

**EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC STAFF ON
PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS IN SOME SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
IN LUSAKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.**

DISSERTATION

BY

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**A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the award of a master's degree in educational
administration and management**

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

LUSAKA

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Declaration

I, Nsama Kabwe do hereby declare that this is my own work, and that all the works of other persons used in this report have been duly acknowledged, and that this work has not been previously presented in this university or any other for similar purposes.

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Certificate of Approval

This dissertation of Nsama Kabwe is approved as a fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Educational Administration and Management, of the University of Zambia.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my Mother Matilda Chirwa and my Uncle Prof. Masauso Chirwa for their help and support throughout my entire life, for believing in me and pushing me to do my master's degree. Above all, my heavenly father for the uncountable blessings he has bestowed upon me.

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ABSTRACT

This research study explored the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals in selected private universities in Lusaka District. The study explored types of performance appraisal systems used in selected private universities in Lusaka District, examined the use of data derived from appraisals and assessed academic staff perceptions on appraisals. Utilizing a qualitative approach grounded in an interpretivist philosophy, this study employed a descriptive research design. The research involved the distribution of online open-ended questionnaires to collect responses from a total sample size of thirty academic staff from five private universities. The findings revealed the prevalence of participatory performance appraisals as a widespread practice. However, the study uncovered varying perceptions among academic staff, with many perceiving appraisals as pointless due to the disconnection from tangible rewards, while others reported improvements in their performance such as teaching methods and time management. Disparities in the provision of feedback were also highlighted, with some receiving comprehensive feedback and others receiving none. Moreover, a notable skepticism appeared on the alignment of appraisal results with actual job performance. Interestingly, the qualification of the supervisor did not jeopardize the perception of academic staff on the Performance appraisal process. In view of these findings, the study recommends that there is need for private universities to establish clear and standardized performance appraisal processes, offer biannual training sessions focused on enhancing academic staff understanding of the appraisal process, utilize the 360-degree feedback appraisal system to provide a comprehensive view of performance and mitigate bias, provide regular and comprehensive feedback. In addition, the study recommends private universities should offer training focused on enhancing academic staff understanding of the appraisal process, use appraisal data for succession planning, rewarding, and recognizing exemplary performance and providing career development opportunities to academic staff. Additionally, the study suggests a framework that supervisors in private universities can use to implement performance appraisals effectively through a series of steps.

KEY WORDS: *Performance appraisal, Academic staff, Private universities, Effect, Perception*

Acronyms

ACR - Annual Confidential Report

AS – Academic Staff

HEA – Higher Education Authority

PAS – Performance Appraisal System

PMP - Performance Management Package

SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

ZAPUASA - Zambia Private Universities Academic Staff Association

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter explores into the foundational aspects of the research, offering a comprehensive background of the study, articulating the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, outlining the study objectives and research questions, and discussing the delimitations and limitations of the research. Furthermore, it presents the theoretical and conceptual framework that underpins the study, providing operational definitions for clarity and coherence.

1.1 Background to the Study

Performance appraisal is the analysis of the successes and failures of an employee and assessment of their suitability for training and promotion in the future (Maund, 2002). It is a complex and challenging task as it involves making judgements about others. It is frequently unacknowledged, yet it is always a necessary component of the supervisory process. Today, universities around the world are concerned with the reputation and quality of their universities regardless of location. They have also become competitive within the present environment. As such, they have a huge responsibility to transfer knowledge to society for economic development by conducting high quality research and producing skilled graduates. Therefore, knowledgeable, and skilled academic staff is a distinctive resource for any university to support the quality of teaching. So, one way in which universities do this is by managing the performance of their academic staff through accurate appraisals which can help determine training needs and increase employee motivation through the feedback process.

In Zambia, performance appraisals have been present since 1997 when the government introduced it as an Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) with the aim of managing employee performance in the Civil Service. However, in a study conducted by Kamfwa (2016) on the effect of Annual Performance Appraisal Systems in selected ministries of Zambia's Civil Service, it was revealed that APAS was not effectively used in appraising performance in the ministries concerned and this led to negative perceptions by employees mainly due to lack of tangible rewards and recognition. This is to show that despite having a standard appraisal system in the Zambian civil service, there is inconsistency in implementing it and it is not effectively used. Little about this is known in Private Universities in Zambia.

However, in a recent 2021 survey by the Zambia Private Universities Academic Staff Association (ZAPUASA) it was revealed that only 25% of academic staff in private universities experienced a formal performance appraisal process providing them with comprehensive feedback. This statistic shows a substantial gap in both the implementation and effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in Zambia's private universities. Further analysis within the subset of academicians subjected to performance appraisal revealed that only 10% represented part-time lecturers, showing a significant oversight in including this demographic in the appraisal process.

Nyaoga, Magutu & Kipchumbu (2010) revealed that performance appraisal is the only tangible metric way in which an organization can know the level of performance of its diverse employees. Despite the important role that performance appraisal plays in fostering job satisfaction and productivity among academic staff in the higher education sector, there exists a noticeable gap in research efforts dedicated to exploring how academic staff perceive performance appraisals in Private Universities in Zambia.

The impetus behind this study also stems from the researcher's intrigue regarding the increase of private universities in Zambia, particularly in Lusaka. As highlighted in a 2021 report from the Zambia Higher Education Authority (HEA), it was shown that there is a presence of fifty (50) registered private universities in the country, all grappling with a rising demand for quality education. Due to this rise in number, private universities have become competitive within the present environment ensuring that they have high performing academic staff. However, the specific dynamics of how academic staff perceive performance appraisals is still largely unexplored, providing the rationale for the current research endeavour.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The assessment of academic staff effectiveness through performance appraisals is one way in which private universities can know the performance of their academic staff. In Zambia, it has been present for over two decades, yet many studies have revealed that it is not effectively used to manage employee performance. Existing literature highlights a prevailing negative sentiment and dissatisfaction among employees towards the appraisal system (Nyeleti et al 2022; Dasayanaka, Abeykoon, Ranaweera & Koswatte 2021). A study on the views of teachers and head teachers on performance appraisals revealed that teachers lacked proper understanding of Annual Performance Appraisal Systems (APAS) which so led to the development of negative perceptions and attitudes towards the system. The study also revealed

that many teachers did not see the importance of APAS in their career because the system was perceived as an academic exercise without tangible results.

Ikemefuna & Chidi (2012) also reported that many respondents perceived performance appraisal negatively, because of inherent errors in the appraisal process such as the halo-effect, favoritism, and stereotyping. However, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies specifically investigating how academic staff perceive performance appraisals in Zambia's private universities. The scarcity of tailored insights presents a challenge for private universities in refining performance management strategies that can enhance academic staff performance and overall institutional success. As emphasized by Grote (2011), inadequately conducted performance appraisals risk becoming objects of ridicule, emphasizing the need of addressing this issue.

Moreover, existing research within higher education has focused on the effectiveness and utility of performance appraisals in increasing employee job satisfaction in other geographical contexts. Therefore, recognizing this knowledge gap, this study sought to explore the perceptions of academic staff regarding performance appraisals, providing valuable insights into their views and experiences. Through this exploration, the study hoped to inform the enhancement of performance appraisal systems in private universities, ensuring they align with the needs and expectations of academic staff.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

To explore the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals in selected private universities in Lusaka district.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is hoped to provide wide-ranging benefits for private universities which can ultimately improve the quality of education and support for students. It aimed at gaining insight into some of the best performance appraisal systems which can enhance academic staff performance and increase job satisfaction. It is expected to enlighten private universities on the need for conducting performance appraisals in their universities, as this can help them in identifying training and development needs for academic staff which can lead to more effective professional development programs that address the specific needs of academic staff. In that regard, the study suggests a framework that supervisors in private universities can use to implement performance appraisals effectively through a series of steps.

Additionally, the study may offer supervisors in private universities with valuable insights into the challenges faced by academic staff members in the appraisal process, which could inform the development of more effective performance appraisal systems that better meet the needs of academic staff members in their universities.

It is hoped to provide supervisors in private universities with the needed information on the importance of providing feedback and constructive criticism to academic staff as this can enable them identify areas where they need to develop their skills and knowledge to better support student learning in their universities. Lastly, it is expected to bridge the existing knowledge gap on performance appraisal systems and how academic staff perceive them in private universities in Zambia.

1.5 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To establish Performance Appraisal Systems used in selected private universities in Lusaka District
2. To investigate what the data from performance Appraisal Systems is used for in selected private universities of Lusaka District
3. To assess Academic staff perceptions on Performance Appraisal Systems in selected private universities of Lusaka District

1.6 Research Questions

The following are the research questions for the study.

1. What Performance Appraisal systems do select private universities in Lusaka District use?
2. What is the data collected from Performance Appraisal Systems used for?
3. What are the perceptions of academic staff on Performance Appraisal Systems?

1.7 Delimitation of the study

This study focused on the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisal systems in five selected private universities in Lusaka District.

1.8 Limitations of the study

While the research encompassed five private universities in Lusaka, the inclusion of a broader range of institutions could have provided additional insights into the impact of performance appraisal systems on academic staff performance across diverse university settings. Consequently, the findings, while offering valuable perspectives, may not be fully indicative of the broader population of academic staff, given the relatively limited number of respondents. Moreover, it was assumed that the study participants possessed a comprehensive understanding of the performance appraisal systems within their respective institutions, enabling them to provide accurate and candid responses during the research process.

Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from academic staff introduced the possibility of social desirability bias, whereby respondents might have been inclined to present themselves in a more favorable light, potentially affecting the accuracy and objectivity of the data collected. However, to eliminate this bias, this study refrained from obtaining respondents' email addresses to keep their identities anonymous allowing them to be objective rather than subjective. Compounded by limited time and resources, the researcher faced constraints in conducting in-person interviews, which could have offered valuable insights through the observation of respondents' reactions and body language. As such, the study resorted to the use of online open-ended questionnaires as an alternative method for data collection from the academic staff.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

To further guide this study, three motivational theoretical frameworks developed by Locke, Herzberg and Vroom were used to understand the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals. These theories are the Goal setting theory, Two-factor content theory and Expectancy theory, respectively.

1.9.1 Two-Factor content theory

Herzberg developed the Two-Factor content theory which is based on the deceptively simple idea that motivation can be dichotomized into hygiene factors and motivation factors (Herzberg, 1959). He identified several factors in the workplace that can demotivate employees if they are inadequate or absent, known as hygiene factors or 'dissatisfiers.' These include working conditions, rewards, supervision, and salary. While the presence of these hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction, they alone do not lead to motivation. Instead, he also

suggested that ‘Motivators’ also called ‘Satisfiers’ can motivate academic staff. This includes recognizing their accomplishments and providing growth and promotional opportunities to enable them to perform well post-appraisal. These two factors will affect the perceptions of academic staff and in turn make academic staff more productive and committed to their job. This theory is especially important when it comes to rating performance. A supervisor must ensure that the hygiene and motivation factors are met before evaluating academic staff performance.

1.9.2 Goal setting theory

Similarly, the Goal Setting Theory, introduced by Locke, posits that providing clear and specific objectives to employees fosters motivation and engagement in their work. According to this theory, when academic staff understand their goals and how to achieve them within specified deadlines, they are more motivated to excel. Locke & Latham (2006) argued that goal clarity, commitment to goals, prompt feedback, and task complexity can enhance the likelihood of appraisal success. This theory highlights the integral role of setting achievable goals and providing clear expectations before evaluating academic staff performance. This theory also informs the study by emphasizing that when supervisors set clear goals and communicate them through an on-going dialogue with academic staff, it is likely to improve the appraisal process success.

