitude that it does not matter how hard I try to work, I will still get low marks anyway (Elsie, HTS Counsellor).

Moreover, other participants showed that there was no smooth communication between them and their supervisors during the appraisal process. They indicated that during their interaction with their supervisors, their supervisors did not have a way of correcting their mistakes without being rude; they argued that this did not solve the problems they faced:

My supervisor is not able to make me aware of my low performance without getting mad at me. I am a team leader; she will just be shouting 'your team is not performing well madam'. She will never call you nicely, sits you down and say 'are you aware these people are not performing well?' 'What do you think is the problem'? Even if you give her your challenges as a manager, she will never come up with solutions, even though some of these challenges are

repeating themselves, she will not care to solve them for you (Elsie, HTS Counsellor).

Here Elsie is of the view that when employees' performance seems to be low, supervisors should politely point out some of the issues with constructive inquiries. In so doing, managers will be able to resolve some of these issues to avoid the recurring ones. Similarly, other participants stated that performance appraisal process is 'a soul crushing enterprise' where employees are not clear in what they are expected to do.

Managers should learn the importance of appraisal and communicate them with the subordinates. Some supervisors just do performance appraisal because it's a requirement for every organisation; they do not know the importance of appraisals hence why they may not bother to communicate well with us in the task that we need to do (Ronnie, Sales Representative).

It is indicated from Ronnie's sentiment above that supervisors lack critical view of performance appraisal's necessity and only carry it out because it is an organisational need. Thus, it is suggested by Ronnie that managers should have trainings pointing out the significance of performance appraisal process and share the learning with their subordinates. Another participant added that supervisors should allow smooth interaction between them and employees:

Our supervisors should open doors for us to be able to express our feelings and challenges. They should provide us with enough information that will allow us to do our job well. We should be given information on time (Hope, Senior Administrator).

Another participant added:

I believe that managers should give us feedback on our performance appraisal regularly. There are situations where we get feedback on just the ratings we got per goal but the feedback is not clear on how we got to that rating. Our managers should give us feedback to build us and not to just give us scores for appraisal bonus (Queen, Teller).

The above quotations show that supervisors need to furnish employees with sufficient details timely to assist them with their performance. These excerpts place interest in the fact that managers should frequently provide employees with constructive details on how

their performance is rated in order to help them improve their performance. As shown above, there are times when employees do not get detailed responses from their supervisors on how they are working. Instead they are only given scores of their overall performance. Thus, supervisors are seen as needing to frequently communicate their performance concerns with employees.

In summary, the subtheme '*Our supervisors should open doors for us*' showed participants understood the role of their supervisors in the appraisal process. It revealed that supervision plays an important role in performance appraisal especially in ensuring that employees' jobs are done to meet organisational expectations. However, some participants believed their supervisors were not objective in the scores they awarded supervisees. They either showed empathy for low performing employees by giving them undeserved ratings or they awarded those who appeared to be working hard even though they were actually not. The findings however showed that in other organisations objectivity of performance appraisals was valued; hence managers wither had very little say in the ratings that employees received or computerised systems calculated the ratings. This was seen by some participants as a strategy to eliminate favouritism.

Even so, due to perceptions of flawed interactions between managers and supervisees, some participants harboured resentment towards their managers after their appraisal process since they felt their performance ratings were unfair. This led them not only led them to believe that their supervisors could not be trusted but it eroded meaning for their work to such an extent that they now worked for the pay check. Moreover, the participants showed that the lack of smooth communication between them and their supervisors during the appraisal process led them to perceive their managers as rude and unable solve the problems they faced as employees.

#### **4.3.3 'Some of our views are not taken into consideration'**

The second specific objective of the study was 'to determine whether employees' (un)involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influences feelings of procedural fairness'. The participants were asked how they felt about the extent of their '**participation**' in the setting-up of performance standards for their appraisal. It emerged from the findings that some

participants were occasionally required to propose ways in which their organisation's appraisal process could be improved:

We do get involved because once in a while we are given surveys that ask us if we are satisfied with our appraisal process. We are also given chance in those surveys to suggest ways that we can better our organisational appraisal process. The only set back with this kind of involvement is that some of our views are not taken into consideration (Evelyn, Sales Manager).

From the above excerpt, it is clear that even though employees can recommend ways of improving their organisation's appraisal process, their ideas are often not considered or incorporated which leaves employees feeling excluded. However, it emerged from the findings that this was not the case for international organisations; they accepted and even encouraged their employees to participate in the appraisal process:

Normally when the appraisal standards are being set, they are set equally for all different countries that our organisation operates in and can work best differently for those countries. So after every appraisal period, we have a discussion on the things we thought helped us and our challenges. We also suggest other things that can help in the future appraisals (Mary, Auditor).

Here Mary shows that since her organisation has different branches in different countries, they encourage participation based on the view that locals knew the unique environment in which their organisation operates in better than their internationally based employers. Employees are also allowed to give ideas to better the process based on the results of past performance process. However, it was realised that other participants were not permitted to have a say in their organisations' performance appraisal. Instead they were made to acquaint themselves with and follow the established procedures of the appraisal process:

I was never involved in the setting up of appraisal standards. Prior to my appraisal, I was given that appraisal document to familiarise myself with and I was allowed to ask questions where I did not understand. That is as far as I have been involved. How the document should be like and how it should work I believe it was designed by the HR [human resources] (Queen, Teller Private Bank).

Here it seems the appraisal process in Queen's organisation is predetermined by the management and passed on to employees to scrutinise and seek clarification if needed. Another participant added, "We get appraised on the goals that we were never a part of...which makes it a very biased process" (Jeff, Marketing Officer). This statement shows that not involving employees in the setting up of performance appraisals leads them to view the process as unfair. Other participants alluded to the fact that only senior management in their organisations strategized the appraisal process without asking for the junior staff's inputs which left them feeling excluded, "The managers are the only ones who are responsible for designing the goals that we have to meet even though we are the ones that work. They never bother to ask for our input" (Evelyn, Sales Manager). Another participant added:

During my last appraisal I was not even present. I had gone for maternity leave and they did not even try to call me, they just continued to appraise me. Like I said, I am not sure whether the problem is with the process itself, the contract or the supervisor (Hope, Senior Administrator).

From the above statement it is clear that some organisations appraise employees in their absence which leads to concerns that there may be some abnormalities in the timing of the appraisal itself, the performance agreement or the managers. Some participants indicated that performance appraisal perpetuates domination of supervisors over subordinates since managers set goals that benefited them while the subordinates suffered:

Performance appraisal is a burden to us because we are not allowed to participate. Supervisors set unreasonable goals for us to achieve so that they look good to their employers. They set the goals that they know they also will not achieve, just because we are the ones working hard and they sit in their offices (Phillo, Records Assistant).

Phillo's statement highlights that supervisors set unrealistic goals that are supposed to be met by the employees and they are not given a chance to contribute on the process to outline what may work and what may not. Phillo also indicates that supervisors impress their employers by forcing these goals on them as employees. Even so, it was realised that some participants could not critic the appraisal process as they did not fully understand their organisational performance appraisal, "I can't say I have suspected flaws in our appraisal because I don't even understand how the rating is reached. I can't



say whether the way we get appraised is a good way or the bad way” (Alex, Finance Officer). As shown above, the fact that employees are not fully involved in performance appraisal confuses them and leaves them unable to critic or even state whether standards used in their organisations followed procedures or not. Nevertheless, some participants thought performance appraisal should remain a solely managerial responsibility as was the normal practice. They believed if employees were involved, they would naturally avoid appraisals aimed at the more demanding aspects of their jobs in favour of the more enjoyable ones:

Employees should not take part in any aspect of performance appraisal. Our job as employees should be to take instructions from our managers and do as we are told. I cannot imagine a working environment where employees are given a chance to assert how we should be appraised. We would all run away from the hectic part of our jobs and only want to appraise in our strong areas of work. Working in contrast, is about learning areas of both your strengths and weaknesses (Ronnie, Sales Representative).

Another participant added:

The template created by the employer is standard for all of us employees. Each one of us is given that template which also has your job description... you make a performance contract with your supervisor and go through it in the beginning of each financial year...like it is now. But as much as the template is the same, it differs in the sections of job descriptions. In the contract, it is clear that because of your work descriptions you are supposed to do 1, 2 and 3 goals. So during the appraisal period you sit with your managers who will remind you the goals you had to meet and then assess if you met them or not (Mary, Auditor).

