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**EXPLORING EMPLOYEES' PERCEIVED FAIRNESS AND
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS
AND THE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

Cherica Buckner

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EXPLORING EMPLOYEES' PERCEIVED FAIRNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS AND THE INFLUENCE ON
EMPLOYEE RETENTION

by

Cherica S. Buckner

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
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and the School of Leadership
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore employees' perceived fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal process and the influence on employee retention. This study is based on a review of existing literature on performance management strategies. Drawing upon equity theory (Adams, 1963), human capital theory (Becker 1962, 1993), organizational justice theory (Greenberg, 1987), and expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the researcher explores talent management concepts to reveal the influence of employees' perceptions of performance appraisals on employee retention. Collectively the theories form a theoretical framework highlighting the importance of Human Capital Development, including the effectiveness of performance appraisals, effective people management, talent development, and employee perceptions in the workplace.

This qualitative study utilizes interpretive phenomenological analysis to reveal employees' perceived fairness and effectiveness of performance appraisals. The data analysis reveals five themes which are process effectiveness, supervisor relationship, fairness, purpose, and intent to stay. This research may help leaders to improve performance appraisal effectiveness and employee retention. Findings suggest that employees' perceived value, relationships with supervisors, and justice influence perceptions of the performance appraisal process and retention. Recommendations are offered for leaders and supervisors that influence performance appraisal processes and outcomes within the organization.

Keywords: Employee retention, effectiveness, perceived fairness, performance appraisal, talent management

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DEDICATION

To my children, Dylan and Ethan, I love you both immensely. You two are the most amazing humans that I know. I'm so proud of you both. Thank you for your love and understanding throughout this process. To my family, I love and thank each one of you for your constant support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>EPA</i>	Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal
<i>FDS</i>	Forced Distribution System
<i>HCD</i>	Human Capital Development
<i>HR</i>	Human Resources
<i>HRD</i>	Human Resources Development
<i>HRM</i>	Human Resource Management
<i>IPA</i>	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
<i>IRB</i>	Institutional Review Board
<i>MBO</i>	Management by Objectives
<i>OJT</i>	Organizational Justice Theory
<i>PM</i>	Performance Management
<i>PMS</i>	Performance Management System
<i>TM</i>	Talent Management

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

In the United States and worldwide, organizations are experiencing a seiche of resignations (Cook, 2021). Coined the “Great Resignation,” the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in July 2021, 4 million Americans resigned from their jobs (Cook, 2021). In the article “*How to Manage the Great Resignation*,” organizations are forewarned that high turnover will be present for a long time, and organizations must rethink retention strategies (The Economist, 2021). The challenging question remains, “How can employers retain people in the face of this tidal wave of resignations?” (Cook, 2021, para. 1).

Across the globe, as Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) suggest, a focus on employee retention elevates talent management as the most critical issue in human resources management (HRM). Critical to an organization’s success, talent management is a process that involves the implementation of employee talents including performance, development, and retention (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). According to Thornton (2016), talent management is a comprehensive approach to enhancing human capital, enabling organizations to drive results and deploy processes to alleviate challenges by aligning business objectives. Talent management practitioners embrace performance management, which reviews and builds on employees' assets, increasing employee engagement, job performance and commitment, thereby reducing turnover (Scott et al., 2022). Al-Dalahmeh et al. (2020) postulate HRM focuses on employees as intangible assets without distinction of demographics such as talent, skills, or knowledge. Irrespective of the industry, HRM identifies competencies and dexterities in all types of companies (Al-Dalahmeh et al., 2020). For instance, organizations implement talent

management concepts to control human capital and safeguard company assets (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Coined by Steven Hankin of McKinsey & Company “*The War for Talent*” deemed talent management synonymous with human capital development (Chambers et al., 1998).

In today’s complex organizational environment, evident by the proliferation of technological innovation, a wide range of socio-economics, geo-political, and population changes, the focus on human capital development escalates (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Recruiting, developing, and retaining talent heightens in order to successfully navigate organizational challenges (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Furthermore, an organization’s aptitude to attract, develop, and retain talent determines the implementation of talent management concepts, including performance appraisals (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020).

The performance appraisal is an intricate process by which organizations determine how effectively employees perform work (Rosales-Sánchez et al., 2019). However, questions relating to employee perceptions of performance appraisals remain unanswered (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). The outcome of a study conducted by Gallup in 2017 titled “*Re-Engineering Performance Management*” reveals extensive funding devoted to talent development contributes only a 3% increase to organizational outcomes (Wigert & Harter, 2017). Further, the study results indicate that talent development levels remain low despite significant financial contributions by organizations (Wigert and Harter, 2017). Nevertheless, according to Stahl et al. (2011), leaders must involve themselves in the talent management process. This involvement

stresses prioritizing recruitment, retention, and performance appraisal to help organizations create a competitive advantage (Stahl et al., 2011).

An organization's aptitude for innovation remains vital for creating a competitive advantage (Curzi et al., 2019). Agility remains necessary as innovation serves as the foundation of competitive advantage, and organizations need employees to progress towards high performance (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). Further, high performance is achieved in the workplace when organizations recognize and respond to opportunities citing a need for change in the work environment (Lee & Yoo 2019).

To remain competitive, organizations use performance management systems to appraise employee performance through instant feedback and annual performance appraisals (Murphy, 2020). Pahos and Galanaki (2020) posit that performance appraisals have roots in human capital and HRM practices examining the impact of organizational outcomes and employee retention as an expansive body of literature. Research dating back to the 1920s highlights the performance appraisal as widely studied in the field of HRM (Barends et al., 2016). According to Curzi et al. (2019), employers must capitalize on employees' performance to cultivate innovative ideas to improve retention.

Furthermore, the performance appraisal can strengthen employee production and enhance organizational performance, thereby supporting retention efforts (Barends et al., 2016). Similarly, Nutakor (2019) highlights how employee fairness perceptions of performance appraisals remain a vital human resources (HR) element. In addition, performance appraisal studies assert that managing employees' perceptions determine the system's success (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012; Kim & Rubianty, 2011; Waheed et al., 2018).

Despite problems with performance appraisals, the process remains a positive aspect of HRM regardless of efficacy concerns (Fuenzalida & Riccucci, 2019; Justin & Joy, 2022; Kim & Rubianty, 2011; Milliman et al., 2002). Among both scholars and practitioners, the employee performance appraisal, in general, can positively influence organizational outcomes, including productivity, task performance, job satisfaction, retention, and organizational commitment (Barends et al., 2016). Additionally, according to Pahos and Galanki (2020), employee performance amasses value to organizations through the distinct behavioral occurrence that an employee performs over time.

Employee performance is a multi-dimensional concept emphasizing employee behavior and aspects of organizational outcomes (Pahos & Galanaki, 2020). Additionally, employee performance remains complex and influences perceived fairness, employee recognition, rewards, and performance appraisal techniques (Pahos & Galanaki, 2020). However, administering fair and effective performance appraisals continues as one of the most laborious HRM tasks (Kim & Rubianty, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, employees quit jobs due to unfair perceptions and underappreciation, often occurring during the performance appraisal process (Cook, 2021; Javed et al., 2013; Maier, 2016). Ostensibly, researchers suggest that performance appraisal success depends on employees' perceived fairness of the system (Kim & Rubianty, 2011; Nutakor, 2019; Prather, 2010).