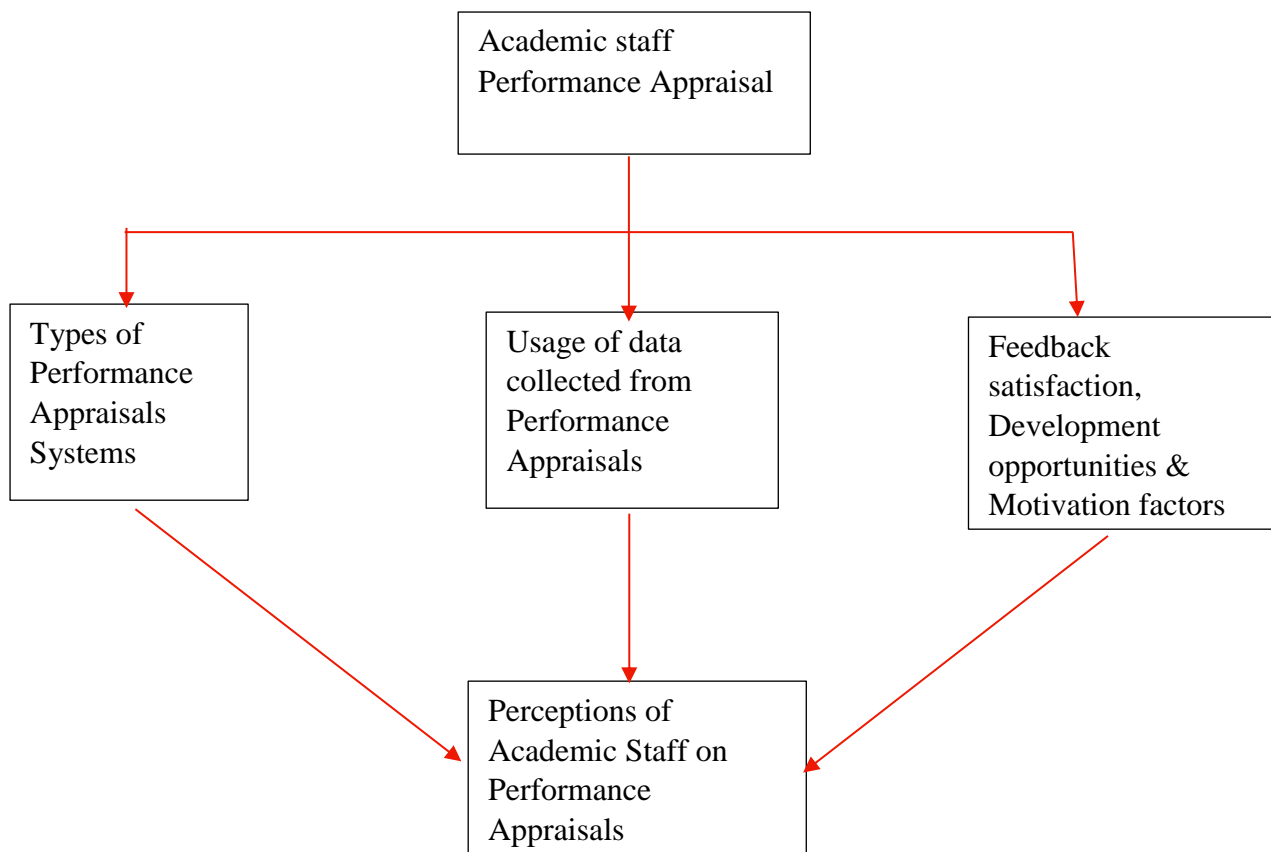
1.9.3 Expectancy theory

In this study, the expectancy theory according to Vroom (1964), serves as a guide to examine how academic staff perceive the link between performance appraisals and their outcomes within private universities. Firstly, the expectancy component assesses academic staff's beliefs regarding the likelihood that their efforts in the performance appraisal process will lead to desirable outcomes, such as promotions or professional development opportunities. Secondly, the instrumentality aspect explores academic staff's perceptions of the direct relationship between their performance appraisal ratings and the attainment of desired outcomes. Lastly, the valence dimension evaluates the value that academic staff place on the potential outcomes resulting from the performance appraisal process. By applying this theory, the study aimed to gain valuable insights into how academic staff's perceptions of performance appraisals are shaped by their expectations, beliefs, and values, thereby informing strategies to enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of performance appraisal systems in private universities.

Overall, these theories emphasize the interplay between motivation and performance within organizations, emphasizing the importance of meeting individual needs and setting clear goals to enhance academic staff motivation and productivity. Their implications extend to the design and implementation of performance appraisal systems, advocating for strategies that align with these motivational theories to optimize academic staff performance. In the context of this study, the adoption of the Two-Factor Theory, Goal Setting Theory and expectancy theory offered valuable insights into understanding the dynamics of performance appraisals and how academic staff perceive them.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks according to Meyer (2001) are structured from a set of broad ideas and theories that help a researcher to properly identify the problem they are looking at, frame their questions and find suitable literature. It also gives direction to the research.



The conceptual framework outlined above suggests that academic staff appraisals indirectly have an influence on academic staff perceptions on performance appraisal. To elucidate this

relationship, the study initially explored the performance appraisal systems employed in selected private universities in Lusaka district, offering insights into both the divergences and commonalities among the utilized systems. This exploration laid the foundation for devising recommendations aimed at refining performance management strategies. Subsequently, the study explored the utilization of data derived from appraisals, seeking to understand the efficacy and efficiency of prevailing appraisal practices. Furthermore, the study examined academic staff satisfaction of feedback, developmental opportunities, and motivational factors provided following appraisals. These factors all had an influence on the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals. This comprehensive examination aimed to reveal both areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with current appraisal methodologies, as well as potential areas for refinement. Such insights were integral in crafting recommendations and strategies tailored to better align the appraisal process with the needs and expectations of academic staff, ultimately fostering performance and organizational efficacy.

1.11 Operational Definitions

Performance Appraisal: the process of determining how well an employee is performing their duties.

Performance: This refers to carrying out duties and responsibilities by an individual within a timeframe

Job Satisfaction: Positive emotions associated with one's job evaluation.

Academic staff: Personnel whose primary assignment is instruction, research, or both in a faculty of a university.

Supervisor: A person responsible for evaluating the activities and performance of staff and ensuring that the work is done correctly

Perception: The way in which staff regards, understands, or interprets performance appraisals.

Effect: Impact or influence that the appraisal process has on staff performance

Performance feedback: Input and advice given to staff after the appraisal process to help them improve their job performance.

Professional Development: Opportunities to progress in their career, potentially resulting in promotions, increased pay, and greater responsibilities following performance appraisals.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter presented a review of various literature related to the study. Literature was reviewed in a systematic way starting with the historical background of performance appraisal systems in Zambia and other parts of the world, performance evaluation methods, objectives of performance appraisals, perceptions of employees on performance appraisal, benefits of performance appraisal, challenges faced by supervisors and academic staff during the appraisal process and the effects of performance appraisal systems on employee performance.

2.1 Historical development of performance appraisal system in Zambia

Olufemi (2014) stated that the concept of performance appraisal is a slightly new phenomenon to the African public sector. Olufemi further stated that since the 1960s when many nations in the region acquired freedom, the focus of the new administrations was on reforming the public sector. In the case of Zambia, performance appraisal systems can be traced from 1993 when they were introduced to improve service delivery. However, they used the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) which was based on personal observation and perception of the rater which had been passed down from the British Colonial Administration (GRZ, 1997). Nevertheless, the ACR was not objective because it was based on the supervisor's personal observation and perception of an individual and because this appraisal tool was not based on work planning and goal setting, it lacked a baseline for performance delivery. The ACR was later discovered to be one-sided because the appraisee did not have access to or input into the entire process because the manager or supervisors had to do it all without the input and contribution of the one being appraised.

As a result, in 1997, the Zambian government implemented the Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) as part of the Performance Management Package (PMP), with the primary goal of introducing a culture of work planning and target setting in government ministries, and other spending agencies (Kamfwa, 2016). The goals were to improve the Public Service' efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out its functions, as well as to put in place an effective personal appraisal instrument for making critical personnel decisions and since then, measuring performance in service delivery of the public sector in Zambia has continued to expand over the past 20 years and has been the prevailing practice (Kanchebele, 2012).

Additionally, Tembo (2018) conducted a study on the effectiveness of performance management system in Zambian public service. The study showed that despite implementing the Annual Performance Management System for more than two decades, the performance of the public service in Zambia has raised serious concerns from stakeholders including citizens. Signifying that, despite being an important aspect of human resource management, it is failing to deliver the expected result in the Zambian public service.

2.2 Performance Evaluation Methods

Performance evaluation methods are the systems and processes through which an appraisal is carried out in an organization. The methods include determining the types of data collected and evaluated in the appraisal, the forms and frequencies of communication that take place between supervisors and their employees, and the various types of evaluation tools used to measure performance (Grote, 2011). It is therefore important to understand the evaluation methods used because they can influence the usefulness of the appraisal system in an organization and the perceived or actual benefits gained from its use.

360-degree feedback, also known as ‘multirater feedback’, is the most comprehensive appraisal where feedback about the employees’ performance comes from a broad spectrum of contributors (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). These contributors encompass evaluations from supervisors, colleagues, subordinates & even self-assessments. In a study conducted by Kadim, Rafiq & Afzal in 2023, it was revealed that there is a positive correlation between 360-degree leadership performance appraisal and organizational outcomes. Sahoo and Mishra (2012) added that systems of 360-degree appraisal are perceived by employees as more accurate and more reflective of their performance. They are thus considered it as effective in providing comprehensive information.

Additionally, Murphy & Cleveland (1995) highlighted the use of Management by objectives (MBO) to define and measure job performance. They stated that it is often used with managerial and executive performance. There is a particular importance placed on the contribution of the employee to the organization’s goals and results. In this approach, the focus of the appraisal changes from the personal attributes of the employee to performance on the job. It is a results-oriented rating technique that is dependent on goal setting to create objectives for the employee. Here, the supervisor and the subordinate work together to define the goals and performance measurements for the subordinate. They decide what needs to be achieved and how the achievements will be measured.

2.3 Objectives of Performance Appraisal Systems

Performance appraisal is widely used by organizations for a variety of activities through which organizations seek to assess employees and develop their competencies, improve performance, and allocate rewards. Grote (2002) identified several objectives of performance appraisals. He highlighted that it serves as a vital tool for facilitating communication between management and employees. This communication fosters a mutual understanding of performance expectations, job requirements, and individual contributions within the organization. By engaging in a two-way dialogue, supervisors and employees can address existing performance issues and collaboratively develop strategies for improvement.

Another significant objective of performance appraisal is to inform decisions regarding salary increases and promotions. According to Grote (2002), the appraisal process offers a structured framework for evaluating an employee's contributions and determining appropriate compensation adjustments based on merit and achievement. Similarly, performance appraisal serves as a basis for identifying individuals with the potential for career advancement and promotion. This is true, compared with findings from a study conducted by Wamundila (2020) where the study concluded that managers were able to gauge teachers who deserved awards and were able to improve the quality of education through performance appraisals. This shows that when organizations assess an employee's strengths and weaknesses, they can make informed decisions about promoting individuals to higher positions where their skills and capabilities are best utilized. Moreover, these performance-based pay adjustments and rewards incentivize employees to excel in their roles and contribute to organizational success.

Performance appraisal data is also instrumental in identifying training and development needs within the organization. By analyzing individual performance and identifying areas for improvement, organizations can tailor training programs to address specific skill gaps and enhance employee competencies. This proactive approach to employee development not only improves individual performance but also contributes to the overall effectiveness of the organization.