Here it is argued that performance appraisal should not involve employees as its very purpose is to identify weaknesses and strengths in their work. Therefore, since the appraisal tool used is standardised for all employees, it was management’s job to engage employees in the drawing up of the performance contract (based on the job descriptions) which would then be used to assess employees at the end of the year. In contrast, other participants thought employees should be involved in performance appraisal as managers sometimes failed to focus on the ‘bigger picture’ of performance appraisal and tended to emphasise issues that added no value to the organisation, “We should be involved because our supervisors tend to focus too much on small goals that do not really

help the organisation” (Queen, Private Bank Teller). Another participant shared similar sentiments:

We should be allowed to suggest the things that we should be appraised on as we tend to ignore the most important activities to do in the organisations, only because they are not part of the appraisal process. For example, towards the end of the year, when it is almost appraisal time, we do not focus of anything that is not part of the appraisal and we tend to miss out on the important issues we needed to make ends close at (Joseph, Accountant)

Here, Joseph is of the view that employees should be allowed to contribute in the setting up of performance appraisal standards because managers are incapable of thinking of everything that needs to be done in the organisation and to include it in the appraisal. By so doing, organisations would avoid failing to accomplish goals which were not set out in the performance appraisal yet they were important:

If I would be given a chance to participate in the setting up of appraisal process and standards, the biggest issue I would push for to be revised is the timeframe of performance appraisal. Given the fact that I feel 6 months is a long time, if it were to be done quarterly, then I think it would work better. So that we can see our progress in time... and not to wait for 6 months. At times one has 2 goals and tends to focus on one more than the other (Peter, IT Specialist).

Peter’s account highlights the fact that employees are not allowed to contribute in performance appraisal planning. Therefore, he feels like if he was given a chance, he would suggest that the appraisal time-frames be shortened for two main reasons; it would allow for goals to be achieved sooner and issues to be given equal attention. Other participants went further and stated that they wished their organisations could allow the employees to appraise each other as this would help them to not only learn but would help them improve each other. They also stated that since employees often interact with each other, they knew each other’s strengths and shortcomings very well:

I think in giving out the score, employees should be allowed to appraise their colleagues. It would help for one to know their weaknesses from their colleagues’ point of view...we could even be able to build each other up (Elsie, HTS Counsellor).

Generally, the subtheme '*Some of our views are not taken into consideration*' illustrated that employees were rarely required to fully participate in the setting up of appraisal standards in their organisations. Where they were allowed, they could only comment on or seek clarification the process itself and/or follow the established procedures of the appraisal process. This led to view of performance appraisal as perpetuating management's domination over employees. Moreover, supervisors were seen as setting unrealistic goals that were supposed to be met by the employees while they were not given a chance to contribute on the process meaningfully. It also emerged that some employees were ignorant of their organisation's appraisal standards thus they were unable to state whether procedures were followed in their appraisal or not.

Nevertheless, some participants thought performance appraisal should remain a solely managerial responsibility as was the norm. They believed if employees were involved, they would naturally avoid appraisals aimed at the more demanding aspects of their jobs in favour of the more enjoyable ones. In contrast, other participants thought employees should be involved in performance appraisal as managers sometimes failed to focus on the 'bigger picture' of performance appraisal and tended to emphasise issues that added no value to the organisation. Managers were also seen as incapable of thinking of everything that needed to be done in the organisation to include it in the appraisal.

#### **4.3.4 'It is not easy to achieve every single goal that you set for yourself'**

The third and last specific objective of the study was to find out how perceptions of distributive fairness in relation to the actual work performed and the appraisal rating scored influence appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes. The participants were asked how they felt about the actual scores that were allocated to them in their most recent performance appraisal in terms of '**goal-attainment**'. It emerged from the findings that participants were satisfied with high ratings they got when they compare the score with the goals that they have achieved:

In my position I am working alone and there are so many things that happen in a short space of time. But since I performed well...and given the rating that I got from my appraisal, I think I got a score that I deserved...and now I come to work happy knowing that my efforts are being noticed (Peter, IT specialist).

Although Peter's statement above seems to highlight that he is possibly overwhelmed at work (since he admittedly has no colleagues to share work tasks with), since his supervisors awarded a rating that acknowledged his hard work, this seemed to not only satisfy Peter, but also helped him to develop a positive attitude towards his work. It could also be argued that due to the 'deserved' rating that Peter scored, relations between him and his managers had improved which further enhances the satisfaction he feels towards his job. Other participants shared a similar view; they saw performance appraisal as helpful as it not only enriched their job performance but it helped them see their growth when compared to when they first got recruited into the organisation. Therefore, they viewed it as something that led them to be more focused and willing to surpass their last scores or job-related goals:

As compared to when I first joined the company, I can feel as well that my working strategies have improved. I scored 75% out of 100 on my last appraisal. That makes me love the job I am doing even more. I am now eager to work hard to attain an even higher score (Joseph, Accountant).

In similar view, other participants felt their organisational performance appraisal ratings were fair for each employee as the appraisal tool was common for each employee:

I can say that we all get the score we deserve because we have a standard appraisal tool, we appraise ourselves first then we seat with our manager for him to appraise us. At times one goes into the appraisal room already knowing the percentage they (Mary, Auditor).

It is shown from Mary's statement above that employees got a chance to appraise themselves first before their formal appraisal by the supervisors. Thus, allowing employees to compare the ratings they gave themselves and the ratings that the supervisors gave them. Even so, it emerged that it was difficult to meet every goal that employees had set for themselves at the beginning of the appraisal period. For some, it was meeting set goals despite work pressure:

Yes, I do believe that the appraisal I got is what I deserved. I worked very hard to meet the goals that I had for myself and which were approved by my supervisor. You know, it is not easy to achieve every single goal that you set for yourself in the beginning of the year. I had achieved almost every goal...I got...and I got a rating of 4 out of 5 which is perceived as excellent...and that really made me happy (Ronnie, Sales Representative).

Ronnie's view highlights that meeting work-related goals enhances self-satisfaction even when employees fail to achieving all the set goals. It could be argued that Ronnie's ability to match effort to scores led him to develop a philosophical view of his overall score. That is, he seems to have reflected on his scores and realised that he had either set too many and/or unrealistic goals or even claimed he could reach all set goals within a specific timeline. Hence he seems to readily accept failure to meet all his goals since his rating confirms his efforts to meet those goals. Conversely, some participants were depressed by the scores that they received. For some, the issue was with the calculation of appraisal ratings. They viewed their organisation appraisal system as unjust as the actual ratings scored did not match the actual effort expended:

I did not get a score that I deserved. I worked very hard but at the end of the year, I received low marks. This made me feel very sad and makes me question the process of appraisal rating (Phillo, Records Assistant).

Other participants felt the problem of appraisal ratings derived from employees being appraised by supervisors who were not directly linked to the work that they did. For some, supervisors were clueless in the work that they do and it led them to have different views on the scores that were to be allocated:

At times we are given appraisers who do not even have an idea of our work. If for example I deal with administration, it is very complicated to be appraised by someone who does marketing as our line of work is different. In that case we do not agree on most of the appraisal score that she gives to other goals (Evelyn, Sales Manager).

Similarly, some participants observed that performance appraisal process was not clear to them as the actual rating was reached at in a composite manner, "As I said, I have no clue how my supervisor gets to the score that she gives me, the calculations are complicated for us to understand" (Alex, Finance Officer). Another participant added:

I don't think the process itself was fair. I think we need to be made aware of the process; we need to be made to understand the process more than we do now. Because we would be expecting 80% but then get very low marks. The appraisal score is calculated in a very complicated manner, we just know that we score over 5 on each area (Elsie, HTS Counsellor).

From Elsie's statement it is clear that employees should be properly inaugurated to the appraisal rating process as they were not completely identifying with how the given scores are concluded. It was also realised that the appraisal scores caused confusions as the employees' ratings expectations were higher than the actual score that they got. Consequently, some participants felt that appraisal scores that they were given were not meant to improve them but they were meant to punish them unjustly:

I think it exists to victimise. Why do I say that? Because I have seen that after appraisal is done no one is ever happy. We all have a thing or two to complain about. It is not meant to help us at all. Especially because we get bonus increased based on our appraisal score. In some cases, when the score is too low then you don't get a bonus at all (Phillo, Records Assistant).

It is indicated from Phillo's statement that after each appraisal is completed, there were criticisms about the process as the employees felt the process was unfair. This especially from Phillo's view was on account that there is a salary increase given to employees based on their appraisal score; which at times may lead to no increase if the ratings are too low. Similar sentiments were shared:

Appraisals are done towards the end of the year when it is bonus periods. The supervisors use this to give high scores to their favourite employees so that they can get high bonuses as bonuses are also based on the appraisal percentage that one gets (Jeff, Marketing Officer).

Here it seems appraisal ratings have element of favouritism as salary increases are associated with appraisal ratings, and therefore managers have a propensity of giving high ratings to their preferred workers. Other participants had similar views and added that supervisors tend to give low ratings to employees that are distant from them even though they may appear to be hard working.

Some of us really work hard in our places of work...but the supervisor seems to be giving high scores to her favourite people. When you are friends with her she always gives you good marks. But for us who are not friends with her, she gives low marks even though we know we deserve better...and this makes us to be very discouraged about trying to work hard, because we get low marks anyway (Caroline, Debtors Clerk).