In theory and practice, the effectiveness of a performance appraisal is a dynamic aspect of the performance appraisal process (Abdulkhaliq & Mohammadali, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2015; Lawrie, 1990; Syahsudarmi, 2021). According to Abbas (2014) and Brutus and Baronian (2020), effective performance appraisals serve as an integral component of

human capital development in organizations. In addition, stakeholders deem performance appraisals effective when they consider the process useful (Giles & Mossholder, 1990; Iqbal et al., 2015; Levy & Williams, 2004; Murphy, 2020). Babagana et al. (2018) posit effective performance appraisal determines an organization's successes and failures and boosts the performance of employees. Therefore, the fundamental aim of performance management, specifically performance appraisal policies, is to enhance the performance of employees (Babagana et al., 2018).

The performance management process identifies objectives, responsibilities, and expected behaviors to align performance with an organization's strategic goals (Curzi et al., 2019). White (2019) posits that performance management appraises future needs through consistent observation and performance supervision. According to Simbolon (2018), organizations champion performance management systems to improve accountability, transparency, and performance. A performance management system distinctly models, measures, and evaluates employee performance (Korenková et al., 2019).

Mueller-Hanson and Pulakos (2015) reveal three primary performance management factors: (a) performance goal setting, (b) evaluation of results, and (c) feedback. White (2019) denotes that organizational leaders must understand the importance of performance management systems as calamity could lie ahead if avoided. According to Garbotoy and Lane (2018), performance management systems often face turmoil from perplexed employees and frustrated leaders. Subsequently, according to Cappelli and Tavis (2016), organizations' agendas should include the overall amending of performance management systems.

Employees' performance management persists as a component of organizational outcomes (Preizer, 2014). Despite years of research and practice, dissatisfaction with performance management systems reach unprecedented levels, with employees viewing appraisal systems as erroneous and useless (Sempel, 2019). Due to high dissatisfaction with performance management system methods, organizations face exasperation from employees and managers (Mueller-Hanson & Pulakos, 2015; Sempel, 2019). According to Pulakos et al. (2019), many organizations call to eliminate performance appraisals altogether from the performance management process. According to Sempel (2019), numerous organizations experience profound opposition to performance appraisals, while others focus on standard and adaptable objectives. For example, some firms take radical action, such as eliminating performance ratings, while others set flexible goals and conduct frequent informal performance check-ups to motivate employees (Brutus & Baronian, 2020; Clifton & Harter, 2019; Mueller-Hanson & Pulakos, 2015).

Performance appraisals aim to inspire employees to advance their performance levels (van Woerkom & Kroon, 2020). Following the performance appraisal process, appraisal goals must significantly contribute to overall organizational growth and retention strategies (Bibi et al., 2018; Harper, 2016). For example, employees' contributions to organizational goals affect how managers assess their performance (Curzi et al., 2019). Additionally, employees' articulation of their managers' vision and direction determines successful organizational performance (Al Khajeh, 2018; Harper, 2016; Nienaber & Martins, 2020). Successively, a manager's aptitude for success influences employee effectiveness through hiring, developing, and retaining exceptional employees (Gyurák Babel'ová et al., 2020; Harper, 2016).

This qualitative research study explores talent management concepts and employee perceptions of fairness influencing employee retention. Researchers acknowledge the importance of performance appraisal fairness (Brown et al., 2019; Harrington & Lee, 2015), suggesting appraisal significance as a challenge facing the field of HRM and human resource development (HRD). Exploring employees' perceptions may assist in identifying recommendations for fair and effective performance appraisal processes, yielding increased employee retention rates, among other key performance indicators (van Woerkom & Kroon, 2020). Employee perceptions become reality; driving human capital practitioners to rethink ways to retain employees in the organization (Dy & Rosalia, 2015).

Background of the Study

In a historical context, Azizi Rostam (2020) notes performance management theories play a role in the evolution of performance management processes (i.e., performance appraisals). The article "*Management Theory*" by McGregor (1957) focuses on the performance management process and suggests that feedback received during the appraisal process should support employee training and development. Moreover, McGregor (1957) argued that employees desire to perform at elevated levels increases if they receive proper feedback (Azizi Rostam, 2020). However, employees report performance appraisal results as biased (Azizi Rostam, 2020; Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015). In addition, organizations face intense competitive pressure to transform and improve their talent management concepts, including offering a fair and unbiased performance appraisal system (Azizi Rostam, 2020). Therefore, shifting talent management concepts can provide employees with an effective performance appraisal

process to help employees develop their skills (Azizi Rostam, 2020; Stahl et al., 2011). Identifying the nature of performance management concepts, such as performance appraisals and feedback, contributes to the overall success of organizations (Schleicher et al., 2019).

Since the mid-1900s, performance management has remained active in the workplace (Hattingh, 2019). Historians note that the first use of performance management included rating family members' daily performance by the Wei Dynasty emperors in 221 AD (Hattingh, 2019; Rath, 2018). Fast forward to the 1920s, Walter D. Scott founded Walter D. Scott & Co., and in 1938 invented performance appraisals establishing the process as the most valuable aspect of HR (Lynch, 1968; Hattingh, 2019). Founded in 1938, Lynch (1968) describes WD Scott & Co. as the leading management consultancy firm in Australia, specializing in performance and process improvement. Although not widely utilized outside of the firm, Scott's work surrounding the performance appraisal process shaped the performance management concepts of the 21st century (Hattingh, 2019). Likewise, performance management continues as a systemic, information-driven process that assists leaders with employee management to achieve individual and organizational goals (Azizi Rostam, 2020).

According to Hattingh (2019), effective and efficient performance management includes activities ensuring organizational achievement. Azizi Rostam (2020) confirms performance management contributes to organizational success through human capital development (i.e., performance improvement through developing employee capabilities) as a strategic and integrated process. However, organizations fail to utilize performance management to its full capacity through human resources (Azizi Rostam, 2020). Even as

leaders use performance appraisal measures to develop employee performance, performance appraisals traditionally focus on rewards and punishments as obstacles to employee performance because employees' perceptions involve flawed systems (Azizi Rostam, 2020).

The evolution of performance appraisals began in the mid-1950s, with the process gaining traction worldwide (Hattingh, 2019). In the mid-1950s, employee performance measurement originated as a personality-based system (Brooks, 2015; Hattingh, 2019). The performance appraisal process continues to evolve in the 1960s with a new focus on self-appraisal (Hattingh, 2019). The focus in the 1960s evoked changes from employee competencies to future employee contributions to measuring employee performance (Hattingh, 2019). After this, in the 1970s, performance appraisals became controversial, resulting in court cases and lawsuits (Hattingh, 2019). Therefore, the performance appraisal process began to include rating scales to alleviate perceived bias and opinion from the process (Hattingh, 2019). Finally, in the last 20 years, organizations have adopted a more holistic approach to performance appraisals, focusing on employee motivation and talent management, including soft skills and managing employee emotions (Hattingh, 2019).