Grote (2002) added that performance appraisal plays a significant role in human resource planning and succession planning. By evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of employees, organizations can identify potential leaders and develop strategies for grooming talent to fill key leadership positions in the future. This strategic approach ensures continuity in leadership and helps organizations adapt to changing workforce dynamics. Furthermore, performance

appraisal data guide decisions regarding promotion, demotion, termination, layoff, and transfer, ensuring that organizational resources are allocated effectively and in alignment with strategic objectives.

Lastly, Grote (2002) added that performance appraisal serves as a tool for assessing employee potential and guiding career planning and development initiatives. By providing insights into an employee's strengths, weaknesses, and career aspirations, performance appraisal facilitates meaningful discussions between managers and employees about career goals and development opportunities. This initiative-taking approach to career planning enhances employee engagement and retention while fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within the organization.

2.4 Employee Perceptions Toward Performance Appraisal Systems

The way employees view performance appraisal has a critical role in the way they reason, construe situations, and perform tasks. It also influences their life attitudes and feelings in organizations. According to Mulins (2010), attitude towards something forms the basis of organizational behavior. Therefore, it is important that academic staff are aware of what is expected of them on the job. Supervisors must be able to determine which performance appraisal tools may cause organizational problems and result in negative attitude.

Performance appraisal systems have been the focus of several management studies. However, there is limited research on the experiences and views of academic staff on the appraisal systems, particularly on justice and perceived impact on academic staff performance in private universities in Zambia. In a study of perceptions of employees in some selected public and private organizations in Lagos Nigeria, Ikemefuna & Chidi (2012) reported that there was substantial agreement that a performance appraisal is an essential tool for organizational development and that it serves as a basis for managing employee performance.

They also reported that performance appraisal was used for identifying training and development needs. The study concluded that many workers perceived performance appraisal negatively, because of inherent errors in the appraisal process such as the halo-effect, favoritism, and stereotyping. However, the researchers recommended that more attention should be paid to issues dealing with appraisal politics and pursuance of fairness and transparency and that all efforts should be made to adopt open reporting systems to have a motivational effect on employees.

Boachie-Menash & Seidu (2012) also investigated perceptions about rater's bias and errors in a polytechnic in Ghana. Data was collected from a sample of 140 academic and administrative employees using a semi-structured interview. This study reported that there was a negative perception held by the two categories of employees about performance appraisal. The employees held that the performance appraisal system was affected by subjectivity, influenced by some significant errors, the most common of which were the similarity and halo effect biases. The study reported that there was little employee participation in formulating criteria, performance standards and objectives for the appraisal. The study also reported that employees were not well versed about the time, process, and purpose of performance appraisal.

However, despite the negative attitude that employees had on performance appraisal, most of the employees were committed and willing to submit to the process. Concerning individual career development, most employees viewed the PAS as significant to both their personal career goals as well as the objectives of the polytechnic. The results of this study suggest that the subjectivity, rater errors and biases have significant implication on overall organizational performance and that there is need to provide necessary resources to make performance appraisal effective and efficient in meeting the objectives of performance appraisal. Further, the report suggests that subjectivity, rater errors and biases can have an influence on employee perception on performance appraisal. However, the study was done in a distinct set up from the educational sector while this study was done in private universities.

In another study conducted by Nyeleti et al. (2022) on how head teachers and teachers view APAS in selected primary schools in Lusaka, it was revealed that teachers lacked proper understanding of Annual performance appraisal systems which so led to the development of negative perceptions and attitudes towards the system. The study revealed that many teachers did not see the importance of APAS in their career because the system was perceived as an academic exercise without tangible results. It was further revealed that most teachers were not motivated with appraisal systems echoing findings from a study done by Kamfwa in 2016. Head teachers were not providing proper guidance and initiating programs to build capacity in teachers. From this study it can be noted that the head teachers responsible for appraising teachers lacked necessary skills of evaluating teachers thus jeopardizing the appraisal process. It can also be noted that despite public schools having a standard of performance appraisal, the processes are only conducted for formality and are not used for making human resource decisions. However, the study focused on academic staff in primary schools while this study endeavored to focus on academic staff in selected private universities in Lusaka. These findings

by Nyeleti also echo those found by Tembo (2018) where it was revealed that forty-three percent (43%) of the public service employees sampled perceived that APAS as ineffective while thirty-three percent (33%) viewed the performance management system as efficient.

In a study conducted by Onyango (2013) in Kenya, on factors affecting employee perception of performance appraisal process, it was established that some of the factors that affected employees' perception of the performance appraisal process was that feedback during the appraisal process was not accurate. The study also established that performance appraisals were only periodically and that they were not used as a way of motivating staff. Other factors included favoritism and nepotism by raters, setting of unrealistic targets, and lack of rewards for satisfactory performance, among others. The study recommended that employees be involved in designing the rating and measurement scales to ensure development of dependable, valid, fair, and useful performance standards.

Dasayanaka, Abeykoon, Ranaweera & Koswatte, (2021) also conducted a study on the impact of the performance appraisal on job satisfaction in higher education institutions. It was revealed that most of the academic staff had a pessimistic view of the effectiveness of the present performance appraisal systems used in their universities. From the results, it showed that staff were dissatisfied with the links between the promotions, salary increments, rewards, and developmental needs with their performance because it was believed that performance appraisal was highly biased towards the research performance and little attention was paid to teaching performance. However, most of them were happy with the level of guidance and behavior of the appraiser and that the feedback received via the performance appraisal was good for them to identify the required personal improvements. From the study, it can be noted that several factors such as the environment, limited academic freedom, poor human resources, and the conducting of PA by the same appraiser for an extended period led to the dissatisfaction of academic staff in the PA used.

On the contrary, a study conducted to examine perceptions of public servants in Malaysia towards fairness in appraisal found that perceived fairness of performance appraisal had a significant impact on the employees' satisfaction of performance evaluation (Salleh, Amin, Muda & Halim, 2013). These findings, according to Salleh et.al show that performance appraisal is a valuable tool for influencing attitudes towards institutional commitment where employees are satisfied with the appraisal system

From the above literature on the attitude that employees have towards performance appraisal, it can therefore be deduced that employees' views on PAS depend on several factors. Employees are likely to be involved in and supportive of a given PAS if they view the process as a useful source of feedback that helps to improve their performance. Employees can also embrace it if it contributes to their prospects for promotion, salary increase and development. Without employee involvement, the performance appraisal process could become unproductive. Therefore, performance appraisal is necessary for effective assessment and management of academic staff performance in private universities in Zambia. As such, this research also endeavored to find out how academic staff view Performance appraisal systems used in their respective Universities.

2.5 Benefits of Performance Appraisal on Academic Staff Performance

As previously stated, performance appraisal is a process that identifies and communicates how employees conduct their jobs while also helping to develop a strategy for streamlining that process. The purpose of performance reviews is to provide updates on employee performance, identify areas that need training, and develop plans for employee growth. Typically, the performance appraisal system is a crucial part for increasing employee motivation.

The performance appraisal system is an initiative that searches for better, more precise, and more affordable ways to assess work performance and employee motivation. According to Deepa, Palaniswamy, and Kuppusamy (2014), performance appraisal is often regarded as one of the most important human resource management functions. Pointing out that an effective performance appraisal and management system is a key part of an organization's human resource management effectiveness.

A study conducted by Wamundila (2020) on the role of performance appraisal in improving employee performance in secondary schools in Zambia explored what managers and supervisors in selected secondary schools benefited from conducting employee performance appraisal. The study concluded that managers were able to gauge teachers who deserved awards and were able to improve the quality of education through Performance Appraisals. In the same vein, teachers also obtained benefits which motivated them to work hard to be promoted. The study used a mixed method approached and concluded that performance appraisal improves the work output of workers and the objective of an organization. Wamundila's study settled for a sample of one hundred (100) employees within the Ministry

of Education whereas this study settled for thirty (30) academic staff in five selected private universities in Lusaka.

2.6 Challenges faced by Supervisors during Performance Appraisals

Ahmad and Bujang (2013) reported that performance appraisals are often retrospective. A traditional appraisal is usually performed once or twice a year. There would be months between setting goals and reviewing them, and the objectives that are set at the beginning of the year are typically only dragged-out during appraisal time. Meaning, if private universities consist of many people, the process of performance appraisal becomes extremely hectic and difficult. It would take long hours to evaluate the entire department. However, while performance appraisals provide the ideal opportunity for managers and employees to meet one-on-one, they are unfortunately susceptible to biased ratings. Some managers, for example, are either liberal or strict in their evaluation of employees. Managers may also fall victim to the Recent performance effect, in which they only recall employees' most recent actions at the time of the appraisal and award points based on recent favorable or unfavorable events rather than an entire year's worth of activities.

Liu and Dong (2012) agreed that there is a tendency to focus on weaknesses rather than strengths, which leads to conflicts between managers and employees as well as a negative work environment. What organizations do not recognize is that skill gaps must be addressed quickly, or the bottom line will suffer, resulting in bias, stereotyping, halo error, distributional errors and attribution error which are all common problems that arise during the performance appraisal process.

According to Flaniken (2009), bias is simply a personality-based tendency to favor or oppose something. Bias in performance evaluation can be toward or against an individual employee. However, all humans have biases, but supervisors cannot afford to let their biases influence their evaluation of subordinates in the firm. This is simple to say but difficult to do. However, biases make the evaluation process subjective rather than objective, and they certainly create the possibility of inconsistent effects on diverse groups of employees. To overcome the bias issue, the appraiser must remain objective and not allow their feelings of liking or disliking the individual to influence their assessment.

Stereotyping is also another bias where supervisors mentally categorize a person into an affinity group, followed by identification of the person as having the same assumed characteristics as

the group. Even though stereotyping is always assumed to be negative, there are numerous instances of positive stereotyping. However, whether the stereotype is positive or negative, assuming membership in a group rather than explicitly identifying the characteristics of the individual increases the possibility of significant error in evaluations. According to Dangol (2021), supervisors can avoid stereotyping by getting to know each employee as an individual and objectively evaluating individual employees based on their actual performance.

This error also occurs when raters consider subordinates who are more like themselves to be better employees and subordinates who are different from themselves to be poorer employees. In that vein, people tend to feel more at ease with others who share their feelings, which can be reflected in the performance appraisal process. To avoid similarity errors, supervisors must embrace diversity and objectively evaluate individual employees based on their actual performance, even if they differ from them and do not do things in the same way (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013).

In the view of Abrefa-Gyan (2010), some supervisors are lenient while others can be harsh when rating their subordinates. Supervisors may also be tempted to exhibit some forms of biases based on a person's gender, religion, or nationality. In some circumstances, these raters may assign higher ratings to senior employees because of the relationship they have in common. Ofori & Atiogbe (2011) added on and stressed that leadership in higher learning institutions fail to implement performance appraisal systems and that they face several challenges including but not limited to inadequate funding, poor work culture among staff, lack of rewards and lack of clear performance appraisal systems which go a long way to affect the quality of performance appraisal.

In addition, a study conducted by Davis & Mensah (2020) on performance appraisal of employees in tertiary institutions in Winneba revealed that challenges such as fairness of evaluation decisions and lack of knowledge and skills of appraisers affect the conduct of performance appraisal. The study was quantitative and used questionnaires to collect data for the study and the responses were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. As compared to this study, the researcher collected data through open-ended questionnaires to understand how supervisors in selected private universities in Lusaka conduct appraisals and the challenges they face during the process.