From Caroline's statement, it is clear that employees who were closely related to the supervisor got higher scores than other employees who were not as close, yet some of these employees who got high scores were not as hard working as compared to other employees who were distant from their supervisors. She articulates that a perceived low and undeserving rating score demoralized employees from striving hard to achieve their goals. Some participants added that supervisors gave some employees appraisal bonuses that are beyond the ordinary maximum appraisal bonus than employees can get:

But some colleague was given increment of 30% whereas under normal circumstance, even if you have performed better than anyone else, the maximum salary increment you can get is 5%. In that way, they tend to view the other employee like he or she is favoured by management (Peter, IT Specialist).

From Peter's view, it is evident that when one employee gets an extremely higher score than the usual, such an employee is viewed as being favoured by the supervisor. Even so, some of the participants stated that their supervisors recognised and were pleased with how they were performing their jobs. This assertion contributed to these participants to enjoy serving their organisation, "I love working for my organisation. It is nice to know that there are people who appreciate the effort that you put in each day" (Hope, Senior Administrator). Other participants stated that they had little to say about the appraisal ratings that they and their colleagues got as their organisations' appraisal rating were not disclosed: "Well I can't say much on that since the ratings are confidential and I can only know someone's rating if they share it with me" (Alex, Finance Officer).

To summarise, the subtheme '*It is not easy to achieve every goal that you set*' revealed that participants were happy with high ratings they got when comparing the score with the goals that they have achieved. Participants saw performance appraisals as useful as it enabled them see their development when compared to when they first joined their organisations and was perceived to be fair as the appraisal tool was standard for each employee. Nonetheless, it emerged that even though it was hard to meet every goal that employees had set for themselves at the beginning of the appraisal period, participants showed self-satisfaction when they were still able to get higher rating score.

Due to perceptions of organisation appraisal system as unjust, the participants felt actual ratings scored did not match their actual effort expended. Some participants felt the problem of appraisal ratings derived from employees being appraised by supervisors who were not directly linked to the work that they did. Moreover, the participants showed performance appraisal process was not clear to them as the actual rating was concluded in a composite manner. Consequently, some participants felt that appraisal scores that they were given were not meant to improve them but they were meant to punish them unjustly.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

In accordance with the research aims of the study, this chapter presented the findings and interpretation obtained from the interviews of this study. The one on one, semi-structured interviews were the primary tools that were used to collect data. Various themes were extracted from the research questions asked and these themes were classified according to the research objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter 1.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on discussion of the findings of the study. This chapter starts off by deliberating the findings and linking them with the literature and the theoretical framework of the study and ends with the drawing of conclusions and recommendations based on the key findings of the study.

#### 5.2 Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response

This study aimed to examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours. Specifically, the study aimed to describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems. Secondly, it sought to determine whether employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influenced feelings of procedural fairness. Lastly, this study sought to find out how perceptions of distributive fairness in relation to the actual work performed and the appraisal rating scored, influence appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes.

The literature states that performance appraisal may be used to assess staff members' range of professional knowledge, skills and attitudes which impact on their ability to fulfil work duties within the work environment (Lloyd et al., 2009:128). With regards to the objectives of the study, the literature also revealed that although the need for appraisal systems had increased (De Waal, 2013:320), its success depended on the reactions, perceptions and experiences of employees to important aspects of this process (Jawahar, 2007). Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange was also used to theorise performance appraisal as a form of social exchange or a 'joint activity' of two or more actors; where each actor had something the other valued (Lawler, 2001:323). Consequently, global emotions were produced and this was the foundation for stronger or weaker affective attachments to those units (Stets & Turner, 2014).

This study focused exclusively on workers from private organisations and NGOs, since it asked questions about perspectives from the standpoint of the participant as suggested by Hammaberg et al (2016), it utilised phenomenology as a research design. The data was collected using in-depth interviews among 13 purposively selected participants and analysed using thematic analysis technique. From the findings, the key theme '*Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response*' emerged; it was found to describe the full context of perceptions attached to performance appraisal. It was also found to have four subthemes, namely: (1) 'Appraisal is fine, but also quite stressful'; (2) 'Our supervisors should open doors for us'; (3) 'Some of our views are not taken into consideration, and (4) 'It is not easy to achieve every single goal that you set for yourself'.

The first the subtheme, 'Appraisal is fine, but also quite stressful', was related to the general objective of the study which aimed to examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours. Thus, this subtheme focused on the emotions participants attached to the *entire appraisal process* in their organisations. The study revealed that participants attached emotions ranging from 'acceptance' to 'frustration' at the process depending on the extent to which it matched the meanings they attached to their work. They also tended to feel either 'good or 'bad' depending on how the process of performance appraisal was structured in their organisation. Thus, the subtheme 'Appraisal is fine, but also quite stressful' was found to depict the cyclical relationship between social interaction and affect; that is, it showed that the process of performance appraisal brings out reactions and emotions from participants.

The second subtheme 'Our supervisors should open doors for us' is linked to the first specific objective of the study aimed to describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems. Thus, this subtheme focused on how participants felt about the *interaction* between themselves and the other (supervisor) during performance appraisal. It emerged from the findings that emotions from appraisal interactions with supervisors influenced how actors perceived and felt about performance appraisal as a shared activity and the relations involved in it. Accordingly, participants felt gratitude towards the supervisors when they were treated with respect and when they received the information they needed to know about the appraisal process. Conversely participants felt anger towards their supervisor when the opposite happened.

The third subtheme 'Some of our views are not taken into consideration' is associated with the second specific objective of the study which was to determine whether employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influenced feelings of procedural fairness. Therefore this subtheme centred on how participants felt about the extent of their *participation* in the setting-up of performance standards for their appraisal. The data showed that the context of performance appraisal influenced the emotions participants attached to the organisation itself. Thus, employees felt affective attachment when they were allowed to participate in their organizational appraisal process, and they felt affective detachment when they were not allowed.

Lastly, the subtheme 'It is not easy to achieve every goal you set for yourself' emphasises the third specific objective of the study which intended to find out how perceptions of distributive fairness in relation to the actual work performed and the appraisal rating scored influence appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes. Hence this subtheme focused on how participants felt about the actual scores that were allocated to them in their most recent performance appraisal in terms of *goal-attainment*. It emerged that employees who scored highly were eager to work hard to improve or maintain their scores while those who didn't endeavored to improve them. Hence, this subtheme focused more on the self; accordingly, participants felt pride when they scored highly in their appraisals and shame when they scored lowly.

In summary, the key theme '*Performance Appraisal as Emotional Response*' generally showed that performance appraisal, as a form of social exchange, is affect laden due to the experiences employees had with regards to the task of appraisal (process), the interaction with the other during appraisal, involvement within the social unit during the setting up of appraisal standards and finally feelings towards own self as a result of the appraisal score attained.

### **5.2.1 'Appraisal is fine, but also stressful'**

The success of a performance appraisal system depends on how employees perceive and experience the process. According to Jawahar (2007), a performance appraisal system may well depend on loyalties, perceptions of fairness and reactions of employees to important aspects of the appraisal process. Thus, if employees are fully content with

their organisations' appraisal process, they will regard it in a positive manner and exert possible effort to carry out the goals assigned to them efficiently and effectively (Fakharyan et al., 2012). From the onset, the subtheme '*Appraisal is fine, but quiet stressful*' showed that participants were familiar with 'the entire appraisal process' and understood its various intentions within their organizations, "It's important...it allows you to check on progress in your work...whether you are still in line with the goals...set for you" (Caroline, Senior Administrator).

This finding resonates Deb's (2009:45) argument that a well-executed performance appraisal system is a medium for managers and employees to develop an understanding of what work the organisation requires, the manner in which this work should be accomplished, and to what extent it should be achieved. Thus, the referral to 'aligning job description with goals' highlights Kumar and Bhattacharyya's (2011) view that performance appraisal provides guidelines to employees, clarifies what is expected from them, and what their essential functions and related tasks are.

Accordingly, performance appraisal alludes to a consultative approach between management and employees as it helps them to understand how their work supports the overall organisation strategy and direction (Shaw, McPhail & Ressia, 2018). This finding highlights Houldsworth and Jirasinghes' (2016) argument that planning (as the first stage of performance appraisal process) involves the definition of job or role responsibilities, the setting up performance expectations as well as goal/objective setting and agreements on them. Scheneir et al (1987) also stated that planning is a continuous process which encourages commitment and understanding by linking the employees' work with the organisation's goals and objectives.