In the 21st century, talent management emerged as a buzzword for many organizations (Costa, 2017). According to Costa (2017), talent management identifies the supervision of a diverse talent pool, integrating talents of the workforce and the most talented employees, contributing to organizational success and employee retention. Talent appears as the differentiator in the ever-changing workforce. Therefore, attracting, developing, and retaining qualified employees surfaces as a priority for organizations

(Costa, 2017). According to Costa (2017), intrinsic talent transfers across job roles in an organization as employees' natural talents are transferrable. Therefore, the talent management process seeks to retain the most talented individuals in the workforce (Costa, 2017). However, according to Sutton and Wigert (2019), a study conducted by Gallup reveals only 14% of employees universally agree that performance appraisals motivate them to commit to their employer and develop in the workplace.

In 2019, Gallup's study reveals that 10% of U.S. workers are disengaged following negative or unfair on-the-job feedback. In addition, employees' perception of the appraisal process accounts for 30% of employees seeking new employment (O'Connell, 2020). Moreover, in 2019, Workhuman Analytics and Research's study reports that 55% of employees disregard performance appraisals as ineffective and maintain the appraisal does not improve performance (O'Connell, 2020).

Organizations worldwide work to manage and identify factors influencing employee performance (Azizi Rostam, 2020). Employers understand that discovering such factors assists in maximizing employee performance which aids in competitive advantage (Azizi Rostam, 2020). Effective performance in organizations indicates employees produce quality work, productivity increases, and the organization experiences profitability (Azizi Rostam, 2020). To improve organizational profitability, Costa (2017) recommends practitioners focus on recruiting and retaining employees as a priority. The HR processes that contribute to retention success include performance appraisal and career development (Costa, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Theoretically, when employee expectations are clear, employees and the overall business benefit (Schooley, 2020). Fair and effective performance appraisals serve as talent management strategies to grow and develop human capital (Altındağ et al., 2018; Pandita & Ray, 2018; Mihardjo et al., 2020). According to Kampkötter (2017), performance appraisals rank among organizations' most significant HRM functions. For years, organizations have deemed performance appraisals vital to improve employee performance for organizational effectiveness (du Plessis & van Niekerk, 2017).

Presently, organizations confront the daunting task of retaining talent (Collings, et al., 2018; Tarique, 2021). Due to managers' lack of attention to talent management concepts that lead to talent retention, employee turnover remains high (Rono & Kiptum, 2017). Although popular in research and practice, performance appraisal effectiveness remains unknown (Schleicher et al., 2019). As a concept of performance management systems, performance appraisal effectiveness remains an elusive objective and an enigma in HRM (Schleicher et al., 2019). Fair and effective performance appraisals require employees' acknowledgment of employers' expectations (Ray, 2020).

Gallup's (2017) *Re-Engineering Performance Management* report reveals that misguided time spent on conventional performance appraisal processes in the United States causes organizations \$2.4 to \$35 million in losses per year. Elevated employee detachment levels stem from outdated performance appraisals, causing organizations a productivity loss between \$960 billion and \$1.2 trillion per year (Wigert & Harter, 2017). Performance appraisal research reveals that only 14% of employees agree that the conventional performance appraisal process induces motivation. Further, only 20% of

employees agree that the process helps employees obtain exceptional performance levels (Wigert & Harter, 2017).

Despite years devoted to performance appraisal research, employee disapproval levels of the process continue with record highs (Adler et al., 2016; Boruett et al., 2021; Petasis et al., 2020;). According to du Plessis and van Niekerk (2017), employees' frustration with performance appraisals continues to increase. Nutakor (2019) posits that only 6% of employees perceive performance appraisals as effective and fair. Regardless of their benefit, employees report negative perceptions of performance appraisals and doubt their fairness (Hancock et al., 2018; Jan et al., 2012; Nutakor, 2019). Subsequently, organizations continue to struggle with justifying the appraisal process.

Chowdhury et al. (2018) suggest that a lack of fairness in performance feedback creates confusion and employee dissatisfaction. The development and improvement of employee performance require interaction between managers and employees. During the performance appraisal, the interaction between the manager and employee enables managers to reconsider performance appraisal processes for increased effectiveness (Azizi Rostam, 2020).

Nevertheless, managers' disdain for performance appraisals harms appraisal effectiveness and employee performance development (du Plessis & van Niekerk, 2017). Negative manager attitudes regarding performance appraisals can lead to inaccurate performance appraisals, adverse employee perceptions of performance appraisals, and reduced employee support of the performance appraisal process (du Plessis & van Niekerk, 2017). According to Kampkötter (2016), unfair employee perceptions of performance appraisals create business challenges.

Gallup reports reveal that changes in workforce attitudes cause organizational division impacting employee performance and development (Ott, 2017). In some cases, performance appraisals lead to decreased performance rather than increased performance based on employee perceptions of the appraisal process (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). According to Kinicki et al. (2004), useful feedback on performance identifies appropriate work behaviors. Conversely, Goler et al. (2016) suggest that unforeseen negative performance feedback inhibits employees' perceptions of the appraisal process.

Factors including negative employee perceptions cause employees to leave their organization when needs remain unmet (Johennesse & Te-Kuang, 2017). Organizations face employee turnover decreasing employee retention because organizations fail to identify specific factors affecting employee perceptions of the appraisal process (Boswell et al., 2017; Easley, 2019; Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016). When properly utilized, the appraisal process can help organizations increase employee retention and improve employee and organizational performance (Dessler, 2011; SHRM, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore employees' perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and reveal how perceived fairness influences employee retention. The researcher will identify how employees perceive the fairness and effectiveness of performance appraisals and the influence on employee retention. Organizational leaders should understand talent management concepts, specifically performance appraisal effectiveness, to maximize employee performance (Vural et al., 2012; Wiradendi Wolor, 2020).

Talent management is a complex and critical concept that influences organizational outcomes (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). Organizations perceive that talent management is an important strategy supporting the organization's performance and competitive advantage (Al Aina & Atan, 2020). According to Oladapo (2014), a well-defined talent management plan can eliminate unfavorable employee perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness, thereby increasing employee retention.

Research Objectives

This study explores employees' perceptions of performance appraisals and the influence of perceived fairness on retention. The researcher seeks to answer the guiding question of this study, "How does employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness influence employee retention?"

This study is guided by four research objectives:

RO1 – Describe participants' demographics (job role, gender, age, and employment tenure).

RO2 – Explore the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

RO3 – Explore the fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

RO4 – Explore the influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees.

Conceptual Framework

Jabareen (2009) defines a conceptual framework as a network of intertwined concepts that combined offer a thorough comprehension of phenomena. The graphical

illustration of Figure 1 depicts the study's objectives. According to Thomas and Hodges (2010), research objectives specify exclusive research topics and issues the project proposes to investigate. This study includes four research objectives. Research objective one describes the demographics of the sample. Research objective two explores the effectiveness of performance appraisals as perceived by employees. Research objective three explores the perceived fairness of performance appraisals as perceived by employees. The fourth and final research objective explores the influence of performance appraisals on retention as perceived by employees.