2.7 Challenges faced by Academic Staff during Appraisals

During appraisals there might be risks of internal competition amongst employees. They compete for the job status, position, and pay. This could lead to backstabbing and a dysfunction of the department or a team, resulting in failure to achieve performance standards. According to findings from a study conducted by Prjati, Chack & Trivedi in 2018 on the emerging trends of PAS in Private Universities, it was revealed that performance appraisals also become a hindrance in the progress of employee's when the superiors overemphasise on the errors and mistakes of the employees and their achievements are overlooked.

As a result, employees feel that they are not given enough due for their hard work and their achievements. However, the study emphasized that performance management in private universities should be a process of constructive support, encouragement, and a celebration of the achievements. Whereas mistakes and errors should be subtly pointed out and solutions also should be provided to the employees.

2.8 Effect of Performance Appraisal Systems on Academic Staff Performance

Nyaoga, Magutu & Kipchumbu (2010) conducted a study on the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in Kabarak University, Kenya. The study revealed that performance appraisal is the only tangible metric way in which an organization can know the level of performance of its diverse employees. Although most employees were aware of the type of performance appraisal systems used in the University, such systems were not based on any serious formal purpose for which they were designed. The study revealed that the performance appraisal system used was not effective and could not measure employees' performance, hence making it difficult to achieve the intended human resource management objectives.

Additionally, Tembo (2018) in his study on the effectiveness of performance management system in Zambian public service revealed that eighty percent (80%) of the respondents indicated that they had been appraised during their tenure in the public service while twenty percent (20%) indicated not having been appraised since their first appointment, indicating that they were still serving on probation awaiting to be appraised or that there was no value attached to the performance management system in their ministry or department. The study also revealed that fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents had not received training in Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) while the other half had received training in APAS. However, respondents acclaimed that knowledge of the performance management system

being used in the public service was key for them to determine whether they feel the performance management system is effective or not.

Deepa, Palaniswamy & Kuppusamy (2014) added that supervisors are known to evaluate employee performance, but there are several consequences. Supervisors are not always available to conduct employee evaluations. Supervisors are often located in a different building or even a different city than the people they supervise. Virtual teams, internet-connected offices, telecommuting, and other factors cause supervisors to lose touch with their employees more often than in the past 20 or 30 years. There are other issues as well, such as personality conflicts or simply not getting along with some of their employees. This may result in a personal bias for or against specific employees. This may cause a personal bias for, or against, certain employees that may invalidate the appraisal process if it is significant enough.

2.9 Research Gap

While extensive research exists on performance appraisal within the Zambian corporate and public sectors, specifically focusing on the utility of appraisal systems and their impact on employee job satisfaction, there is still a notable knowledge gap in understanding how academic staff perceive performance appraisal systems in private universities in Zambia. This gap is particularly significant given the context of Zambia's private higher education sector, which includes fifty (50) institutions grappling with a rising demand for quality education and highly skilled academic staff. Despite the significant role of academic staff in driving institutional success and student outcomes, there is a scarcity of comprehensive research addressing how academic staff perceive performance appraisal systems within this sector. By focusing on selected private universities in Lusaka District, this study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the dynamics at play and shed light on potential areas for improvement. Addressing this research gap is not only central for advancing academic literature but also for offering valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and enhance the efficacy of performance appraisal systems within Zambia's private higher education sector.

2.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter looked at the historical background of performance appraisals in Zambia and other parts of the world, benefits of performance appraisals, perceptions of employees on performance appraisals, effects of performance appraisals on academic staff performance, and challenges that supervisors and academic staff face during appraisals. It was noted that much

of the literature suggested that performance appraisal is an unavoidable part of organizational life and when done properly plays a significant role in the institution's overall success. However, it showed that when done poorly, it can be detrimental to the institution and the performance of employees.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter presents the methodology of this study on the exploration of the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals used in selected private universities in Lusaka district. It will cover the research philosophy, research design, study population, sample size, sampling selection and techniques, data collection instruments and strategies, data sources, data analysis and interpretation and ethical considerations. These are addressed in the order they appear above. The study followed a qualitative methodology of data collection.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy serves as the foundational framework that guides the researcher's approach to knowledge development. Research philosophy is elucidated as a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). In this study, the interpretivism philosophy was chosen to explore the subjective nature of human experiences, particularly those of academic staff, regarding performance appraisals. This philosophy acknowledges that individuals construct their realities through their unique perspectives and interactions with the world. Alharahshel & Pius (2020) added that, different people in a society experience and understand the same objective reality in different ways and have individual reasons for their actions. By embracing interpretivism, the researcher aimed to understand the diverse perceptions, motivations, attitudes, and beliefs of academic staff towards performance appraisals.

Particularly, this study employed a qualitative method of data collection through open-ended questionnaires. Qualitative research methods according to (Punch, 2013) generally includes data in form of words rather than numbers. With this method, the researcher captured rich and detailed data, allowing for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of academic staff within the context of performance appraisals. By embracing the epistemological stance of interpretivism, the study prioritized understanding over objectivity, recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed and context dependent (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Likewise, from an ontological perspective, interpretivism recognizes the complexity and subjectivity inherent in human experiences, emphasizing the need to explore and interpret these experiences within their social and cultural contexts. Overall, the interpretivist research philosophy enabled

a holistic exploration of academic staff perceptions, shedding light on the intricacies of performance appraisals within private universities in Lusaka and offering valuable recommendations for improvement.

3.2 Research Design

A research design defines the type of study which is to be conducted to answer research questions and achieve objectives (Kumar, 2014). Given the interpretive stance adopted in this research and the nature of the research question. The study was guided by a descriptive research design which is a design used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Siedlecki, 2020). The justification for using a descriptive research design in this study lied in its suitability for exploring and describing the perceptions and experiences related to performance appraisals among academic staff in selected private universities in Lusaka District. According to Siedlecki (2020), descriptive research allows for the collection of rich, detailed data that can provide insights into the current state of performance appraisal processes, without manipulating variables or attempting to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the aim to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, a descriptive research design enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive information about the topic, identify patterns, and uncover key themes, making it an appropriate choice for this study on performance appraisals in selected private universities.

3.3 Target population

A sample of thirty (30) respondents was used. The respondents were selected from a population of academic staff members from five private universities in Lusaka district. Each university was represented by two supervisors and four academic staff. Therefore, the total sample size included ten (10) supervisors and twenty (20) lecturers.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique employed in this study was a non-probability sampling approach, primarily using non-randomized methods to draw the sample, often relying on judgments and accessibility. Specifically, the study incorporated convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Pasek, Krosnick & Fabrigar (2020) defined convenience sampling as the selection of participants based on their availability and accessibility, while Norat (2010) emphasized the deliberate selection of key informants under purposive sampling. Snowball sampling, also

known as Chain sampling, involves the initial identification of participants, who then aid in identifying additional study participants (Kogan, et al., 2011). These techniques collectively eased the selection of typical and representative cases from each of the five private universities under investigation.

The choice of convenience and snowball sampling techniques for selecting respondents from the five private universities was driven by several practical considerations. Primarily, these techniques allowed for the easy accessibility of respondents within the limited population of academic staff in private universities, especially part-time lecturers. Additionally, the use of these techniques ensured an efficient and cost-effective data collection process, enabling the researcher to adhere to the study's specified time limit and budgetary constraints.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

To address the research inquiries, a combination of primary and secondary data collection methodologies was utilized. Specifically, primary data was acquired through the administration of online open-ended questionnaires with supervisors and lecturers having different open-ended questions. Singh & Sagar (2021) suggested that an online questionnaire is more aggressive in terms of wide reach and digitized data in less time. This approach offered flexibility for both the researcher and the respondents, encompassing part-time and full-time lecturers, as well as supervisors. The dissemination of questionnaire links through established networks within the five private universities facilitated the identification and selection of suitable respondents. This method not only allowed participants to respond at their convenience but also minimized the researcher's data collection expenses.

As respondents completed the questionnaires, they were encouraged to share the questionnaire link with supervisors and lecturers from their respective institutions who had valuable insights on the topic. This snowballing effect led to an expanding pool of participants as each respondent contributed to the identification and selection of additional suitable respondents. The process continued until the researcher observed that new responses were no longer providing substantially new insights or information related to the research inquiries. At this point, data saturation was considered achieved and the online questionnaires were no longer accepting responses.

In parallel, the study integrated secondary data derived from a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including published textbooks, employee retention journals, and various human resource publications. This approach offered notable advantages, as it provided readily

available information at a relatively low cost. The utilization of secondary data not only expedited the research process but also facilitated a comprehensive analysis, allowing the researcher to access pertinent information efficiently and without significant challenges.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial phase in research that involves categorizing, ordering, and summarizing the collected data to derive meaningful insights (Vaisnoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). In this study, a thematic analysis approach was employed to systematically interpret the qualitative dataset. This method allowed the researcher to identify patterns and key themes within the responses.

The analysis process unfolded through several steps. Firstly, the researcher went through the qualitative dataset, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the context of the responses. Thereafter, codes were assigned to each respondent. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that summarized the essence of the data. Themes were developed by identifying connections and relationships among the initial codes. NVivo software was employed to enhance the efficiency and depth of the analysis. The researcher used this qualitative data analysis tool to manage, organize, and systematically explore the dataset. The researcher inquired into the dataset using NVivo, exploring relationships between codes, themes, and responses. This facilitated a better understanding of the details rooted in the qualitative data.

Throughout the analysis, a constant comparative approach was adopted, ensuring that emerging themes and insights were consistently compared against existing codes and themes. Thereafter, the themes were refined and finalized through the process of review and refinement. This involved revisiting the dataset, adjusting codes and themes as necessary, and ensuring that the analysis accurately reflected the richness of the qualitative responses. Finally, reports were generated by summarizing the findings. These reports included direct quotes from the analysis, providing a clear overview of the insights obtained from the data.

For easy identification of the respondents, different codes are assigned to the Supervisors and academic Staff. For instance, the code S1-Uni2 represents the first supervisor to respond from the second university, while the code AS3-Uni2 represents the third academic staff to respond from the second university, respectively.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

In this study, various strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the research methods and findings. Trustworthiness, as defined by Schmidt & Brown (2015), encompasses the quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of qualitative research findings, reflecting the degree of confidence readers have in the results. Lincoln and Guba (1989) introduce the concept of "dependability" in qualitative research, like "reliability" in quantitative research, emphasizing the stability of findings over time. To achieve dependability, documentation of all research processes and decisions was undertaken throughout the study, promoting transparency and reproducibility.

Additionally, methodological triangulation as described by Sim & Sharp (1998), was employed to further enhance dependability. This approach involved utilizing multiple data collection methods, such as open-ended questionnaires and secondary data sources, to corroborate findings and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. By triangulating data from different sources, the study aimed to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research findings, thereby fostering trustworthiness.

In qualitative research, validity, as described by Leininger (1985), pertains to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding about the nature of the phenomenon under study, encompassing its meaning, attributes, and characteristics. To establish credibility, which Lincoln & Guba (1985) define as the confidence in the truth of research findings, thorough methods were employed. Firstly, credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data, involving an analysis of responses from open-ended questionnaires. This process ensured a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the perspectives of academic staff.

To further enhance credibility, direct quotations from participants' responses were integrated into the findings, allowing their authentic responses to permeate the study. This approach ensured that the research findings accurately represented the participants' original data and viewpoints. Additionally, a subset of the findings was subjected to member checking, where five respondents who initially participated in the study were provided with the research findings. This process enabled them to review the interpretations and challenge any perceived inaccuracies or misinterpretations, contributing to the refinement and validation of the study findings.