The findings also revealed that performance appraisal was beneficial as it improved the job performance of employees which helped them reach organisational goals, "When there is a "...process such as one of appraisal, one works hard to achieve their goals because they know they will be appraised" (Mary, Auditor). Thus, performance appraisal fosters common understanding about the goals and objectives of an organisation (Mizrahi, 2017; Bussin, 2017; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; Moynihan 2008; Armstrong & Baron, 2005). This once again resonates Armstrong and Barons' (2005) suggestion that the importance of planning in performance covers the 'what', 'how' and 'when' aspects of achievement of organisational goals. In this way, planning is forward-looking;

it focuses on what people have to do to achieve their potential, and it stretches them to discover what they are capable of (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). Performance appraisal has also been portrayed as a tool for supervisors to give employees an honest analysis of their job performance, “Supervisors get to see if we do our job well” (Hope, Senior Administrator). This shows that performance appraisal processes in participants’ organisations, similar to others elsewhere, assess the performance of an employee in relation to the objectives, activities, outputs, and targets of a job over a given period of time (Abraham, 2013).

This finding reflects Hernandez’s (2009) view that the appraisal process allow employees to know how well they have performed in comparison with the standards of an organisation. The finding also highlights Bhattacharyya (2011) affirmation that a continuous measurement of performance involves checking on progress in achieving objectives and responding to new demands and treating performance management as a continuous rather than finite process. The ability of supervisors to give employees an authentic analysis of their job performance also relates to Matlala’s (2011) finding that supervisors enhanced the outcome of the employees’ performance assessments by reminding them of the achievements that they may have neglected to mention in their assessment reports.

Ramataboe (2015) also adds that through performance appraisal, supervisors not only coach employees (to help them achieve goals and objectives), but they monitor their performance (to check progress of activities against set standards and targets). Thus, it is important for a worker to make sense of performance appraisal feedback, deal with emotional reactions that may occur, and interpret what the message is for him or her individually (Bhattacharyya, 2011:56). Further, the findings showed that performance appraisal helps employees to know their shortcomings at work and to improve on them, “...where there are failures, appraisal helps to clearly define which area one should improve at” (Rosie, HTS Senior Counsellor).

This confirms Fletcher’s (1996) assertion that performance appraisal involves clarifying individual responsibilities and accountabilities, defining and measuring individual performance, implementing appropriate reward strategies, and developing staff to improve performance and ultimately, their future career progression. It may also be argued from the finding that in some organizations, performance appraisal involves

focusing on achieved results, as well as individual and team dynamics affecting the work environment, helping managers to understand how well employees are performing in meeting pre-decided performance standards (Bhattacharyya, 2011). Consequently, performance management is indeed aimed at delivering sustained success to organisations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors (Armstrong & Baron, 2005:9). The fact that performance appraisal helps employees to be aware of short comings in their job performance also resonates the assertion that it encourages performance improvement as performance appraisals have the innate ability to set and measure goals. Secondly, the above finding highlights the view that performance appraisal helps employees determine their own training and development needs (Bhattacharyya, 2011; Grote, 2002).

Even so, it emerged that the performance appraisal process had the tendency to frustrate employees; they saw it as rigid and inflexible as it did not allow them to alter their plans once submitted. "Sometimes it's very difficult to go back and revise them" (Peter, IT Specialist). This finding endorses Murray, Poole and Jones' (2006) argument that many performance appraisal systems are not only inflexible, but also incapable of taking into account the fact that an organisation's performance requirements change over time. This inflexible nature of performance appraisals often limits the problem-solving possibilities and decisions that are made because of the rules, regulations, and protocols that define action (Rowitz, 2009). It is not surprising then for Brennan (2008) to state that performance appraisal should evolve; it should cease being a yearly event to an ongoing process. Thus, being flexible enough to re-evaluate long-held strategies in response to new information or events is a hallmark of an agile organisation (Axson, 2010:102).

Besides its inflexibility, the performance appraisal process was also perceived by participants as an opportunity for supervisors to punish subordinates by ensuring that they did not receive their bonuses. "The[y]...spend the whole year without disciplining employees...at the time of appraisal it is then that they...discipline us" (Phillo, Records Assistant). This finding underpins Chukwuba's (n.d:4) argument that "managers should not use performance appraisal as a punitive instrument, rather as an instrument to help employees get their objectives". Thus, DeNisi et al (1984:360) were correct in their assertion that since performance appraisal allows an observer, often a supervisor or a peer, to rate the job performance of an employee, it continues to generate diverse

reactions among employees. As shown above, the subtheme 'Appraisal is fine, but also quite stressful' highlights the myriad of emotions that participants harbour against the entire process of performance appraisal. Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange as the theoretical framework of this study gives a clear understanding of this subtheme. It starts off by stating that social exchange is a joint activity between the self and others; therefore, the theory connects the joint task of social exchange with a social unit or a social object that is real to actors (Lawler, 2001:329).

Firstly, it highlights *Assumption one: "Social exchange produces global emotions or feelings, along a positive-to-negative dimension"* which argues that emotions essentially involve either "feeling good" or "feeling bad" about the entire exchange process, in this case performance appraisal. According to Lawler (2001), this is so because exchanges are strictly dyadic yet 'connected' to the network. In this case, participants are able to make decisions about whether to exchange, with whom to exchange, and under what terms on the basis of both their job descriptions and appraisal goals. They do this repeatedly over time with the same others, since the network structure creates recurring opportunities and/or constraints on who can exchange with whom.

Thus, performance appraisal (social exchanges) is ongoing, recurring, and subject to renegotiation (Lawler, 2001:326). The obvious task then is to generate 'benefit' for each employee through the exchange of behaviors or goods that they as individuals cannot achieve by themselves, thus they strive to adhere to the goals set out in their performance appraisal contracts (Lawler, 2001:322). According to Lawler, to achieve this, actors (employees) then become both 'backward' and 'forward' looking; that is, they respond both to past rewards, costs, and punishments and also to anticipate future rewards, costs, and punishments (2001:324).

Thus, Assumption one shows that employees attach emotions ranging from 'acceptance' to 'frustration' at the appraisal process depending on the extent to which it matches the meanings they attach to their work. This shows that as a form of social exchange, the appraisal process elicits both global and specific emotions. Secondly, the subtheme 'Appraisal is fine, but also stressful' alludes to *Assumption 2: "Global emotions from social exchange are internal (self) reinforcing or punishing stimuli"* by showing that employees are emoting (feeling) as well as cognizing (thinking). On one hand, the participants felt like the appraisal process was stressful as it required them to always

'look back' and 'be aware' of their actions at work. On the other hand, it was helpful as it 'guides', 'reminds' and allows them to 'check' and 'improve'. This confirms Lawler's argument that regardless of which emotions result from social exchange, they create an internal response to an event or object (2001:325). Thus, the findings of the study in relation Assumption one and two indicate that social exchanges tend to produce global feelings and that these are special classes of reinforcement and punishment depending on individual perceptions of social exchange (Lawler & Thye, 2007:304; Lawler, 2006:251).

Consequently, the subtheme 'Appraisal is fine, but also stressful' reveals that participants' perceptions of the entire '**task**' of appraisal process leads them attach emotions to it; thereby viewing it as either pleasant or unpleasant (See Table 1). This is because 'tasks' are embedded in the form of exchange structures take; thus, exchange relations, in this case productive exchange, which bolsters more exchange behaviour, more feelings, more perceptions of cohesion at the network level and emotional attachment to the network as a social unit (Lawler et al., 2008). Therefore as Lawler stated emotions, in whichever form they may be (global or specific) create an internal response to an event or object (Lawler, 2001:325). Accordingly, if the process brings about positive emotions, then it is perceived by employees as pleasant and if it's vice versa, then it is perceived as unpleasant.

In this way, Assumptions 1 and 2 of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicted **the cyclical relationship between social interaction and affect**; that is, it shows that social exchange (social interaction) brings out reactions and emotions (affect) from actors (Lawler et al., 2009). Assumptions 1 and 2 have also answered the general objective of the study which was to examine employees' perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal practices and their effect on work behaviours and attitudes towards work. Collaboratively, they have shown that employees' reflections on the fairness of their most recent performance appraisal produces global emotions which are felt and channelled those to the process of appraisal itself due to the interpretations of those global feelings (Lawler et al., 2012:64).



### 5.2.2 'Our supervisors should open doors for us'

The perceived fairness of the rater's interpersonal treatment of the ratee during the appraisal process indicates interactional justice. Interactional justice is defined by Chelladural (2006:134) as the extent to which the managers give a clear and correct explanation regarding the distribution of resources and the procedures employed to arrive at such distribution. For Ololube (2016:85), interactional justice is focused on the treatment of individuals by decision makers and whether they show respect, sensitivity, and explain decisions thoroughly. Interactional justice also examines the nature of the relationships between supervisors and subordinates. Thus, perceptions of interactional justice occurs when employees perceive that they are treated well in the organisation (Wankel, 2008:227).