The purpose of this study is to explore employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and reveal how perceived fairness influences employee retention. The study will explore strategies that can improve employee retention related to the performance appraisal process within organizations. The conceptual model in Figure 1 presents the connections between employees' perceived fairness and the perceived effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. Perceived fairness derives from Greenberg's (1987) organizational justice theory (OJT). OJT encompasses three distinct types of justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Greenberg, 1987). This study focuses on procedural justice, which addresses the idea of fair processes and how employees' perceptions of fairness impact their experiences (Yale Law Justice Collaboratory, n.d.). The study will contribute to Human Capital Development research and help improve the performance appraisal process by addressing and exploring employee perceptions.

This study includes four theories that serve as the foundation of the study. The foundational theories include OJT, human capital theory, expectancy theory, and equity

theory. OJT includes the employees' perception of fairness in the workplace (Greenberg, 1987). The human capital theory supports investing in people in evolving markets (Becker, 1962; 1993). Expectancy theory suggests that employees' actions and perceptions are contingent upon forecasted outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Equity theory focuses on determining if the distribution of resources is fair to all partners in a relationship (Adams, 1963). Equity theory categorizes as a justice theory, focusing on perceived fairness, which models employees' contributions and outcomes to maintain equity between contributions brought to the job and results received from the contribution (Adams, 1963;1965). Perceived fairness consists of three primary elements: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Adams, 1963; Greenberg, 1987). Each theory supports and rationalizes the graphical framework depicting the influences of various experiences of employees' perceived fairness of an effective performance appraisal process and the influence on employee retention.

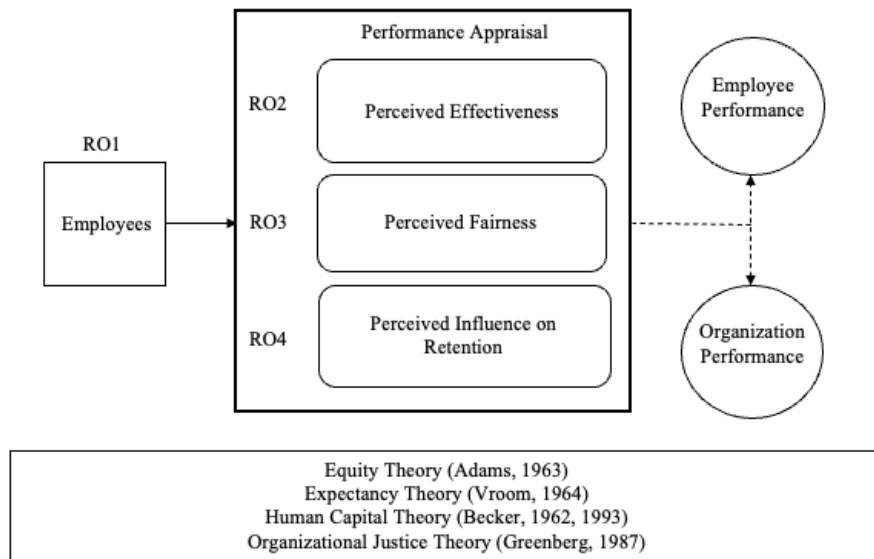


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Significance of the Study

This study may contribute to understanding employees' perceptions of fairness related to performance appraisal that influence employee retention. Based on the results of a 2017 study conducted by Gallup, effective performance appraisal requires leaders to understand their employees beyond their measurable performance (Sutton & Wigert, 2019). Therefore, organizations may use this study's findings to reduce unfairness perceptions and identify the effect of fairness on employee retention. Performance management and performance appraisal are essential aspects of talent management that measure employees' perceptions of the appraisal process (Brown et al., 2019; Stahl et al., 2011).

Furthermore, positive changes in the performance appraisal process may improve employee fairness perceptions, encouraging employees to work towards business objectives and progress towards organizational goals. Performance appraisals remain critical for organizations to align employee performance to company expectations (Carpi et al., 2017; SHRM, 2021). HRD professionals can benefit from this study. The findings from this research could help organizations view performance appraisals as a communication tool for employee accountability and goal setting. Additionally, the findings may also provide a framework that aligns fairness perceptions of performance appraisals to employee retention.

Delimitations

Delimitations narrow the range of the study (Creswell, 2013). According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), delimitations are limits or boundaries set by the researcher. Therefore, delimitations exist for this study. This study includes four

delimitations: (a) industry, (b) human participant protection, (c) population, and (d) scope.

Industry

The study is limited to a Fortune 500 corporation. The participants' experiences in this specific industry may differ from employees' experiences in other sectors. The researcher is aware that employees' perceptions of performance appraisals at non-Fortune 500 companies may vary.

Human Participant Protection

Participation in this study may be impacted by Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) due to the pandemic's occurrence in the world. According to Dodds and Hess (2020), uncertainty continues over conducting qualitative research due to the current global environment. Therefore, Dodds and Hess (2020) posit that COVID-19 creates a challenging environment to conduct research. Additionally, the pandemic may impact face-to-face interaction, resulting in a video conferencing platform to capture participant responses. Through this procedure, risks to participants were minimized as researchers utilized means to protect participants from harm while promoting good research (Breault, 2006).

Population

The emphasis of this study was the perceived fairness experienced by mid-level managers of the performance appraisal. Therefore, the study included mid-level managers only and no other roles in the organization. The researcher is aware that employees in various positions can potentially offer varying perspectives to this study. However, this study focused on mid-level managers' experiences at a Fortune 500 company to limit the

scope. According to Antes et al. (2016), those in leadership and management roles are necessary for effective research.

Scope

The feedback derived from employees actively involved in the performance appraisal process and offered insight into the perceived fairness of performance appraisals and how their perception, in turn, influences retention. Limiting the research scope allows the researcher to study perceived fairness and effectiveness as defined for this research study.

Assumptions of the Study

Assumptions are attitudes connected to the study by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). This research has the following assumptions: (a) The participants provided honest and unbiased responses to interview questions when expressing their perceived fairness of performance appraisals, (b) participants agreed that they were aware and understood the nature of the research study, (c) the participants were not coached or coerced to answer interview questions in a specific manner, (d) the qualitative method is the appropriate method to explore the lived experiences of mid-level managers and the factors that contribute to perceived fairness, and (e) the sampling method provided an adequate number of participants for the study.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following definitions guide the study:

1. *Employee Retention* – is a phenomenon by which existing employees either remain committed to their organization or leave when their needs are unmet (Johennesse & Te-Kuang, 2017).

2. *Human Resource Development* – improving performance through developing human expertise through individual training and organizational development (Swanson & Holton, 2001).
3. *Organizational Justice* – refers to workplace fairness based on employees’ perceptions (Rupp & Thornton-Lugo, 2015).
4. *Performance Appraisal* – a process that helps employers determine developmental and regulatory needs such as training, development, coaching for improvement, and promotion potential (Seidu & Boachie-Mensah, 2012).
5. *Perceived Fairness* – an individual’s analysis of goals and the perception of fair and unbiased results (Tseng & Kuo, 2014).
6. *Performance Management System* – manage employee behaviors, results, and organizational outcomes (Ferreira & Otley, 2009).
7. *Talent Management* – holistically optimizing human capital enabling organizations to drive results through building employee capabilities, organizational culture, engagement, development, recruitment, and retention to align with organizational objectives (The Association for Talent Development, 2009).