Confirmability, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the degree to which the findings of a research study can be confirmed by other researchers. It ensures that the data and interpretations are not mere products of the researcher's imagination but are firmly rooted in the data collected. In this study, confirmability was maintained through reflexivity, a process where the researcher critically reflects on their personal biases and preconceptions before interpreting findings and drawing conclusions. Reflexivity, as defined by Morse, Barrett, Mayan & Spiers (2002), involves active engagement in self-reflection to acknowledge and address potential biases and predispositions brought to the qualitative study. By adopting reflexivity, the researcher set aside their own perceptions, preconceptions, and opinions of the study, thereby ensuring that interpretations were grounded solely in the experiences and perceptions of academic staff. This approach facilitated an objective and unbiased analysis of the data, aligning with the principles of confirmability.

Transferability, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), pertains to the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be applied to other contexts or settings with different participants. In this study, transferability was enhanced through purposive sampling methods, which ensured that participants were selected based on their relevance to the study. The study provided detailed and accurate descriptions of academic staff perceptions, offering rich insights into their experiences and viewpoints. Additionally, efforts were made to present a comprehensive portrayal of the data, allowing readers to contextualize the findings within their own organizational settings or similar contexts. This was achieved through analysis and categorization of information, facilitating the identification of predominant themes and patterns. By ensuring transparency and clarity in reporting, the study aimed to enhance the transferability of its findings to diverse educational settings. Furthermore, the coordination of methodological and analytical materials contributed to the coherence of the research process, reinforcing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's outcomes.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to a strict ethical protocol, commencing with the acquisition of a letter of consent from The University of Zambia and securing ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee. Ethics as defined by Resnick (2015), are norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. After receiving this information, individuals voluntarily agree to participate in the study, demonstrating their understanding of the information provided and their willingness to take part without coercion or undue influence.

According to Faden, Beauchamp & King (1986) informed consent is a process through which individuals are provided with relevant information about a research study, including its purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. Adhering to the principles of informed consent, prospective participants were provided with detailed information regarding the research's nature and objectives before indicating their willingness to take part. Given the academic nature of the study, voluntary participation was emphasized, with participants assured of the confidentiality of their identities.

Particularly in the online data collection process, consent was obtained through an electronic signature by selecting the 'I agree' option to participate in the study and closing the browser if they did not wish to participate in the study, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines. Khairat et al. (2018) suggested that online consent improves research workflows by reducing the physical burden of the collection of hardcopy-signed consent data thus minimizing errors associated with archiving and storing paper-consent forms. Throughout the process, clear and transparent communication was upheld to ensure participants fully grasped the study's purpose, potential implications for the profession, and the anticipated duration of their involvement. To further safeguard participants' privacy and anonymity, no email addresses were collected.

Strict measures were implemented to uphold privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality throughout the entire research process, encompassing data coding, analysis, and reporting. The researcher assigned numerical codes to individual transcripts, identifying supervisors and academic staff with 'S' and 'AS,' respectively and differentiating between the five private universities with 'Uni1' to 'Uni5.' For instance, the code 'S2Uni5' signifies the transcript of the second supervisor to respond to the questionnaire from the fifth university. Additionally, for strict adherence to privacy, the names of the five private universities were also kept anonymous.

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter gave an outline of the overall research methodology that was employed in the study. The research was qualitative and the interpretivism philosophy was adopted. In view of that, a descriptive research design was used as it involved asking respondents for information using online open-ended questionnaires. The chapter also highlighted the sample size of the study which was thirty in total from all five private universities. Thereafter, the data that was collected was analysed thematically. To help the researcher get answers to the problem at hand, the sampling techniques that were used were convenience and snowball sampling. With this

kind of methodology, the research problem was tackled, and answers were found. The following chapter will then present the findings of the study according to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisal in selected private universities in Lusaka District. The findings are presented according to the three research questions namely, 1) What performance appraisal systems do select private universities in Lusaka District use? 2) What is the data collected from performance appraisal systems used for? 3) What are the perceptions of academic staff on Performance appraisal Systems?

4.0.1 What Performance Appraisal Systems Do Selected Private Universities in Lusaka District use?

In response to research question one, the exploration brought to light the existence of diverse performance appraisal systems implemented across selected private universities in Lusaka for assessing academic staff performance. These systems incorporate a range of methods, including participatory evaluations and self-assessment. Understanding the types of appraisal systems in place allowed for a comprehensive analysis of their effectiveness, fairness, and influence on academic staff performance. It also provided insights into variations and commonalities among the appraisal systems utilized, which informed recommendations for improvement or refinement.

4.0.2 Participatory Method

Notably, the prevalent method observed among the chosen private universities was the use of annual face to face performance evaluations, highlighting its widespread adoption. This method emphasizes the crucial role of direct engagement and communication in the evaluation process. In response to queries about how the appraisal process is conducted and which appraisal system was less effective, respondent S4-Uni3 articulated,

The participatory one (face to face) where the one being appraised is party to the decision being made is effective. The non-participatory could be said to be less effective because ratings are made unilaterally by the supervisor.

Additionally, supervisors were asked how they ensure that the performance appraisal process is fair, unbiased, and transparent. In response, S4-Uni3 expressed that,

It is usually a dialogue between the supervisor and staff. We let those being supervised have a say on whatever rating is being given to them and justify why they should be given anything higher than the proposed one. Besides, they have a right to appeal to the next line of supervision if they feel the appraisal is not just.

Whereas respondent S7-Uni4 added that,

The performance is not only based on classroom work but also activities outside the classroom such as good exemplary conduct and relatability towards clients, fellow staff, and students as well.

Moreover, the findings showed that most supervisors employ identical appraisal tools to assess the performance of both part-time and full-time lecturers within private universities. This strategy is rooted in the acknowledgment that both categories of lecturers make fair contributions to the attainment of departmental goals and objectives. When supervisors were asked if they evaluate both part-time and full-time lecturers using the same appraisal tool, respondent S3-Uni5 stated that, *"Yes, everyone has the ability to contribute to the growth and development of the institution; therefore, we use the same measure of evaluation."*

Further, supervisors were asked what areas of performance they evaluate in academic staff, respondent S4-Uni3 articulated that, *"we evaluate their methods of teaching, for instance if they elicit student participation and promptness in giving feedback after assessments."* Whereas respondent S7-Uni4 stated that, *"we evaluate their time management skills and teaching skills. We also evaluate the performance of their learners from the previous semester."*

4.0.3 Self-Assessment

The second theme that emerged was self-assessment. The study also revealed that other supervisors employ self-assessment methods to evaluate academic staff performance, in that regard respondent S6-Uni1 articulated that,

We evaluate lecturers by giving them appraisal forms to evaluate their own performance against predetermined criteria, thereafter, we set a day to discuss the results with the lecturer. This method encourages self-reflection in the lecturers.

With respondent S5-Uni1 expressing that,

We actively engage lecturers in the evaluation process by encouraging their direct participation, we create a platform where they can openly discuss their strengths and areas for improvement as this ensures that the appraisal process is more inclusive and fairer.

The preceding responses echo the sentiments expressed by respondent AS6-Uni1 who provided insight into how the appraisal process is conducted with their supervisor. In their response they articulated that *‘I was given a form to evaluate myself and later discuss with my supervisor, this enabled me to prepare adequately and engage effectively in the appraisal process.’* Whereas respondent AS6-Uni1 added that *‘I will be given a form to assess myself then discuss the feedback with my Head of department.’* Following that, supervisors were asked what the data collected from appraisals is used for. Different themes emerged from the analysis, and these will be discussed in the next research question.

4.1 What is the Data collected from Performance Appraisal Systems used for?

The findings revealed that data obtained from performance appraisals serves diverse functions within private universities. Responses to this research question provided insights into the significance and effectiveness of the appraisal process.

4.1.1 Contract Renewal and Promotion

When asked what the data collected from performance appraisals is used for, the first theme that emerged was contract renewal and promotion. In that regard, respondent S4-Uni3 articulated that, *‘for full-time lecturers, it informs decision for promotion and for those on part-time, it serves as evidence whether to renew the contract or not.’* With respondent S1-Uni2 expressing that, *‘they are used to renew contracts for part-time lecturers and used to identify and develop training needs for the lecturers based on their weaknesses.’*

4.1.2 Provision of Post-Appraisal Development Opportunities

This study also revealed that performance appraisal feedback is used to identify training needs and career development opportunities for academic staff. In that regard, respondent S7-Uni4 expressed that, *‘it is primarily used to pinpoint specific training needs and areas of improvement for academic staff. It is also used for allocating workload and resources efficiently.’* Whereas, respondent S10-Uni4 expressed that, *‘it enables a fairer distribution of tasks and responsibilities that align with their respective competencies and expertise.’*

Following that, supervisors were asked if they provide academic staff with any support or development opportunities to help them improve their performance following appraisals. In response, respondent S4-Uni3 stated that, “*we help organize or facilitate in-house training aimed at realigning teaching with new innovations and facilitate further training for full-time staff.*”

Additionally, S2-Uni4 expressed that, “*they are free to go back to further their studies if necessary.*” However, when academic staff were asked if they are provided with any development opportunities following appraisals, respondent AS7-Uni3 stated that, “*I was not given any training following the appraisal.*” Whereas, respondent AS17-Uni5 stated, “*the university has helped to set aside time for lecturers to engage in continuing professional growth activities.*”

These findings reveal that performance appraisals serve various purposes such as identifying training needs, making decisions on promotions or contract renewals for both part-time and full-time lecturers. Notably, these appraisal processes are designed to be participatory and transparent by allowing input from the staff being appraised. After substantial information was gathered on this research question, academic staff were asked how they perceive appraisals based on how the process is conducted, the consistency of appraisals, the feedback received and the motivational component. This will be discussed in the next research question.

4.2 What are the Perceptions of Academic Staff on Performance Appraisal Systems?

In response to the research question, the findings offered a comprehensive insight into the diverse perceptions surrounding performance appraisals among the academic staff. A variety of viewpoints appeared, revealing that while some academic staff acknowledge the significance of performance appraisals in enhancing their professional growth, most perceive them as demotivating primarily due to the absence of tangible rewards, lack of feedback and the inconsistencies in the process.

4.2.1 Unfair Appraisal Processes

When probed about the fairness and impartiality of the appraisal process, a division in perspectives was discovered and the prevalent theme that emerged was unfair appraisal processes. Academic staff were asked whether the appraisal is fair or not to gauge their perception of the appraisal process's objectivity, transparency, and equity. While a few respondents considered the process to be fair and transparent, citing the consistency of

feedback and the interactive nature of the process, others expressed concerns about the absence of rewards and recognition post-appraisal, thus influencing their perception of its fairness. For example, one respondent AS7-Uni3 stated that, *“it is a sheer waste of time, if an organization cannot motivate its employees after subjecting them to such a lengthy process.”*

With AS13-Uni5 expressing that, *“it is not fair. No rewards are given after appraisals regardless of how good you perform.”* Whereas respondent AS8-Uni3 stated that, *“it depends on who is assessing but I find it irrelevant, especially since it is not objective.”*

4.2.2 Fair Appraisal Processes

The second theme that emerged was fair appraisal processes. Other respondents viewed the appraisal process as fair. In that vein, respondent AS17-Uni5 articulated that, *“it is fair, we are allowed to rate ourselves before meeting with our supervisors. This, allows’ for self-scrutiny and improves our view of the work we put in.”* With respondent AS11-Uni5 saying that, *“It is fair and very transparent, my strengths and weaknesses are discussed, and I am given an opportunity to criticize or praise the entire process.”* Respondent AS5-Uni1 added that, *“it is fair and unbiased because there was no unnecessary bureaucracy during the entire process, and everyone was given the same treatment.”*

4.2.3 Linking Performance Appraisals to Rewards and Recognition

Further, when respondents were asked whether performance appraisals used in their universities, should be linked to rewards and recognitions, maintained as they are, improved or abolished. The findings showed that most academic staff would like performance appraisals to be linked to rewards and recognition. Some of the reasons that were given by the respondents were that *“they should be linked to rewards and recognition as these are good motivators for good performance.”* (AS11-Uni5, 2023). Whereas respondent AS5-uni2 added that, *“they should be linked to rewards to foster motivation and further promote the achievement of organizational goals.”*

With respondent AS2-Uni2 adding that,

They should be linked to rewards and recognition because it would make employees work extra hard to get rewarded and recognized, ultimately that would result in the institution achieving its goals and objectives.