The subtheme '*Our supervisors should open doors for us*' highlights perceptions of interactional justice of performance appraisal. The findings revealed that supervision plays an important role in performance appraisal especially in ensuring that employees' jobs are done to meet organisational expectations. It showed participants understood the role of their supervisors in the appraisal process, "...to have our supervisors guiding us in what we have to achieve at the end of the year..." (Hope, Senior Administrator). This finding illustrates perceptions of interpersonal justice (a sub-type of interactional justice) which relates to the degree of fairness people see in how they are treated by others in their organization. In this way, the perception that managers 'guide' employees in the organisation, leads those employees experience interpersonal justice which then affects how employees feel about those with whom they interact and communicate (Griffin & Moorhead, 2011:395).

The above finding also resonates Chelladural's (2006) view that employees perceive fairness in the appraisal interaction by the extent to which the managers give a clear and correct explanation regarding the distribution of resources and the procedures employed to arrive at such distributions. This then confirms MacLean's (2001) assertion that performance appraisal is largely about communication; as employees deserve to know how well or how poorly they are doing in their jobs. Thus, as part of ongoing communication processes aimed at minimising chances of surprises for either managers or employees, it is important to hold periodic discussions or reviews (Bussin, 2017). Besides this, managers being 'guides' during the performance appraisal process

endorses Leong's (2014) statement that performance appraisal should be ongoing, interactive process and that it should enhance employee capability and facilitate productivity instead of the usual perception of doing it once a year. Further, it relates to Matlala's (2011) statement that a strong link exists between interactional justice and coordination and balance of member contributions. This shows then that if there is any bias or dishonesty of decision makers involved in ongoing structuring of task activities of team members, achieving desired coordination would be difficult (Duyan & Benedetto 2007).

Therefore, it is in the best interest of managers to ensure that perceptions of interactional justice are improved, in order to enable more acceptable performance appraisal findings. It also emerged from the study that some organisations relied more on computerised appraisals; hence managers had very little say in the ratings that employees received as these computerised systems calculated the ratings, "My appraisal is based on the output stored in the computer while I do my work" (Jeff, Marketing Officer). This finding illustrates the view that when performance appraisal uses a systematic and objective way of judging the relative worth or ability of an employee in performing his or her job, this produces good results especially in the perception that the appraisal interaction had little human bias and prejudices (Leong, 2014:).

In organisations that employed traditional appraisal methods, it emerged that participants believed their supervisors were not objective in the scores they awarded supervisees. They stated that their supervisors either showed empathy for low performing employees by giving them undeserved ratings, or they gave high ratings to employees who appeared to be working hard even though they were actually not, "But our supervisor pitied her because...she seemed to be working hard" (Phillo, Records Assistant). This illustrates initial impression error that takes place when an employees' performance appraisal unjustifiably gets influenced by the first impression the rater has of the employee (Deb, 2009). The finding also highlights sympathy error which occurs when an employees' performance appraisal gets unjustifiably influenced by sympathy factors such as marriage problems or hardships faced. As such, the rater tends to assign (Deb, 2009). Further, this finding implies that performance appraisal in some organisations is an annual event and employees know this, hence they 'act' busy during this time to impress their supervisors.

This belies Armstrong and Baron's (2005:13) view that monitoring of performance appraisal should be continuous rather than as an annual event. It could therefore be argued that the above finding illustrates impression management on the side of employees; that is, some employees display work behaviours intended to control or manipulate the attributions and impressions formed of themselves to others (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984).

By so doing, the supervisors find themselves interpreting their actions and awarding that behaviour which leads them to commit recency errors where supervisors reward due to the influence of recent occurrences and assigns higher ratings to employees' performance than warranted (Deb, 2009). This error also leads to the negation of Cardy's (2011) view that subjective assessments and consequent feedback captured the performance picture better than objective measures of performance. Conversely, the fact that supervisors seem to award high ratings for individuals who are not deserving also highlights Griffin and Moorhead's (2011:395) view that informational injustice (as a subtype of interactional justice) is experienced especially in terms of the perception that the supervisor awarded a rating out of 'pity' and not actual work done.

This not only illustrates a possibility of obscured interactions between the supervisor and that employee who was 'unfairly awarded', but lets the observer feel like the final appraisal decision was based on incomplete and inaccurate information and/or that important information was ignored. The ability of employees to display certain behaviours with the purpose of controlling or manipulating the attributions and impressions formed relates to Mohamed's (2017) assertion that the behaviours employees exhibit at work are intended to create and maintain the desired perceptions of themselves, and are done so in a hope for impressing supervisors.

Thus, people are all motivated to manage impressions and frequently do so to achieve important outcomes such as job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, decreasing intent to turnover, raising performance appraisal, and reducing job stress as opined by Beard (1996:2). Therefore, the subtheme 'Our supervisors should open doors for us', highlights that many organisations continue to face challenges in developing accurate performance checklists. Therefore, managers' subjective opinions are frequently relied upon. This suggests that performance appraisals may be fraught with biases or errors, resulting in compromised evaluations of employees' accomplishments and capabilities (Boachie-

Mensah & Seidu, 2012). So, in order to obtain accurate performance appraisal information, managers must provide objective and unbiased ratings of employees and avoid victimisation of employees who are not favoured by supervisors (Bersin, 2008 cited in Boachie-Mensah, 2012). Due to perceptions of flawed interactions between managers and supervisees, some participants harboured resentment towards their managers after their appraisal process. They felt their supervisors were unfair in the ratings they gave them, "I have so much anger towards him...I was not expecting such a low mark" (Phillo, Records Assistant).

This result endorses Wankel's (2008) view that perceptions of interactional injustice occur when employees perceive that they are not treated well in the organisation. Thus by supervisors awarding employees the ratings they did not deserve, they are as seen as biased which implies that participants question the interactional fairness of performance appraisal within their organisation or the treatment of individuals by decision makers and whether they show respect, sensitivity, and explain decisions thoroughly (Ololube, 2016:85).

This perception led participants to not only believe that their supervisors could not be trusted, but it also eroded meaning for their work to such an extent that they now worked for their next pay checks, "I am no longer looking up to her" (Elsie, HTS Counsellor). This indicates that the job satisfaction levels of employees are affected negatively by the perceptions of interactional injustice. Accordingly, employees' job satisfaction or the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values was eroded by perceptions of interactional injustice (Mitchell et al., 1987:31).

According to Greenberg (1993), this is because if workers experience interpersonal justice, they are likely to reciprocate by treating others with respect and openness. But if they experience interpersonal injustice, they may be less respectful in turn, and may be less inclined to follow the directives of their leader agree with the decisions (Greenberg, 1993). Thus, interactional fairness strongly impacts on perceptions of leader-member exchange and other evaluations of authority in organisations (Shipp & Fried, 2014:163). Moreover, the participants showed that the lack of smooth communication between themselves and their supervisors during the appraisal process led them to perceive their managers as rude and unable solve the problems they faced as employees, "She will

just be shouting...she will never come up with solutions” (Elsie, HTS Counsellor). This confirms Griffin and Moorheads’ (2011:395) argument that if employees feel that when supervisors made appraisal decisions important information was ignored, they experience less informational justice. The referral to ‘she will just be shouting’ highlights Wankel (2008) view that interactional injustice occurs when employees perceive that they are not treated well in the organisation. It has also been found to strongly impact perceptions of leader-member exchange and other evaluations of authority in organisations (Shipp & Fried, 2014:163). Thus, managers need to show respect, sensitivity and explain decisions thoroughly to employees (Ololube, 2016:85). It can also be argued as articulated by Deb (2009) that supervisors may commit strictness error which happens when the rater is overly harsh while judging the performance of employees especially in cases where the standards of performance may be unjustifiable high or unrealistic.

As shown above, the subtheme ‘Our supervisors should open doors for us’ highlights the established emotions in the actors’ social exchange. Lawler’s (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange gives also gives a clear perspective of this subtheme as it places emotions and feelings at the centre of interaction or exchange (Burke, 2006:244). It states that social exchange is essentially about how actors jointly deal with and respond to the uncertainties and ambiguities (Lawler, 2001:323).

The subtheme ‘Our supervisors should open doors for us’ highlights Assumption five: *“During joint tasks, actors interpret and explain their global feelings partly with reference to social units”* which asserts that depending on the exchange structure, emotions or feelings from exchange influence how actors perceive and feel about their shared activity, their relation, and/or their common group affiliations (Lawler, 2001:322). Assumption five therefore states that with higher degrees of jointness, the emotions experienced by actors in exchange should make the relational or group context more salient as a target for cognitions and feelings. This is because emotions contribute to the “objectification” of relations and groups.

Accordingly, when employees felt the injustice in their interactions with supervisors, this produces element of negativity and detachment to their organizations appraisal system (Lawler, 2001:321). Assumption five also argues that individuals’ relational and group attachments are connected to their emotional experiences in social exchange (Lawler,

2001:321). This is because social exchange is quintessentially a joint activity. Thus, in the context of joint tasks, actors interpret global emotions as produced in part by social units (relations, groups or networks). This leads to stronger or weaker affective attachments to relations, networks, groups or organizations (Burke, 2006:251). Therefore, as shown above, Assumption five of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicts the **interactions** within social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a part of how people communicate and interpret information as they interact (Lawler et al., 2009:34). Thus, it is focused more on the **other** (supervisors); that is, the participants seem to feel gratitude towards their supervisors when they felt interactions between themselves and the supervisor were fair. Conversely, they felt anger when they perceived interactions to be unfair (See Table 1).