Summary

This study explores employees’ perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention. The topic explored by the researcher utilizes the theories of Adams (1963), Vroom (1964), Becker (1962, 1993), and Greenberg (1987), and determined elements of perceived fairness that affect employee retention. This research complements current literature on fairness perceptions

by exploring employees' lived experiences of performance appraisals. Furthermore, this study's data may help organizations develop a new understanding of employees' perceptions of performance appraisals and their influence on retention.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The remaining chapters' content is organized as follows: Chapter II reviews scholarly literature related to performance appraisal processes, perceived fairness, talent management, and retention. Chapter III presents the research methodology, including qualitative research methods and the data collection process used for this study. Chapter IV included analyzing and presenting themes derived from the data. Finally, Chapter V summarizes and concludes the researcher's findings, and offers future research recommendations.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

The foremost and supporting factors are amalgamated and synthesized in this literature review. This chapter offers a review of relevant literature that supports the conceptual framework related to the topic of the study. The literature review contains an overview of information regarding performance appraisals, perceived fairness, performance appraisal effectiveness, and employee retention. This chapter includes a comprehensive history of employee perceptions of performance appraisals and how perceived fairness influences employee retention. The literature review will unveil the need for this study by identifying the gaps in the current literature. The literature review encompasses an overview of historical, seminal, past, and modern-day research perspectives on performance appraisals and perceived fairness.

The concept of performance appraisal and performance management has evolved employee and organizational performance over the years. Arogundade and Olasunkanmi-Alimi (2015) postulate that management literature on performance appraisals governs dialogue and remains an organizational concern as a pivotal HRM function. According to Varma et al. (2008), as a relatively new field, the origins of performance management systems and performance appraisals emergence varies on a country-by-country basis. Bernardin et al. (2016) disclose that despite well-defined pragmatic theoretical frameworks of performance appraisal to enhance organizational effectiveness and HRM functions, scholars remain insensitive to its scope (Jawahar, 2007; Pichler, 2009). This, in turn, eliminates the ability to denote a specific origin of the perceptive systems limiting proficiency in the field by experts.

Fletcher (2001) posits that research on the performance appraisal process meets several challenges: understanding what to appraise and how to appraise. Organizations constantly seek fair and unbiased performance appraisal processes to achieve organizational effectiveness and sustain the business long-term (Sanyal & Biswas, 2015). The performance appraisal process has developed over the years and assimilates into essential aspects of human resources development. Sustaining high-level performance appraisal principles requires organizational leaders to appraise employees' performance fairly while providing appropriate corrective feedback (Clarke et al., 2013).

Organizations' HRM leaders receive limited guidance to mitigate outcomes associated with employee perceptions to performance appraisals and how they influence organizational outcomes (Evans & Tourish, 2017; Qui et al., 2015). Additionally, Jawahar (2007) contends that the gap in the performance appraisal paradigm impedes discourse between researchers and practitioners, making performance appraisal research ineffective for practitioners. As a result, many organizations risk losing their human capital, contributing to higher turnover (Qui et al., 2015). According to Bhurtel and Adhikari (2016) and Mathew and Johnson (2015), performance appraisals help employees understand employer expectations and the progress they are making in that regard. This chapter will further explore the challenges associated with performance management systems and performance appraisals to reveal inciteful information about a discipline that scholars have only loosely defined, according to Neely (2005).

Theoretical Framework

The researcher will use theoretical frameworks of human capital, organizational justice, equity, and expectancy theory to address the research objectives. The four

theories selected for this study relate to performance appraisal, employee perceptions, and organizational outcomes. Further, the chosen theories assist with exploring the performance appraisal process and the best way to mitigate perceptions of injustice and unfairness. The four theories presented serve as a foundational framework for this study.

Human Capital Theory

The most valued asset in any organization is its human capital (Rajaram, 2007). According to Goldin (2016), human capital is the standard skill possessed by the labor force. Human capital literature traces back to William Petty in 1676, who compares the loss of artilleries and machinery with the loss of human life (Rosen, 1987). In addition, Adam Smith, in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, released in 1776, concludes that the skills of employees are an imperative source of economic growth (Smith, 2002). In HRD, capitalizing on human talent through skill improvement works toward organizational advancement (McClean, 2004). According to Gordon (2012), talent management drives human capital. From this perspective, talent management is a set of human capital development practices, including selection, development, and retention (Balcerzyk & Materac, 2019). Becker (2009) notes that education and training serve as essential investments in human capital. Organizational justice theory determines if the contribution to human capital in organizations is fair.

Organizational Justice Theory

Thibaut and Walker (1975) introduced organizational justice in the mid-1970s as it emerged in performance appraisal to support procedural fairness in dispute resolution. Organizational justice refers to workplace fairness based on employees' perceptions (Rupp & Thornton-Lugo, 2015; Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Organizational justice

is deeply rooted in theories that promote fairness. The relationship between organizational justice and performance appraisal was first established by Greenberg (1986), suggesting organizational justice indicates that an organization considers fairness in its practices. Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) theorize that organizational justice stems from the decisions made at the end of the performance appraisal process.

Furthermore, Ilgen et al. (1979) and Rietsche et al. (2021) determine that performance feedback influences individual employee performance, significantly impacting organizational outcomes. Cropanzano et al. (2007) declares that organizational justice benefits the organization and its employees with the potential to produce substantial repercussions for both. Gruman and Saks (2011) suggest that performance appraisals are a source of dissatisfaction for employees because the appraisals are perceived as biased or irrelevant. Expressly, research acknowledges that performance appraisal processes predict organizational justice (Cropanzano et al., 2002; Jacobs et al., 2014).

Justice perceptions improve the comprehension of inequities or unfairness and determine if there is an effect on organizations. According to Folger and Konovsky (1989), procedural and distributive justice evolved from Adams' (1963) equity theory. Procedural justice refers to an organization's methods and procedures to determine the incentives, compensation, and benefits packages (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). According to Greenberg and Colquitt (2005), procedural justice refers to the fairness of procedures in making decisions that result in distributive outcomes.

Thibaut and Walker (1975) initially introduced the concept of procedural justice, which extends into six criteria by Levanthal (1980). Folger and Konovsky (1989) refer to

distributive justice as the perceived fairness of organizations' incentives, benefits, and compensation packages. According to Greenberg and Colquitt (2005), distributive justice is the fair distribution of resources, including compensation, rewards, problem resolution, and job advancement. Finally, interactional justice is employees' interpersonal treatment from authority figures in organizations (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005).

A range of factors makes up employee perceptions of fairness. According to Gelbrich and Roschk (2011), decisions made by employers in every aspect influence employees' perceptions of the organization in defining procedural and distributive justice. According to Luo (2007), interactional justice is attainable when organizational leaders are willing to justify feedback, show compassion, and treat individuals with respect. According to Mikula et al. (1990), employee perceptions of unfairness and injustice have been linked to interpersonal justice and interpersonal treatment more often than procedural and distributive justice. The additional justice perceptions further establish Adams's (1963) equity theory, reiterating that justice is only perceived as unfair when perceived as unjust (Adams, 1965).

Equity Theory

Adams' (1963) equity theory focuses on individual contributions and the expected outcome for given inputs. Adams' equity theory delineates that individuals seek out social equity in various forms, such as high performance. The outputs of an organization should always match the employees' inputs. According to Adams, individuals view their input and output in a quantifiable format. What employees put into the organization should be reciprocated in rewards. Employee rewards are based on their level of experience, education, and years with the organization (Adams, 1963).