4.2.4 Inconsistent Appraisals

During this study, the researcher also tried to find out the tenure of work of academic staff in their respective organizations along with the number of appraisals they received. In that regard, the findings revealed varying patterns, for instance, some received numerous appraisals within a short period, while others had fewer despite a longer tenure. Some of the respondents worked for 3 years with one appraisal, 2 years with five appraisals, 5 years with ten appraisals, 4 years with one appraisal with another working for 4 years with no appraisal. This shows that there is a group with shorter tenures but multiple appraisals, suggesting a more frequent evaluation cycle or potentially faster career progression. While another group includes longer-tenured academic staff who received either a minimal number of appraisals or an unexpectedly high number, hinting at potential disparities in appraisal practices or variations in managerial approaches.

In view of the above, respondent AS2-Uni2 a part-time lecturer articulated that, “*the appraisal is not fairly done because it was only given once for the three years, I have held the post.*” With respondent AS11-Uni5 stating that, “*for the four years I have been a part-time lecturer, my performance has not been evaluated by our head of department.*”

From the above, the findings of the study show that private universities do conduct performance appraisals. However, there are inconsistencies and there are hardly any rewards or recognition given to academic staff to motivate them following appraisals. As such there is a unanimous call for a more direct correlation between appraisal outcomes and tangible rewards or recognition, with the consensus that such alignment would significantly amplify both motivation and performance among the academic staff coupled with consistent appraisals.

4.2.5 Dissatisfaction of Performance Appraisal Feedback

The study also revealed that the feedback from performance appraisals exerted a varied influence on the motivation of academic staff to perform better. While a subset of respondents reported concrete enhancements in their performance, credited to the feedback they received, others showed a limited impact. When queried if academic staff receive feedback following appraisals and if they are satisfied or demotivated, responses were diverse. Respondent AS13-Uni5 stated that “*I get feedback and I am demotivated.*” With respondent AS2-Uni2 articulating that, “*I only got feedback once and I was not satisfied.*” Respondent AS7-Uni3 added that, “*I received feedback but there has not been any promotion based on the feedback*”

echoing a response from AS8-Uni3 from the same university who stated that, *“I am satisfied except it has no relevance as it is not linked to rewards.”*

4.2.6 Feedback Satisfaction and Motivation

However, academic staff displaying improvement attributed their progress not only to positive feedback but also to the support and developmental opportunities provided by their respective institutions. They also considered the feedback as a catalyst for self-improvement, as it necessitated areas for development and refinement. When academic staff were asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the feedback they received, respondent AS12-Uni1 expressed that, *“I am strengthened depending on how the feedback comes.”* Whereas respondent AS17-Uni5 added that, *“I am motivated because it has helped me identify areas, I need to work on to progress in my career.”*

When asked what changes have been made following appraisal feedback, respondent AS2-Uni2 stated that *“I have started using pictorial illustrations and videos when lecturing.”* With respondent AS11-Uni5 stating that, *“I have improved on my method of delivery, attitude towards work as well as time management.”* Additionally respondent AS17-Uni5 stated that, *“It has helped me to identify areas I need to work on especially those that help with career growth.”* On the contrary, one respondent explained that despite being given feedback, they have been self-motivated. In that regard, respondent AS7-Uni3 expressed that, *“I am still performing at a high level. I am a self-motivated employee.”*

4.2.7 Skepticism of Performance Appraisal Feedback and Self-Perceived Contributions

A sense of skepticism appeared among certain respondents on the accuracy of the feedback they received, suggesting a potential disparity between their self-perceived contributions and the appraisal evaluations. When asked if the results from the appraisals accurately reflect their performance in the organization, respondent AS3-Uni2 stated that *“If there are no irregularities, I feel it can.”* With respondent AS8-Uni3 articulating that *“Not really, I feel I contribute more than the four or five parameters captured on the performance appraisal.”* Whereas respondent AS16-Uni4 added that, *“there is much more to my performance than what is reflected in the appraisal.”*

Academic staff also highlighted the absence of prior training in the appraisal process, leading to them viewing the entire process as unjust and lacking professionalism. One respondent that

received prior training to the appraisal, stated that, *“I was given a form to evaluate myself and later discuss with my supervisor, this enabled me to prepare adequately and engage effectively in the appraisal process.”* (AS6-Uni1, 2023).

Interestingly, the qualifications of supervisors did not appear to significantly influence the academic staff's perceptions on the relevance of the performance appraisal process. While some respondents considered supervisor qualifications as not significant, two respondents considered it a significant factor in shaping their perception of the appraisal process. In that regard, respondent AS12-Uni1 articulated that, *“no one must occupy an office for the job position they do not qualify.”* Whereas respondent AS3-Uni2 said that *“He must have better because there is a factor of confidence that I feel usually comes when it comes to understanding what the job is about.”*

This chapter presented the findings of the study according to the research questions which included assessing performance appraisals used in selected private universities in Lusaka district, the use of data collected from appraisals and the perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals. The findings emphasize the complex nature of performance appraisals and highlight the importance of addressing issues related to fairness, consistency, rewards and recognition and the provision of constructive feedback to enhance academic staff motivation and improve performance. The next chapter will discuss the findings according to the research objectives.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the research findings in relation to the literature review, theoretical frameworks, and overall aims of the study. The findings will be discussed according to the three objectives namely 1) Types of performance appraisals used in selected private universities in Lusaka district 2) Use of data collected from appraisal and 3) Perceptions of academic staff on performance appraisals.

5.1 Types of Appraisals used in Evaluating Academic staff Performance

The exploration of academic staff perceptions on performance appraisals used within selected private universities in Lusaka revealed a diverse array of assessment methods employed to evaluate academic staff. These methods encompass participatory performance evaluations and self-assessment. However, Supervisors did not exactly specify the types of performance appraisals used in their respective institutions but rather mentioned when and how they are conducted, signifying a lack of understanding of the diverse types of PAS. However, when academic staff were explained to on the different types of appraisals and asked to identify the most favorable performance appraisal system, most respondents favored the 360-degree feedback system, advocating for the comprehensive collection of performance related data from multiple sources including students, peers, supervisors, and the lecturers themselves with only two respondents opting for the Management by Objectives (MBO) approach, suggesting a preference for a more inclusive and multi-faceted assessment process. Aligning with findings from a study done by Kadim, Rafiq & Afzal in 2023, where it was revealed that there is a positive correlation between the 360-degree performance appraisal and positive organizational outcomes.

Additionally, the study revealed the significant role of face-to-face interactions in conducting these appraisals, emphasizing the importance of direct engagement and communication in the evaluation process as being considered crucial for its efficacy. In contrast, the study conducted by Boachie-Menash & Seidu (2012) in a polytechnic in Ghana revealed that there was minimal employee participation during the appraisal process. These contrasting findings highlight distinct perspectives on the involvement of employees in the appraisal process. In this study, active participation of the appraised individuals was viewed favorably and considered essential

for an effective appraisal. On the contrary, the polytechnic study revealed a lack of employee involvement, leading to negative perceptions due to biases and errors within the appraisal system.

Another interesting finding was the use of uniform appraisal tools by supervisors to evaluate both part-time and full-time lecturers. This approach stemmed from the recognition that both categories contribute significantly to the achievement of departmental goals. This finding reflects a commitment to fairness and equality in the evaluation process. It aligns with the expectancy theory, suggesting that academic staff are more motivated when they perceive fairness and equity in how their efforts are assessed (Vroom, 1964). By employing uniform appraisal criteria, supervisors communicate clear expectations and standards to all lecturers, irrespective of their employment status, fostering transparency and enhancing motivation. This approach not only ensures consistency but also cultivates a sense of inclusivity, reinforcing the belief that diligent work will be duly recognized and rewarded. Hence, the finding resonates with the core tenets of the expectancy theory, emphasizing the pivotal role of perceived fairness in driving employee performance. Additionally, this fair evaluation method received affirmation by supervisors, emphasizing the belief that all lecturers possess the potential to contribute meaningfully to the institution's growth and development.

5.2 Use of Data collected from Performance Appraisals

The findings from the study highlight the diverse role of performance appraisals within private universities. Primarily, supervisors emphasize their significance in identifying the individual strengths and weaknesses of academic staff, determining promotions for full-time academic staff and as evidence guiding decisions on contract renewals for part-time academic staff. Additionally, the findings highlighted that it serves as a tool to identify specific training needs, ensuring that academic staff can enhance their skills and capabilities, thus improving overall performance. These insights align closely with findings from a study conducted by Wamundila (2020) that examined the impact of performance appraisals on employee performance in Zambian secondary schools. The study affirmed that effective appraisals enabled managers to identify deserving educators for awards and significantly contributed to enhancing the quality of education through a structured appraisal system.

According to the two-factor theory, this implies that the use of performance appraisals to identify strengths and weaknesses, determine promotions, guide contract renewals, and identify training needs can be seen as hygiene factors which are necessary for maintaining fairness and

transparency within the organization and addressing basic academic staff needs. Performance appraisals can also be seen as motivators as they are used to determine promotions that can drive academic staff to excel and contribute to their overall job satisfaction and motivation.

Additionally, responses to approaches to support academic staff development following appraisals varied. Some highlighted providing in-house training sessions aimed at aligning teaching methodologies with innovative practices and providing opportunities for further education, while others expressed that academic staff are free to further their studies if necessary. This implies that there is a diverse range of preferences among supervisors regarding the types of support they desire for their academic staff professional development following performance appraisals. Overall, this highlights the importance of offering a variety of development opportunities and support mechanisms to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of academic staff, thereby promoting their continuous learning and growth.

However, the findings highlight a significant underutilization of the data collected from performance appraisals. This observation aligns with a study conducted by Nyeleti et al. (2022), which similarly revealed that Annual Performance Appraisal Systems (APAS) were often perceived merely as formalities rather than valuable developmental tools. Yet, the data obtained from these appraisals holds substantial potential beyond mere assessment. For instance, it can serve as a foundation for other important human resource decisions, including succession planning, where supervisors can pinpoint high-potential academic staff for future leadership roles. Moreover, using this data can facilitate the rewarding and recognition of exemplary academic staff performance. Enhancing the use of performance appraisal data can significantly enhance both individual and organizational outcomes within academic settings.

5.3 Academic Staff Perceptions on Performance Appraisal

The study revealed a variety of perceptions among academic staff on the efficacy of performance appraisals. While many participants acknowledged the significance of the process in easing performance improvement, a subset of lecturers perceived the appraisal system as pointless citing inconsistencies of the appraisal, lack of feedback, and the absence of a direct link to rewards and recognition. These observations echoed findings from a 2022 study by Nyeleti on the Perceptions of Headteachers and Teachers regarding the Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) in selected primary schools in Lusaka District, where it was revealed that teachers viewed the appraisal system as pointless and regarded it as an academic exercise only, rather than a developmental system. Suggesting a broader pattern in the perception of

appraisal systems among educational institutions in the region. It can thus be deduced that most academic staff view the appraisal process as insignificant due to lack of understanding of its importance, lack of post-appraisal rewards and lack of prior training given to them by the supervisors.