This is because interactions with the 'other' are entrenched in the form of social exchange where individual weighs the cost of an interaction or longer-term relationship against its benefits and engages in what is perceived to be fair exchange (DePoy & Gilson, 2007:136). Assumption five also answered the first specific objective of the study which was to describe the effects of impression management on employees' perceptions of interactional fairness in the context of their organisations' performance appraisal systems. It showed that the reaction or emotions employee got in the appraisal interaction were a result of how they perceived their interactions with their managers, regardless of whether the appraisal outcome was favourable or not.

### **5.2.3 'Some of our views are not taken into consideration'**

In the context of performance appraisal, procedural justice relates to the fairness of the process by which employees feel their performance is measured (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). Procedural justice thus focuses on the perceived fairness of procedures used to determine the appraisal rating (Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2015:17) and has long been recognised as a key determinant of people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. That is, in the organizations, people react to how fairly they are treated (Tornblom & Vermunt, 2016:91). The subtheme '*Some of our views are not taken into consideration*' derives from employees' perceptions of procedural fairness. It illustrates that in terms of this study employees were found to rarely be required to participate in the setting up of appraisal standards in their organisations, "We also are given chance...to suggest ways that we can better our organisational appraisal process" (Evelyn, Sales Manager).

This finding endorses Bhattacharyya's (2011) argument that to gain acceptance from the employees, organisations should develop performance standards collaboratively. For organisations that allowed some participation of employees in the setting up of appraisal standards, employees' were generally satisfied with the fact that "management in their organisations heeded their voices into the appraisal process" (Mello, 2014:522). This alludes to Lind and Tylers' (1988) contention that the referral to 'given chance...to suggest' highlights that employees perceive appraisal process to be fair when they have participated in the implementation of its standards. It also confirms Tyler et als' (1985) argument that employees perceive the chance for self-expression as procedurally just, regardless of the final decision, which shows that their attitudes towards the appraisal process are influenced by their level of participation (Korgaard & Roberson, 1995).

The data also revealed that participants felt employees should be involved in the setting up of performance appraisal standards as it would help managers to include some of the important goals of the organization, "We should be allowed to suggest the things that we should be appraised on" (Joseph, Accountant). This finding echoes Condrey's (2010) statement that employee participation in the appraisal process introduces positive features such as inclusion of employees' suggestions in the appraisal standards and employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system. It could also be argued that this finding highlights the importance of performance appraisal planning (as the first stage in performance appraisal).

It shows that employee participation in the planning of performance appraisal standards affords employees an opportunity to voice their concerns and assists in clarifying potential complications on the goals that employees need to achieve (Robert, 2002). It also shows that giving employees substantial participation in appraisal planning increases satisfaction and sparks motivation to improve subsequent job performance. Further, planning is seen to allow employees, together with supervisors, to set up job-related plans and goals for the future.

It allows for collaboration based on the views of both parties (Kroemer, 2002). It also emerged from the data that not allowing employees participate in the setting up of performance appraisal standards lead to them being dominated by their supervisors as they only performed tasks designed by their supervisors "Performance appraisal is a burden...Supervisors set unreasonable goals..." (Phillo, Records Assistant).

According to Coens and Jenkinss' (2002) this is a justifiable complaint that employees have as performance appraisal systems are too often structured in a one-sided manner, wherein managers dominates the process, leaving little or no opportunity for open discussion between themselves and employees. Thus, Gilliland and Langdon (1998) state that organizations should add employees' voice into the development of the performance appraisal system, the performance appraisal process itself, and the feedback delivery, as this can positively impact satisfaction and performance levels (Kleingeld, van Tuijl & Alegra, 2004).

It also emerged that most participants were not allowed to participate in the setting up of appraisal standards in their organisations; this contributed to perceptions of unfairness of appraisal procedures. Supervisors were seen as setting unrealistic goals that were supposed to be met by the employees while they were not given a chance to contribute on the process meaningfully, "Supervisors set unreasonable goals for us to achieve" (Phillo, Records Assistant). As stated by Matlala (2011), when employees are not involved in the appraisal process, they engage in job activities or goals that they did not help design, and because of this they are most likely to be detached from the process as they view it as unfair. It is for this reason that Alexander and Rudermans' (1987) state that that work changes are more acceptable and productive if workers participate in planning for change.

Warner (2002) also argues that if employees are not given an adequate chance to contribute in the appraisal standards used to evaluate them, some may feel tricked; but most of all, they are not likely to perform well in the first place. Thus, employees should take part in appraisal process to know what standard of performance is expected from them, and also to have a general idea on how judgements are reached. In this way, when employees participate in the appraisal process, the quantity and quality of performance appraisal information increases leading to a more accurate and valid process (Roberts, 2002:90).

Nevertheless, some participants thought performance appraisal should remain a solely managerial responsibility as was the norm. They believed if employees were involved, they would naturally avoid appraisals aimed at the more demanding aspects of their jobs in favour of the more enjoyable ones, "Employees should not take part in any aspect of performance appraisal" (Ronnie, Sales Representative). This finding correlates with



Roberts (2002) account that in some cases it is not productive to allow employees to take part in appraisal process. This finding however contradicts Warner's (2002) opinion that planning (as a first stage in performance appraisal process) is partly an employee's responsibility and partly supervisors' as well. However, in most circumstances, the fairness, accuracy, and effect of the appraisal on future productivity and employee morale are entirely the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor (Warner, 2002:42). It also emerged that some employees were ignorant of their organisation's appraisal standards thus they were unable to state whether procedures were followed in their appraisal or not, "I can't say whether the way we get appraised is a good way or the bad way" (Alex, Finance Officer).

This finding corresponds to Field, Gallacher and Ingrams' (2009) affirmation that organizations may portray performance reviews as strong organizational practices, but these may not be experienced by employees and supervisors as either strong organizational processes or strong learning processes. The above finding also confirms Banfield and Kays' (2008) argument that there is no recognition that the claimed advantages of performance appraisal (which include positive nature of formal appraisal meetings between appraiser and appraisee, and the generation of valuable feedback) might not be experienced by those involved in the process or by the organization.

As indicated above, the subtheme "Some of our views are not taken into consideration" highlights how actors analyze experience, interpret, and respond to their own emotions and feelings produced by successful or unsuccessful exchange efforts. Lawler's (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange expands on this subtheme as it explains a causal process through which the emotions generate order and solidarity at the relational, group, or network level (Lawler, 2001:323). The subtheme "Some of our views are not taken into consideration" highlight Assumption four: "*Global emotions produced by social exchange trigger cognitive efforts to understand the sources or causes of global feelings*" which states that emotions are motivating because "feeling good" is positively valued in itself and "feeling bad" is negatively valued in itself (Lawler, 2001:327).

Assumption four of Lawler's theory stipulates that emotions emerge from exchange because the goal of the actors is to generate more valued goods, profit, and utility than they currently have, which makes it possible for them to participate in exchanges that provide each with more benefit than they had before (Lawler, 2001:324). Consequently,

employee participation in the appraisal process is seen to introduce a number of positive features, including employees' suggestions on the concepts to be included in the appraisal standards and employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system (Condrey, 2010). In this way Assumption four explains that exchange brings about outcomes in the form of rewards and punishments; which, in turn, bring forth emotional responses that vary in form and intensity. Thus, when exchanges occur successfully, actors experience an emotional 'high', and when they fail, they experience emotional 'downs'. Positive emotions include excitement, pleasure, pride, and gratitude while and negative emotions include sadness, shame, and anger (Lawler, 2001:322).

Therefore, Assumption four of Lawler's Affect Theory of Social Exchange depicted the **context** of social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a build into cultural norms or structural positions (Lawler et al., 2009:34). Therefore, assumption three is focused more on the **social unit**. Thus, employees felt affective attachment when they were allowed to participate in their organizational appraisal process, and they felt affective detachment when they were not allowed to participate in the process (See Table 1).

This is because a 'social unit' is embedded with either positive or negative emotions in the form of social exchange. Thus, when employees attributed negative emotions towards their organizations' appraisal system, their affective detachment to the organizations increased. When employees attributed positive emotions towards the appraisal system, their affective attachment to their organizations increased to the extent that the organizational appraisal system (social unit) was perceived as the context for or source of positive emotions and feelings. It became an object of value in it's own right, and employees were inclined to engage in collectively oriented behaviour (e.g., staying in the organization) (Stets & Turner, 2014).