Equity theory is used to explain fairness perceptions from the perspectives of employees and their standpoint on the percentage of fair or unfair inputs to outputs in an organization. Equity theory has gained substantive attention in public and private sectors (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012). Equity theory consists of three justice perceptions, which include (a) procedural justice, (b) distributive justice, and (c) interactional justice (Adams, 1963; Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). Philosophers Herodotus and Plutarch used the term justice to explain decency and moral obligation, and it can be traced back to the ancient Greeks (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Vehemently debated over the years, organizations' and employees' perception of justice has been a long-standing issue in discussions over whether the employees received fair outcomes and appropriate organizational procedures (Deutsch, 1985; Tyler, 1989). The three-justice perceptions are the primary components of organizational justice. The term organizational justice is used to describe the role of fairness in a corporate environment (Moorman, 1991). According to Greenberg and Colquitt (2005), organizational justice describes individuals' perceptions of fairness in the workplace. In contrast to equity theory, expectancy theory holds that individuals perform to attain rewards.

Expectancy Theory

Vrooms' (1964) expectancy theory is the driving force behind an individual's ability to perform a specific action and posits that the three perceptions/components of expectancy theory: (a) expectancy; (b) instrumentality; and (c) valence determine motivation. Vroom (1964) denoted that an individual's motivation determined their

driving force to perform and influenced the outcome of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence.

Vroom (1964) defined expectancy as an employees' belief that a particular outcome is based on their expectations and efforts. Second, instrumentality refers to the idea that success will be rewarded. Lastly, valence refers to an employees' belief that an outcome is fair (Vroom, 1964). According to Lawler and Suttle (1973), who later expanded, expectancy theory, defined it as a representation of a general theory based on work. Ramli and Jusoh (2015) pointed out that Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation focused on an individuals' performance due to their expected or predicted outcome.

Over the years, scholars have made it known that the expectancy theory is a tool that is instrumental in linking the motivation of employees to an organization's environment (Vroom, 1964). Based on perceived fairness, an employee will modify their behavior if their organization does not commit to rewarding superior performance (Hareendrakumar et al., 2020). According to Vroom (1964), as employee needs change, what motivates them may also vary. According to Hareendrakumar et al. (2020), employee motivation is enhanced when employees' fairness perceptions are appropriately addressed. Terera and Ngirande (2014) contend that organizational culture significantly influences job satisfaction. As a known and respected body of work, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation is linked to literature in psychology and aids in explaining motivation factors (Sullivan & Meek, 2012). According to Vroom (1964), when there is value, employees are self-motivated and contribute to the organization's

performance. Employees must trust that their organization will commit to talent management and have a plan for future job growth (Terera & Ngirande, 2014).

Talent Management

Talent management has been defined as "a set of combined organizational procedures designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain productive, engaged employees" (John Hopkins University, 2016, para. 1). Talent Management practitioners embrace performance management, which reviews and builds on employees' assets, increasing employee engagement, job performance and commitment, thereby reducing turnover (Scott et al., 2022). Multiple benefits associate with the effective implementation of talent management strategies. According to Hughes & Rog (2008), the proper implementation of talent management strategies would improve employee fairness perceptions and increase retention rates. The correct implementation, in turn, would influence company operations and increase financial performance. O'Bryan and Casey (2017) report that talent management processes serve as determinants of an employee's willingness to remain within an organization due to job satisfaction (p. 10). For an organization, the proper implementation of talent management programs and strategies are required for success. O'Bryan and Casey proclaim that the talent management process should include succession planning for future vacant positions. When employers are prepared for voluntary and involuntary turnover, it gives them a competitive advantage (O'Bryan and Casey, 2017).

Organizational culture is "the shared beliefs and values guiding members' thinking and behavioral styles" (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988, p. 245). In essence, the employee's perception of the organization will determine their commitment to meeting or

exceeding organizational goals. Paul and Raj (2014) express that organizations should focus on branding to attract high-quality talent in the current economic climate. When organizations retain capable, competent, and effective employees, their brand value increases. These employees are retained easily due to the organization's reputation in the job market.

Paul and Raj (2014) suggest that an organization's culture must be structured to impact branding, create a positive organizational culture, and increase retention. The authors reveal that an "organization's culture can be the difference between success and failure" (p. 172). The study conducted by Paul and Raj sought to identify a correlation between organizational culture and employer branding, affecting employee retention. The research suggests the main determinants influencing retention include "job satisfaction, organization culture, employee motivation, career prospect, and stress" (Paul & Raj, 2014, p. 173).

Organizations' must make their impression during the onboarding stage. Otherwise, new employees will immediately begin to seek employment elsewhere, affecting the employer's brand in the marketplace. Clear communication of the organizational culture increases employee commitment. This commitment leads to increased employee engagement and higher retention rates.

A Historical Perspective of Talent Management

In the 1990s, McKinsey & Company's article "War for Talent" (Chambers et al., 1998) aligns (a) retention, (b) culture, and (c) employee values as some of the most critical aspects of the talent management process. The organization investigated the talent issues that large organizations face and found that companies could combat the talent

shortage in the workforce through an employee value-based culture. Employee value is simply an organization's ability to mold the company brand into a desirable place of employment, thereby creating a winning culture (Chambers et al., 1998).

Historically, a significant shortage exists of prominent talent in the workforce. According to Chambers et al. (1998), HR leaders and their strategies play an essential role in talent management. The literature reveals that HR managers must "set high standards, ensure that performance is assessed fairly, and act as a vehicle for fostering personal development" (Chambers et al., 1998, p. 49). These strategies assist with employee retention. Talent management strategies are beneficial in sourcing the best employees (Chambers et al., 1998). The most effective strategy for companies includes becoming a brand that skilled employees want to represent, which creates job satisfaction and increased retention.

Talent Management Factors—Job Satisfaction

Terera and Ngirande (2014) suggested that the increase in voluntary turnover resulted from organizations being ill-equipped to predict employee perceptions and future needs. According to the authors, an organization's retention strategy determines its success. The performance appraisal process determined job satisfaction, which was the most influential factor that contributed to employee retention (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). According to Arunchand and Ramanathan (2013), employee commitment was high when employees were pleased, which is reflected in the quality of their work.

According to Hughes & Rog (2008), the proper implementation of performance appraisal improves employee motivation and creates increased employee recruitment and retention rates. It was proposed by Terera and Ngirande (2014) that both rewards

stemming from performance appraisal and job satisfaction also played a role in employee retention. The literature demonstrated the need for management to develop retention strategies involving job satisfaction and rewards as significant factors in the performance appraisal process (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). The authors' research determined no direct correlation between rewards and job satisfaction. It was revealed that job satisfaction turned out to be the key to employee retention (Terera & Ngirande, 2014).

Retention. Due to an increased talent shortage in the workforce, talent management is a necessary strategy to retain employees. Oladapo (2014) sought to understand the trials and accomplishments of talent management strategies, such as performance appraisal, and why many organizations opt-out while others adopt. The researcher found that many factors affect the relationship between talent management and retention. For example, despite its importance, organizations struggled to develop effective talent management programs impacting the decision to implement (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Furthermore, the "challenges and successes" associated with an organization's preference to implement or opt out of talent management programs influenced employee and organization outcomes (Oladapo, 2014 p. 28).