From the goal-setting theory perspective, the effectiveness of performance appraisals in motivating academic staff depends on how well-defined and achievable the goals set during the appraisal process are perceived to be. The findings suggest that for performance appraisals to be effective in motivating academic staff, it is fundamental for supervisors to clearly set goals that are clearly defined, attainable, and linked to meaningful rewards and recognition. Additionally, providing adequate training and support to academic staff to help them understand the importance of the appraisal process and how it contributes to their professional development is essential for enhancing their motivation and engagement (Locke & Latham, 2006).

Significantly, both this study and the research conducted by Dasayanaka et al. (2021) on the impact of performance appraisals in higher education institutions reveal a similar trend concerning the perceptions of academic staff. In both investigations, a prevailing sentiment that emerged among academic staff was a skepticism on the effectiveness of existing performance appraisal systems within their respective universities. This skepticism stems from a perceived lack of alignment between promotions, salary increments, rewards, and developmental opportunities with their performance evaluations. According to the expectancy theory, this implies that academic staff's motivation and effort are influenced by their expectations regarding the outcomes of performance appraisals. When academic staff do not perceive a clear link between their performance and the outcomes such as promotions, salary increments, rewards, and developmental opportunities, their motivation to exert effort in the performance appraisal process and their overall job performance may diminish. This highlights the importance of ensuring transparency, fairness, and consistency in performance appraisal systems to align outcomes with expectations and motivate academic staff to perform at their best.

The study also revealed skepticism among respondents on the accuracy of feedback in capturing the complexity of their roles. This skepticism raised doubts about whether the appraisal results truly reflected overall performance within the organization. Similarly, Nyeleti's study revealed that head teachers lacked the necessary skills to effectively evaluate

teachers, hence compromising the credibility of the appraisal process. However, both studies highlight the changes implemented by respondents following appraisal feedback, such as adopting new teaching methods and identifying areas for career growth.

However, while some respondents in this study found satisfaction and motivation in feedback as a means for self-improvement, others expressed dissatisfaction due to infrequent cycles and the absence of associated rewards. These sentiments echo findings from a study conducted by Dasayanaka et al. (2021), which revealed that many academic staff held a pessimistic view of the effectiveness of the current performance appraisal systems used in their universities. The results highlighted staff dissatisfaction with the lack of clear links between promotions, salary increments, rewards, and appraisals. Drawing on Herzberg's two-factor theory, the absence of feedback and rewards may lead to dissatisfaction and that their presence alone may not necessarily motivate staff. Instead, factors such as meaningful work, opportunities for growth, and recognition for achievements are important for fostering job satisfaction and motivation. Therefore, the study recommends that performance appraisal systems should not only address hygiene factors like feedback provision but also incorporate motivators such as career development opportunities and recognition programs to effectively enhance academic staff motivation and performance. This recommendation is grounded in the theoretical understanding provided by Herzberg's two-factor theory, which emphasizes the importance (Herzberg, 1959).

In this study, another notable disclosure is that more than half of the respondents reported a lack of prior training in performance appraisal procedures. This finding suggests a significant gap in understanding among academic staff on the evaluation process, its significance, and their expected roles, leading them to perceive it as a mere waste of time. This observation aligns with findings from a study conducted by Nyeleti et al. (2022), which highlighted how the absence of capacity-building initiatives for teachers influenced their perceptions of performance appraisal. However, the goal-setting theory offers valuable insights, emphasizing the important role of setting up clear objectives in enhancing appraisal success rates.

According to the theory, success hinges on several key elements, including the explicit clarity of goals, a shared commitment to achieving them between supervisors and academic staff, and the consistent provision of prompt feedback. Contrary to these principles, the findings of this study show a lack of prior appraisal training for academic staff, which is essential for effectively communicating goals, appraisal processes, and the overall importance of

conducting appraisals. This emphasizes the need for comprehensive training initiatives to empower academic staff with the necessary knowledge and understanding of the performance appraisal process.

Additionally, it was revealed that the qualifications of supervisors do not affect how academic staff perceive the appraisal process. As opposed to a study conducted by Davis & Mensah (2020) on performance appraisal of employees in tertiary institutions in Winneba, where it was revealed that challenges such as lack of knowledge and skills of appraisers affects the conduct of performance appraisal. However, one respondent in this study stated that there is a factor of confidence that they feel usually comes when it comes to understanding what the job is about.

The findings further revealed diverse patterns in the frequency of performance appraisals among academic staff, which correlated with their tenure within the organization. While some experienced multiple appraisals within a short timeframe, others, despite longer tenures, received fewer or no appraisals at all. This discrepancy raises pertinent questions about the organizational consistency in conducting performance evaluations. Such disparities highlight potential inconsistencies in the implementation of appraisal processes. These findings resonate with those of a study conducted by ZAPUASA in 2021, which reported that only 25% of academic staff members in private universities underwent a formal performance appraisal process that provided comprehensive feedback. This alignment highlights the systemic challenges in ensuring fair and consistent performance evaluation practices within private university settings. It might be interesting to analyze why some academic staff had more frequent appraisals or why others did not receive any during their tenure. This could involve investigating organizational policies, managerial practices, or academic performance trends to understand the disparities better.

Additionally, findings from the current study mirror those observed by Nyeleti et al. (2022) in terms of the varied impact and misconceptions surrounding performance appraisal systems among academic staff. Both studies highlight a lack of proper understanding of these systems, leading to negative perceptions and attitudes. Nyeleti's study revealed that many teachers viewed Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) as an academic exercise without tangible results, resonating with a respondent in this study who expressed satisfaction with feedback but perceived it as lacking relevance.

In summary, these findings collectively emphasize the necessity for a comprehensive approach to performance evaluation within private academic institutions. Addressing misconceptions,

improving feedback accuracy, increasing frequency, and aligning appraisal systems with organizational goals and recognition mechanisms are important steps. This study also emphasizes the importance of providing adequate guidance and capacity-building initiatives for appraisers to ensure a more effective and meaningful appraisal process. The strategies are explained in detail in the framework below.

5.4 Effective Implementation of Performance Appraisal

The graphic representation below visually communicates a holistic framework for effective implementation of performance appraisals for both part-time and full-time lecturers, emphasizing the interconnected elements key for success in private university settings.

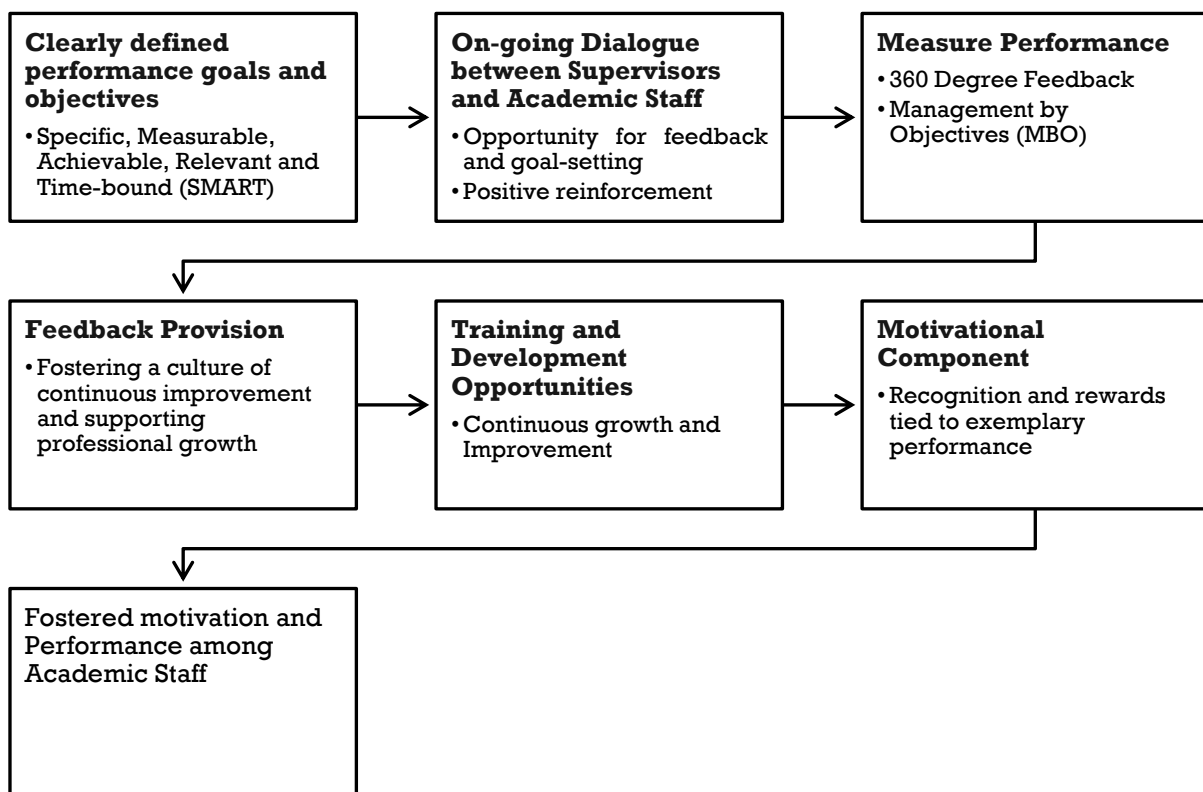


Figure 1: A Framework for improving staff academic performance through appraisals

The above proposed model suggests that for Performance appraisals to be implemented effectively, the process should begin with clear identification and definition of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) performance goals, communicated through regular interactive dialogue sessions to ensure a shared understanding.

This approach aligns with the principles of consistent communication advocated by Locke & Latham (2006), emphasizing the positive impact of goal setting on success.

To measure performance effectively, supervisors can employ a diverse range of interactive appraisal methods such as the 360-degree feedback appraisal system and Management by Objectives (MBO) which should be tailored according to the difference in responsibilities of academic staff. The former involves gathering insights from students, peers, supervisors, and the evaluated lecturer, promoting flexibility and ensuring a thorough evaluation process.

Post-appraisal, the prompt provision of constructive feedback becomes integral to fostering a culture of continuous improvement among academic Staff. Identifying training and development opportunities follows suit, enabling continuous growth and improvement aligned with the identified performance areas. In recognition of exemplary performance, a motivation component is essential, signifying acknowledgment and rewards as suggested by the Two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1959). This motivational strategy serves as a catalyst for sustained motivation and enhanced performance, creating a positive and conducive environment for academic staff within the institution. As there is no universal approach, universities search for solutions that work best for them. However, this framework can be a foundation for a successful performance appraisal implementation process.