Thus, "global emotions produced by social exchange trigger cognitive efforts to understand the sources or causes of global feelings". Assumption four also answered the second specific objective of the study which was to determine whether employees' involvement in the setting up of performance appraisal's standards, timing and appointing of appraisers influences feelings of procedural fairness. It revealed that the fairness of appraisal process was influenced by the extent which employees were allowed to participate in the appraisal process. Employees' were perceived as the ones who are

capable of suggesting ways in which existing appraisal scores and performance appraisal systems could be enhanced to help them reproduce positive emotions and/or avoid negative ones, thereby reducing appraisal discrimination complaints and ensuring appraisal satisfaction. Reactions or emotions that employees got during the appraisal process were a result of their perceptions of the procedures followed at arriving at the appraisal outcome. It revealed that participants did think about the causes of the emotions they held towards adherence to procedure of performance appraisal in their organisation. Some wished to contribute more meaningfully to their organisations' appraisal standards while others thought appraisal should remain a solely managerial responsibility as was the norm.

The findings also showed that participants believed employees could be involved more in performance appraisal since supervisors set unrealistic goals and were incapable of thinking of everything that needed to be done in the organisation. Additionally, participants thought employees should be involved in performance appraisal as managers sometimes failed to focus on the 'bigger picture' of performance appraisal and tended to emphasise issues that added no value to the organisation.

#### **5.2.4 'It is not easy to achieve every single goal that you set for yourself'**

In the context of performance appraisal, "distributive fairness refers to perceived fairness of appraisal rating or outcome received in relation to the actual work performed" (Akhtar & Khattak, 2013:508). For Suliman (2013 cited in Ololube & Nwachukwu, 2016:85) distributive justice refers to employee satisfaction with work outcomes; thus distributive justice speaks to the perceived fairness of an actual appraisal rating in relation to the actual work performed (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). The subtheme '*It is not easy to achieve every goal that you set for yourself*' illustrates perceptions of distributive fairness in performance appraisal. The findings of the study revealed that participants were happy with high ratings they got when comparing the score with the goals that they had achieved. "...and given the rating that I got from my appraisal...I got a score that I deserved" (Peter, IT Specialist). This resonates Akhtar and Khattaks' (2013) argument that individuals formulate perceptions of fairness by comparing the ratio of their perceived work outcomes (rewards) and perceived work inputs (contribution). Accordingly, the positive affectivity towards the job results from the cognitive assessment of the actual job outcomes in comparison to those expected (Quah & Ong, 2012:114). Thus, Alexander

and Ruderman's (1987) assertion that rating fairness (distributive fairness) is an important predictor of workplace attitudes and behaviours in that it has a particular strong effect on workers' satisfaction with their pay and on turnover intentions is confirmed. Consequently, the referral to 'I got the score that I deserved' speaks to the perceived fairness of an actual appraisal rating in relation to the actual work performed (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). From this finding, it can also be argued that for most employees, motivation is influenced significantly by appraisal rewards (Robbins: 2001). The study also revealed that performance appraisal ratings were viewed as useful as they enabled participants to notice their development when compared to when they joined their organisations, "As compared to when I first joined the company...my working strategies have improved" (Joseph, Accountant).

This echoes the view that appraisal ratings are meant to make employees' performance to be more effective and productive by assessing range of professional knowledge, skills and attitudes which impact on their ability to fulfil work duties within the work environment (Bhattacharyya, 2011:55). This finding also echoes Bhattacharya's (2011) assertions that appraisal feedback is the basis for discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of employees as focus can then be given to performance improvement. Therefore, it is important for a worker to make sense of performance appraisal feedback, deal with emotional reactions that may occur, and interpret what the message is for him or her (Cardy, 2011:5).

This finding also highlights the necessity of review (as the third step in performance appraisal). It shows feedback as an important ingredient of the review process as it helps employees to understand their performance gaps, to improve and to deliver better performance in future (Bhattacharyya, 2011:7). Since completed reviews play a role in any future ones, Lloyd et al (2009:135) state it is important that employees are given plenty of notice that a review or formal performance appraisal is occurring. It also shows that without appraisal feedback (appraisal rating), employees cannot improve. Feedback is perceived essential to correct and refine employee performance. It is also essential if workers are to understand their strengths and weaknesses or simply have an idea of how they are doing in terms of achieving organisational objectives (Cardy, 2011:75). Thus, employees are also more likely to embrace and contribute meaningfully to performance appraisal if they perceive it as an opportunity gain personal development (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012:73). Other participants perceived appraisal ratings as fair since

the appraisal tool used to appraise employees was standard for each employee, “We have a standard appraisal”. Even so, due to perceptions of organisation appraisal system as unjust, the participants felt actual ratings scored did not match their actual effort expended. Some participants felt the problem of appraisal ratings derived from employees being appraised by supervisors who were not directly linked to the work that they did. “At times we are given appraisers who do not even have an idea of our work” (Evelyn, Sales Representative). This resonates Murphy and Cleveland’s (1995) assertion that if supervisors do not know half of what workers do, they are unlikely to be a valuable source of information about the quality of performance about the quality of performance or the steps that workers should take to increase work quality. It also builds on Sison (1991) argument that supervisors required to appraise employees should be given adequate training for task so they can give unbiased ratings.

According to Cardy (2011:5), it is important for a worker to make sense of performance appraisal feedback, deal with emotional reactions that may occur, and interpret what the message is for him or her. Other participants felt the appraisal score they got was not meant to help them develop more skills but was a tool used to punish them. “I think it exists to victimise...when the score is too low... you don’t get a bonus at all” (Phillo, Records Assistant). This finding confirms Rubbin and Edwards (2018) affirmation that a claim of discrimination in the appraisal process is a purposive behaviour resulting from a negative perception of the appraisal, and signals an employee believes her or his appraisal was negatively impacted, and this might result from a rating viewed as inaccurate and or biased. Both may lead an employee to claim discrimination.

The study findings also revealed that participants who felt their appraisal rating were unfair developed a negative attitude towards their work. “This made me feel very sad and makes me question the process of appraisal rating” (Phillo, Records Assistant). The finding underpins Greenberg’s (1993) argument that when employees perceive injustice of distribution results, they express their dissatisfaction toward the organisation by lowering their working performances and changing their attitudes. It is also indicated that employees receiving low rating will have more negative attitudes towards their organization (Steers & Porter, 1991). This aspect of appraisal injustice may reflect an attribution assessment that recognises that employees expended a great deal of effort but the overall results do not reflect such (Daley, 1992).

Moreover, the participants showed performance appraisal process was not clear to them as the actual rating was concluded in a composite manner, “The appraisal score is calculated in a very complicated manner” (Elsie, HTS Counsellor). This finding endorses Kessler’s (2009) statement that employees need to understand the organization’s appraisal ratings, and how to work effectively with the forms, tools and resources the organisation has provided. Consequently, some participants felt that appraisal scores that they were given were not meant to improve them but they were meant to punish them unjustly, “I think it exists to victimise”. This finding relates to the assertion that the content of the feedback is usually critical; and therefore a worker might embrace feedback as an opportunity to improve, or the worker might reject the feedback and deny its validity (Cardy, 2011:77).

The above result also resonates Lloyd et al’s (2009:136) statement that when feedback is accurate and able to be backed up with specific examples, employees are more likely to trust and value the feedback and the manager giving it. This feedback also needs to be in line with feedback given between appraisals and reviews. The finding also revealed that supervisors gave higher rating scores to employees who were close to them, but gave lower ratings to the ones that are not close to them. “The supervisors use this to give high scores to their favourite employees”. According to Deb (2009) this illustrates an error termed *invalid criteria*, where an appraiser uses criteria for evaluating employees’ performance other than the criteria established by the job analysis process. In this case, managers seem to use friendship with employees as a standard for appraisal. This finding confirms Deb (2009:189) assertion that the perception of distributive fairness is not simply determined by the amount received, but by what is received relative to some referent other.

As indicated, the subtheme “It is not easy to achieve every goal you set for yourself” underlines that during social exchange (appraisal rating), global feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction were produced. Lawler’s (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange gives an apparent perspective of this subtheme as it recognizes the different emotions that may be generated by power or status differences in social exchange as these have important effects on the interaction between low and high status or power actors (Lawler, 2001:323). The subtheme also highlights Assumption three: “*Actors strive to reproduce global positive emotions and avoid global negative emotions experienced as a result of social exchange*” which portrays global emotions as positive forciers (Izard, 1991). When

activated, they organize action or interaction and unleash cognitive efforts to interpret where they come from. Assumption three of Lawler's theory clarifies that the motivational (rewarding) effect stimulates "cognitive work" through which actors ascribe meaning to and interpret the causes of emotions felt (Stets & Turner, 2014:82). The motivational effects are due to the fact that positive and negative emotions from interaction or exchange (appraisal rating) are internal rewards that people want to experience again or internal punishments they wish to avoid (Gasper & Clore, 2002). Consequently, the subtheme revealed that employees who scored highly in the appraisal rating were eager to work hard to improve or maintain their scores, and employees who were not satisfied fully about their scores were willing to work hard to improve it, thereby avoiding low appraisal (punishment).