Employee retention was required for organizations to function correctly and meet established goals. De Long et al. (2003) and Oladapo (2014) revealed that retention is a strategic opportunity for many organizations to maintain a competitive workforce. Considerable research has been conducted supporting retention as a significant component of the talent management process. According to Oladapo (2014), retention rates reflect management's focus (or lack of focus) on performance appraisal and proper implementation. The literature suggested that talent management strategies drove

business and affiliated organizations with the most qualified talent in the marketplace. Therefore, adopting a skilled and knowledgeable workforce correlated with retention and employee satisfaction.

Oladapo (2014) considered that the talent shortage could be remedied through management teams supporting the implementation of fair performance appraisal through talent management strategies. The author's research found that most HR managers support talent management programs. Unfortunately, HR managers lacked the necessary support from their organizations to initiate a fair talent management strategy. According to Oladapo (2014), talent management is essentially "attracting, selecting, engaging, developing, and retaining employees" (p. 20). It is important to consider these attributes in facilitating the skills required to retain employees. The study conducted by Oladapo revealed that an employer's primary focus should be performance management and retention planning. The researcher suggested that compensation is no longer the driving force behind retention; still, performance appraisal components such as developing knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) are primary drivers of organizational success.

Human Resources strategies influence talent management and employee retention strategies. Hanif and Yunfei (2013) examined the influence of HR practices and talent management on retention within an organization. Hanif and Yunfei suggested that combined talent management and HR practices procured organizational success. The authors attributed succession planning based on performance outcomes and the organization's reputation as influences behind talent retention. The overall functions associated with these HR strategies were assets to an effective retention strategy. The loss

of high-performing employees was a sign that generic HR strategies were not a priority in the organization. Further, it was suggested that there is a profound link between high employee turnover and organizational instability (Hanif & Yunfei, 2013). Paul and Raj (2014) determined that an employer's brand should communicate who they are and what they offer as an organization.

Employer Branding. According to Mosley (2007), the concept of employer branding became apparent in literature during the nineties. The literature on employer branding discussed the importance of internal and external employer branding and the impact on employee retention. Singh and Rokade (2014) suggested that HR managers must initially incorporate a retention strategy in the hiring process. The authors' determined that current labor markets, organizational conditions, and employee equity are the internal and external factors that impact employer branding. Talent is attracted and retained based on how an organization is perceived internally and externally (Singh & Rokade, 2014). According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), if employers want to attract workers and engage current staff members, they must promote the internal and external factors that make them desired employers.

Singh and Rokade (2014) examined strategies to retain high-quality employees. The authors suggested that retention initially began by positioning the most suitable talent in the proper job function. When an employee is hired into the organization, employers must immediately begin implementing talent management strategies conducive to retention such as (a) practical employee orientation, (b) competitive compensation, (c) benefits package, (d) workplaces conveniences (i.e., on-site gym), (e) work-life balance, (f) work environment, (g) career growth opportunities, and (h) employer-employee

relationships (Singh & Rokade, 2014). The listed strategies, in turn, would create a desirable brand image for an organization. This concept encouraged employers to build a positive external reputation by utilizing internal factors.

Additionally, the authors determined that a desirable brand image would entice the most skilled employees with a desire to remain in the organization. Furthermore, when an employer presented an excellent brand image, there was usually a positive organizational culture. The organization's overall identity is created through a branding framework that includes determinants implemented in the organization's performance management system (Singh & Rokade, 2014).

Performance Management Systems

The performance management system (PMS) process manages employee behaviors, results, and organizational outcomes (Ferreira & Otley, 2005). PMS includes elements of appraisal and employee development (Gravina & Siers, 2011). According to Broadbent and Laughlin (2009), PMS in relationship to human resource management systems (HRM) influences the behaviors of employees individually. Ajzen (1991) noted that individuals' beliefs are linked to their behaviors. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory denotes that individual beliefs and outcomes determine a course of action. Employers must understand employees' perceptions of performance appraisals.

According to Jan et al. (2012), it is widespread practice for supervisors to appraise the work of subordinates about 90% of the time during performance appraisals. Harper (2016) describes performance appraisal as a meaningful contribution to growth that must be effective. Performance appraisals help employers determine developmental and regulatory needs such as training, development, coaching for improvement, and

promotion potential (Seidu & Boachie-Mensah, 2012). Most organizations look to appraise performance transparently and fairly. Unfortunately, employees maintain that the performance feedback process seems biased and does not relate to their work (Chowdhury et al., 2018; DeNisi & Kluger, 2000; Grubb, 2007). Employee perceptions of appraisal fairness can impact performance behaviors.

Performance Management at a Glance

Employees' ability to perform a multitude of tasks within an organization is a concept of performance (Saeed et al., 2014). Luthans (2006) conceived that performance is a culmination of tasks executed or not executed by employees. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2014), organizational targets are achieved based on employee performance behaviors. Performance behaviors have been the focus of a myriad of studies, establishing employee performance as significant and essential (Dobre, 2013; Kumar, 2021; Rizwan et al., 2017; Schraeder & Jordan, 2011). Criteria such as quality, quantity, and interpersonal relationships have been used to assist organizations in assessing performance (Bernardin & Russel, 1993).

Furthermore, criteria used to assess performance require accuracy, collaboration, and trustworthiness (Mathis & Jackson, 2002). According to George (2014), employee performance is measured while considering many factors, such as appraisal efficacy and leadership and organizational proficiencies. According to Radebe (2015), performance appraisal is a rudimentary and imperative element of performance management that encompasses a systematic appraisal of employee job performance through implementing business processes and standards.

Performance Management Versus Performance Appraisal

The performance appraisal of employees' performance at work has been of interest to scholars and practitioners for centuries, leading to an interest in managing performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Performance appraisals are the universal HRM tools utilized by organizations to evaluate the efficacy of employees (Pichler, 2016; Tsai & Wang, 2013). Although performance management and performance appraisal are frequently used analogously and assumed the same, the two remain different (Dorsey & Muller-Hanson, 2017). For example, performance management includes an extensive compendium of activities designed to amplify individual and organizational performance, whereas performance appraisal evaluates preceding performance intended to align individual performance to achieve organizational goals (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Dorsey & Muller-Hanson, 2017).

To juxtapose the two, performance appraisal serves as an intermittent formal method by which leaders appraise employees (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Leaders assess employee performance based on specific measurements, score the appraisal, and inform employees of their rating (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Performance management can include a wide range of undertakings, strategies, processes, and interferences designed to help employees improve their performance, beginning with performance appraisals, including feedback, setting goals, incentives, and training to improve performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Thus, performance management systems initially start with performance appraisals and then shift the focus to improving individual performance consistent with goals set to improve organizational performance (Aguinis & Pierce, 2008).

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal and the science which serves as the foundation is directed towards two goals: to accurately measure and assess an employees' job performance and develop a system that will advance employees' and functions in the organization (Chattopadhyay & Ghosh, 2012). To adequately put performance appraisals into context, the intent of the performance appraisal process must be defined. Performance appraisal is a culmination of activities developed by the organization and implemented to assess employee competence, enhance performance, and determine incentives (Fletcher, 2001).