5.5 Conclusion

In summary, this study revealed the significant role of performance appraisal in enhancing academic staff performance. While few academic staff acknowledged its significance in enhancing their performance, others considered it futile, primarily due to the absence of rewards and recognition post-appraisal. However, there was overwhelming support among academic staff for linking performance appraisals to tangible rewards and recognition, highlighting the importance of extrinsic motivation in driving performance. Suggestions for improving the appraisal process included more interactive and frequent sessions, with a preference for the 360-Degree Feedback method for evaluation. Additionally, the study revealed diverse uses of data from performance appraisal systems, ranging from contract renewals to identifying training needs. Respondents' perceptions of performance appraisal were shaped by factors such as fairness, motivation, accuracy of feedback, and the presence of rewards. Overall, these insights provided valuable context for understanding how academic staff perceive the appraisal process within the academic setting.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

This chapter is a conclusion of the study on the exploration of academic staff perceptions on performance appraisals in selected private universities in Lusaka district. It presents the key findings, recommendations, conclusion of the study and areas of further research. The study revealed prevalent use of participatory and self-evaluation methods in performance appraisal system with face-to-face interactions being common. The study revealed a lack of precise understanding among supervisors regarding specific appraisal systems, although the 360-degree feedback method was favored post-explanation. Data from appraisals primarily influenced contract renewals for part-time lecturers and identified promotion candidates and training needs for full-time lecturers. Academic staff expressed varied perceptions, with concerns over inconsistencies, inadequate feedback, and lack of rewards. Conversely, those who perceived appraisals positively reported improvements in teaching methods and time management, emphasizing the significance of constructive feedback. Lastly, the study highlighted the importance of aligning performance appraisals with tangible rewards and recognition to foster motivation and enhance overall performance among academic staff.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, this study proposes several recommendations to address notable challenges and improve the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in private universities in Lusaka District.

6.1.1. Private universities can offer training at least twice a year focused on enhancing academic staff understanding of the appraisal process, emphasizing its importance in personal and professional growth. This can include workshops on goal setting, self-assessment, and effective feedback mechanisms. At the same time encouraging feedback from the academic staff to incorporate their perspectives and suggestions for enhancing the appraisal process so that it remains relevant and effective in promoting academic staff performance. As a result, a culture of open communication and transparency will be fostered.

6.1.2. For improved appraisals, more interactive and frequent appraisal sessions, supervisors can use the 360-degree feedback appraisal system to have a comprehensive view of a lecturer's performance from multiple sources including supervisors, peers, subordinates, students, and

the lecturers themselves. This approach can help mitigate bias and unfairness and promote a more holistic understanding of strengths and areas for development.

6.1.2. Supervisors are encouraged to adopt a structured feedback mechanism, providing consistent and thorough evaluations to all academic staff. This entails offering constructive criticism alongside positive reinforcement, fostering an environment conducive to ongoing improvement and professional development.

6.1.3. Private universities should use the data collected from performance appraisals to aid them in the identification of high-potential academic staff members who can be considered for key leadership positions in the future. This supports effective succession planning and talent management initiatives within the university, ensuring the continuity of leadership and the preservation of institutional knowledge and expertise.

6.1.4. Private universities should align performance appraisals with rewards and recognition, drawing from the principles of the Two-Factor Theory and Expectancy theory. By establishing a transparent connection between appraisal outcomes and tangible rewards such as recognition programs, career growth prospects, or monetary incentives, academic staff motivation and job satisfaction can be significantly boosted. The study significantly highlighted that academic staff tend to exhibit higher performance levels when they perceive a clear correlation between their efforts and attainable rewards.

6.2 Further Research

The study advocates for further research to explore the effectiveness of training and development opportunities provided to academic staff following performance appraisals. This can involve assessing how these opportunities contribute to skill enhancement, job satisfaction, and overall performance improvement.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored the perceptions of academic staff regarding performance appraisals within selected private universities in Lusaka district, revealing diverse perspectives. Initially, the study aimed to establish the prevalent performance appraisal systems in these institutions. It emerged that participatory and self-evaluation methods were common, with face-to-face interactions being predominant. Theoretical implications suggest that involving academic staff in the appraisal process could foster acceptance and positivity towards it. Interestingly, supervisors exhibited a lack of clarity regarding the specific appraisal systems

utilized, though they favored the 360-degree feedback method for its comprehensive assessment approach after receiving clarification. Moreover, the findings emphasized the significant role of performance appraisal data in various human resource decisions, including contract renewals, promotions, and identifying training needs. However, it was noted that supervisors typically do not provide prior appraisal training to academic staff, which contradicts principles from the goal-setting theory that emphasize goal clarity to enhance the appraisal process. Consequently, the study recommends the adoption of the 360-degree feedback appraisal system by supervisors to ensure a comprehensive evaluation encompassing multiple perspectives. This approach can mitigate biases, promote fairness, and foster a holistic understanding of strengths and areas for development among academic staff.

The second objective aimed to evaluate the utilization of data obtained from performance appraisals. Findings revealed that while part-time lecturers' contracts were renewed based on appraisal data, full-time lecturers' data informed promotion decisions and training needs identification. However, there's evidence of significant underutilization of this data, consistent with findings from previous studies suggesting that appraisals were often seen as mere formalities rather than developmental tools. Yet, this data holds immense potential for informing other important human resource decisions, including succession planning and recognition of exemplary performance. To optimize the effectiveness of performance appraisals, supervisors must grasp their significance and purpose. It is recommended that private universities leverage this data to identify high-potential staff for future leadership roles, ensuring continuity and expertise preservation within the institution.

The third objective aimed to assess academic staff perceptions of performance appraisals in selected private universities in Lusaka district. The findings indicated prevalent inconsistencies and a lack of comprehension among staff and supervisors regarding the appraisal systems in place. This lack of clarity led to negative perceptions among academic staff, citing inconsistencies, inadequate feedback, insufficient prior training, and notably, the absence of tangible rewards and recognition as key factors influencing their views. The study highlighted that without tangible rewards and recognition, academic staff struggled to perceive appraisals as valuable tools for enhancing performance, aligning with existing research in this area. Conversely, those who viewed appraisals positively attributed their stance to the satisfaction derived from constructive feedback, reporting subsequent improvements in various aspects of their roles. This highlights the importance of extrinsic motivation in shaping academic staff

perceptions of the appraisal process, emphasizing the need for alignment between appraisal outcomes and tangible incentives.

Contrary to some prior research, this study suggests that the skills and qualifications of supervisors may not significantly influence academic staff perceptions of performance appraisal. Instead, it proposes several practical solutions for private universities to improve their appraisal systems. These include establishing clear and attainable goals, providing pre-appraisal training for academic staff, utilizing diverse appraisal methods, offering detailed feedback, strategically leveraging appraisal data for human resource decisions, and implementing motivational strategies through rewards and recognition. These refined recommendations aim to provide actionable insights for enhancing performance appraisal systems, fostering institutional performance, and enriching the quality of education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

A. Respondent's Occupational Information

1. Name of University?
2. Are you a part-time or full-time lecturer?
3. How long have you been at post?

B. Perceptions of Academic staff on Performance Appraisals

4. Have you ever had your performance appraised since you joined the institution? If so, how many have you undergone?
5. Were you given any formal performance appraisal training before your first performance appraisal?
6. How is the performance appraisal process conducted with your supervisor/Head of department? How would you like it done i.e., face to face?
7. Do you get feedback from the rating? And are you satisfied, motivated or demotivated? Briefly explain
8. What changes have you made following feedback received from an appraisal? (In terms of performance)
9. Have you received any support or development opportunities to help you improve your performance? If so, what kind of support?
10. Do you feel that the performance appraisal process is fair and unbiased? Briefly explain.
11. Do you think the feedback you get from performance appraisals accurately reflects your job performance and contributions to the institution? Briefly explain
12. Do you think performance appraisal systems used in your university should be linked to rewards and recognitions? maintained as they are? improved or abolished? Briefly explain
13. Does the qualification of your supervisor affect how you value the performance appraisal?
14. Do you have any recommendations on how best performance Appraisal systems can be used to rate academic staff performance?

15. Which of these would you classify as the best performance appraisal systems to evaluate academic staff performance?

i) Management by Objectives (MBO) (*Evaluating employee performance based on the job objectives or responsibilities*)

ii) 360-Degree Feedback (*Getting feedback on an employee's performance from the immediate supervisor, peers, self, and customers*)

iii) Peer reviews (*work mates*)

iv) Customer or client reviews (*learners*)

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUPERVISORS/HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

A. Respondent's Occupational Information

1. Name of University
2. What is your job title?
3. Years at post?

B. Performance Appraisal systems

4. Does the institution use performance Appraisal Systems to evaluate academic staff performance? If so, specify.
5. Have you conducted any? If so, how often is it conducted?
6. What performance appraisal systems have worked well so far? Which performance appraisal systems are less effective?
7. Do you appraise both part-time and full-time lecturers using the same procedures? If not, briefly explain why

C. Usage of Performance Appraisal Data

8. What do you evaluate in the lecturers regarding their performance?
9. Do you deliver feedback to academic staff? If so, how is it given?
10. What is the data collected from performance appraisal systems used?
11. Do you provide staff with any support or development opportunities to help them improve their performance following performance appraisals? If so, specify.
12. Which of these would you classify as the best performance appraisal systems to evaluate academic staff performance?
 - i) Management by Objectives (MBO) (*Evaluating employee performance based on the job objectives or responsibilities*)
 - ii) 360-Degree Feedback (*Getting feedback on an employee's performance from the immediate supervisor, peers, self, and customers*)
 - iii) Peer reviews (*work mates*)
 - iv) Customer or client reviews (*learners*)

APPENDIX 3: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear respondent,

RE: EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC STAFF ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS IN SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN LUSAKA DISTRICT.

I am a postgraduate student at The University of Zambia conducting research on '*Exploration of the Perceptions of Academic Staff on Performance Appraisals in Selected Private Universities in Lusaka District.*' The study is aimed at gaining insight into some of the best performance appraisal systems as a remedy to enhance academic staff performance and increase job satisfaction in private universities. The findings of this study may be used by supervisors in private universities to reformulate performance appraisals that suit the academic staff job descriptions and will enable them to make effective academic staff decisions based on the data collected. It will also be expected to bridge the existing knowledge gap on academic staff perceptions on performance appraisals in private universities in Zambia.

As part of the requirement for the award of Master of Educational Administration and Management, I am required to undertake this study and you have been selected to participate in it. Therefore, I humbly request your cooperation and assistance with information for the study. Kindly be advised that the information you shall provide is for academic purposes only and in no circumstance should you provide your name or email address. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

I wish to thank you most sincerely for agreeing to participate in this essential educational undertaking.

Yours Sincerely.

Nsama Kabwe

0971920007

APPENDIX 4: RESPONDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The aim and purpose of the study has been explained to me clearly. I have been informed of my rights in participating in this study and aware that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any point I feel like. The issue of confidentiality in participating in this study has also been explained to me and I understand that the information may be published but the names, email addresses and identity will not be associated with the results.

Please select '**I AGREE**' to participate in the study or **CLOSE** the browser if you do not wish to participate in the study.

APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka 10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 Fax: (+260)-211-290 258/253 952 | E-mail: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376
HSSREC IRB No. 00006464

18th May, 2023,
Ms. ~~Nsama Kabwe~~
University of Zambia,
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
LUSAKA.

REF NO. HSSREC:-2023- MAY -007

Dear, Ms. ~~Nsama Kabwe~~

**RE: “ EXPLORATION OF THE EFFECTS OF PERFORMANCE
APPRAISAL ON ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF SOME
SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN LUSAKA DISTRICT.”**

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:- 2023- MAY- 007
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 18 th May 2023	Expiry Date: 17 th May, 2024
Protocol Version and Date Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	Version - Nil. <input type="checkbox"/> English.	17 th May, 2024 To be provided
Consent form ID and Date Recruitment Materials	Version - Nil Nil	To be provided Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	

APPENDIX 6: RESEARCH BUDGET

EXPENSES	COST
Stationery	K150
Travel expenses	K500
Data bundles and airtime	K500
Printing	K1000
Ethical Clearance	K500
TOTAL COSTS	K2,650