Therefore, Assumption three of Lawler's theory of Social Exchange depicted **outcomes** of social exchange; that is, it views affect (reactions and emotions) as a product of exchange or social interaction (Lawler et al., 2009:34). It showed that reactions or emotions that an employee gets are a reflection of the actual rating scored. Therefore, assumption three is focused more on the **self**; accordingly, employees felt pride when they scored highly in their appraisals and shame when they scored lowly. This is because positive effect generated more inclusive or integrative categorizations of self in negotiation settings involving social exchange (Lawler, 2001).

Assumption three also answered specific objective 3 which intended to find out how perceptions of distributive fairness of the actual appraisal rating scored, in relation to the actual work performed, influences appraisal (dis)satisfaction and job attitudes. It revealed that employees attach emotions to performance appraisal outcomes. When appraisal score is high, it is satisfactory and is perceived as fair, but when the rating is low, appraisal rating is dissatisfactory and perceived as unfair. Thus, employees felt pride when the score is high and they felt shame to self when the score is low. When participants were happy with high ratings they got, they saw performance appraisals as useful and felt satisfied with their ability to attain higher rating score.

Conversely, when appraisal scores were low, they were seen as unjust, especially if they did not match actual effort expended. Consequently, low appraisal scores were seen as unjust punishment and this triggered feelings of dissatisfaction with the appraisal scores.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study recommends that to enhance performance appraisal process fairness, organizational commitment and satisfaction of employees, organizations should improve employees' participation in the appraisal process and should allow the process to be flexible in that it should be done at least twice a year. Organizations should also give priority to the interaction strategies employed in the organizations as it was revealed that employees feel gratitude towards the supervisors when they are treated with respect. Employees should be given all information they need to proceed with their goals. Moreover, for appraisal to yield the desired outcomes, adequate attention should also be paid to the avoidance of appraisal ratings discriminations and transparency in the rating process.

Management should employ well positioned appraisers who have adequate knowledge on appraisal system in order to enhance the communication of appraisal feedback since it has an influence in helping employees to identify their strengths, weakness and potential areas of improvement within the organization or better still have some training for appraisers before they carry out the appraisal exercise. The study further recommends that appraisers should be managers or supervisors who are directly involved in the work that they as praise's do and performance appraisal rating must be calculated in a clear manner of aligning appraisal score with the intended goal to achieve.

The individual performance appraisal scorecard must also be designed in such a way that the employee is able to state the reasons why the goals were not achieved together with the proposed improvement. An equal treatment of employees from all organisations; appraisal ratings rule should apply to each and every one of them. More so, training programmes for both employees and supervisors could be initiated by organisations to offer tips for avoiding appraisal errors. The performance enhancement plan must be implemented and monitored for employees who are failing to meet agreed performance standards to assist them in improving their work performance.

### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

Based on the findings from this research study, the researcher recommends that a replication of this study with different samples to assess whether the results obtained will



also be observed with employees from other organisations. Future research, of expanded scope and sample, could also be undertaken utilising other research methodologies on perceptions of fairness of performance appraisal among workers in Lesotho using the study findings as a reference. Furthermore, this study was conducted on employees who work in private and non-governmental organizations, therefore, it is recommended that further studies should be conducted focusing on organizations of interest. Lastly, future research on emotion responses to performance appraisal feedback can investigate the effects of the emotions on organizational attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement

## 5.5 Conclusions

This study asked the question, “How do employees’ justice perceptions of performance appraisal practices influence work behaviours and attitudes?” Lawler’s (2001) Affect Theory of Social Exchange showed that social exchange as a joint activity between the self and others, therefore Lawler (2001) connected the joint task of social exchange with the social unit (or social objects real to actors). However, in any social exchange Lawler (2001) states that actors face substantial degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty about what their partners value, hence, social exchange is essentially about how actors jointly deal with and respond to these uncertainties and ambiguities (Lawler, 2001:323).

In terms of performance appraisal, emotions were found to be attached to; (a) the entire *process* of performance appraisal; (b) the *outcomes* of performance appraisal; (c) the *interactions* with the supervisor during performance appraisal and (d) the *context* of performance appraisal itself. Therefore, with regards to justice perceptions of performance appraisal it can be concluded that workers attached emotions derived from their perceptions of the (i) task; (ii) self; (iii) other and, (iv) the social unit (Lawler, 2001:329-330). Moreover, although employees reacted differently to appraisal outcomes, their emotional responses all seemed to center on whether their managers showed respect, sensitivity and explain decisions thoroughly to them (Ololube, 2016). Consequently, the extent to which performance appraisal is perceived as fair leads employees to attach commensurate emotions to it.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the findings of the study outlined in chapter 4 and presented the conclusion for the literature review and empirical study. The chapter concluded with outlining the recommendations as well as suggestions for future research.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

My name is Mammefane Letoane and I am currently working towards a Master of Science degree in Industrial Sociology at the National University of Lesotho. I am conducting a study on justice perceptions of performance appraisal in Lesotho. I would like to interview you by asking you a few questions on your experiences of performance appraisal process. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or even choose to end this interview anytime without any negative repercussions. The interview will take one hour, approximately. Should you agree to participate, I shall record our conversation on an audio recorder to help me remember all the information from our conversation, but only if you are comfortable with it. I will then transcribe (write out) what you have said. Our discussion will be confidential and your name will not be recorded anywhere in the transcription manuscript so there will be no way of linking what you have said in this interview to who you are. Only I (and my supervisors) will see this information. The audio files and transcripts of our conversation will be securely stored, and only I will have access to this information. Once the research is finalised, the audio files and transcripts will be destroyed.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided.	
I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	
The separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	
I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	

#### Statement by the participant

Name of participant.....

Signature of participant..... Date .....Day/month/year

#### Statement by the researcher

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

Signature of researcher .....Date .....Day/month/year

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide**

### **1. Can you tell me more about yourself?**

- a. Age, marital status, highest qualification, place of residence.
- b. Where do you currently work and what is your position?
- c. Have you ever been through the performance appraisal process?
- d. When was the last performance appraisal held in your work place?

### **2. Employees' justice perceptions of performance appraisal on work behaviours and attitudes**

- a. How do you feel about the entire process of performance appraisal?
- b. How do you feel about your job since your last performance appraisal?
- c. Since the last appraisal, how would you characterize your job performance? Please explain your answer.

### **3. Distributive fairness, appraisal discrimination and satisfaction?**

- a. Would you say the last appraisal rating you received reflected what you actually deserved? Please explain your answer.
- b. Would you say the actual appraisal ratings your colleagues get are fair or are they intended to victimize them?
- c. How do you feel about working for your organization since your last performance appraisal?

### **4. Employees' participation and perceptions of procedural fairness**

- a. Have you ever suspected flaws in your organizations' appraisal process, either in the past or in your last performance appraisal?
- b. Were you involved in the setting up of the appraisal standards used to evaluate you? Please explain your answer.
- c. In your opinion, which aspects of performance appraisal should employees be involved in?

### **5. Impression management and interactional fairness**

- a. Have you ever felt like how your manager/rater views you will affect the rating score that you get? Explain your answer?
- b. How can you describe your feelings towards your manager after your last appraisal?
- c. What strategies may be put in place in order to enhance interactional fairness within organizations?



## Appendix C: Demographic Characteristics

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Marital status	Highest qualification	Place of residence	Occupation	Place of work
1.	Mary	Female	27	Single	Diploma	Naleli	Auditor	Private
2.	Caroline	Female	27	Single	Bachelor's degree	Naleli	Debtors clerk	NGO
3.	Queen	Female	28	Married	Bachelor's degree	Ha-Thetsane	Bank Teller	Private
4.	Phillo	Female	29	Married	Bachelor's degree	Abia	Records assistant	NGO
5.	Rosie	Female	32	Married	Bachelor's degree	Naleli	Senior counsellor	NGO
6.	Hope	Female	35	Married	Bachelor's degree	Masianoken g	Senior Administrator	NGO
7.	Elsie	Female	39	Married	Bachelor's degree	Ha-Thetsane	Counsellor	NGO
8.	Eveline	Female	41	Married	Bachelor's degree	Naleli	Sales manager	Private
9.	Jeff	Male	27	Single	Bachelor's degree	Maseru West	Marketing officer	Private
10.	Alex	Male	31	Single	Bachelor's degree	Maseru West	Finance officer	Private
11.	Peter	Male	32	Married	Bachelor's degree	Ha-Thetsane	IT specialist	NGO
12.	Ronnie	Male	36	Married	Bachelor's degree	Ha-'Nelese	Sales representative	Private
13.	Joseph	Male	39	Married	Masters	Ha-Thetsane	Accountant	Private