Reviewing an employee's contributions to an organization and how well they meet individual and organizational goals defines the performance appraisal process (Grigoroudis & Zopoundidis, 2012; Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015; Jha, 2016). Employee performance appraisal encourages solid performers to maintain their high-performance level and motivates underperformers to improve (Scott, 2001). According to Sudin (2011), the performance appraisal process aids employees in recognizing, assessing, and improving their performance.

A Historical Perspective of Performance Appraisals

The performance appraisal process in occupational settings was developed in the late 1800s and has become symbolic in the labor force. Performance appraisal is a component of performance management systems (PMS) and has been radically transformed from its original function over time (Johnson, 1886). According to O'Boyle (2013), performance appraisals have traditionally been used for succession planning, performance measurement, and identifying training and development needs. Grote (2011)

notes that performance appraisals have been utilized as a stimulus for altering an organization's culture. The performance appraisal process, as a whole, influences the perceptions of employers and employees. Therefore, there has been a continuous effort to determine if performance appraisals influence organizational outcomes (Soo Oh & Lewis, 2009).

Historically, employees' perceptions of performance appraisals within an organization were not thoroughly considered (Lawler, 2012). According to Dusterhoff et al. (2014), the performance review process did not successfully change the way people work. The most recent research on performance appraisals merely examines limited processes of the rater and specific measures of employee performance (Lee, 2015). Lawler (1994) reveals that those who support the process believe that appraisals can aid employers in defining their employees' work in a motivating and rewarding way. According to Dusterhoff et al. (2014), researchers find that if they look beyond the appraisal outcome, employee perceptions of fairness are influenced by their relationship with the employer. In turn, the lack of focus on employees' acceptance and understanding of the appraisal process contributes to perceived fairness.

Earlier literature supports that most performance appraisal research solely focuses on the needs of the organization's outcomes and not the employees (Fernandes, 2011). Ochoti et al. (2012) reveals that when employees receive a practical performance appraisal, they clearly understand their career paths. The perception of fairness and how employees perceive the appraisal links to an employee's understanding of the process (Dusterhoff et al., 2014). According to Skinner (2005), it is unfortunate that organizations do not effectively use performance appraisals and that they only meet minimal standards.

Perceptions of Performance Appraisals—Benefits and Consequences

Martin et al. (2000) attest that, in the past two decades, data from the United States Courts reveals that a significant number of issues litigated in the judicial system were discrimination cases related to performance appraisals. Numerous researchers accentuate the importance of performance appraisals. Although, present researchers have not been able to identify the proper configuration to effectively assess performance appraisal systems (Iqbal et al., 2015). According to Shaout and Yousif (2014), performance appraisals improve work quality and stimulate employee engagement as a critical factor. Many researchers believe a need exists for proper checks and balances for employee performance related to employee success and positive organizational outcomes.

Daga and Kappor (2014) acknowledge the benefits of performance appraisal: enhancing employee focus, promoting employee trust, reinforcing goals set, enabling communication, determining training needs, and performance improvement. The way employees respond to the review process and performance appraisal influence the outcome of the entire process, including fairness perception, truth, and overall achievement (Iqbal et al., 2015). Vasset (2014) argues that performance appraisals draw criticism due to failure and ineffectiveness, resulting in costs associated with implementation overshadowing the system's benefits.

According to Kampkötter (2017), a significant component in practitioners' literature indicates that performance appraisal comes with substantial financial penalties to numerous employees. According to Shaout and Yousif (2014), organizations depend on the performance appraisal rating to determine employees' contribution to the organization.

The attributes of a successful performance appraisal include two aspects, including personal and demonstrated qualities, which are personality traits. A limited list of unique characteristics measured in performance appraisal includes decisiveness, integrity, dependability, and adaptability; and demonstrated traits include professional knowledge, morale, motivation, and staff development (Daga & Kappor, 2014). Performance appraisals can lead to positive or negative employee behaviors. Although performance appraisals are necessary for organizations, trepidation with the process remains with raters and ratees (Bernardin et al., 2016; Kromerei, 2015; Mulvaney, 2017). An individual's perception of the performance appraisal process is essential to their overall output following the procedure. Coetzee et al. (2015) attest that organizational leaders must regularly conduct employee performance appraisals, as they can improve an employee's effectiveness for the organization. Leaders in organizations should be aware of employee perceptions of performance appraisals, as unknown perspectives can lead to adverse organizational outcomes.

According to Jacobs et al. (2014), an employee's pursuit of feedback from management serves as a motivating factor regarding performance improvement. Iqbal et al. (2015) contend that some scholars do not believe that performance appraisals contribute to HR and PM functions. According to Dechev (2010), performance appraisal continues in the workplace as a laborious process that creates stress and anxiety and negatively influences employee morale, leading to demotivation. However, Taylor et al. (1995) and Maitland (2017) declare performance appraisals are required to make critical HR decisions, including benefits and compensation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Holland et al., 2005), raises, promotions, layoffs, terminations, training

and development needs, and disciplinary action (Cropanzano & Folger, 1991; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Gilliland, 1994; Konosky & Cropanzano, 1991).

Furthermore, performance appraisals remain crucial in enhancing human capital. Leaders should acknowledge their motivating influence (O'Connor & Raile, 2015; Scheers & Botha, 2014). Employees want to know that they are an integral part of an organization's success. Organizational outcomes depend on employees knowing what they do well and how they can improve. The performance appraisal process can serve as a catapult to organizational success. According to Jacobs et al. (2014), as a process, performance appraisals help develop employee performance through clear, concise feedback that encourages employees to do their best by clarifying improvement needs and reinforcing feedback as a source of motivation. Performance appraisals are more effective when organizational leaders establish a succession plan with attainable goals for employees.

The performance appraisal process can serve as a map to individual and organizational success when feedback reflects the environment and the employee's record of accomplishment. According to Medsker and O'Connor (2015), leaders in organizations must ensure feedback given during a performance appraisal is consistent. Consistent feedback reveals that organizational leaders pay attention to an employee's behaviors. When employees receive consistent feedback, they are motivated to do well for the organization. The appraisal process has been perceived as influential in improving the performance and growth of employees when the process is without issues; as a result, it positively impacts business outcomes (Radebe, 2015).

Performance Appraisal Issues

Researchers specify that performance appraisal issues provide reasonable cause to eradicate the system (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016; Kellaway, 2010; Smith, 2018). According to Smith (2018), about 95% of managers' report dissatisfaction with performance appraisals, and 90% of HR professionals deem performance appraisals inaccurate. Consequently, employees disapprove of performance appraisals and believe they are impertinent and untimely (Smith, 2018).

Performance appraisals have often been discredited as the process can be operated as a hierarchical and bureaucratic system maintained by HR rather than frontline managers (Armstrong, 2020). Many problems pose a threat to performance appraisals' value, validity, and reliability (Bright & Black, 2019). Performance appraisal problems focus on two issues (a) problems with the appraiser and (b) problems with the appraisal process (Na-Nan et al., 2021; National Research Council, 1991). Na-Nan et al. (2020) reveal factors that cause performance appraisal problems making them ineffective and the cause of employees' negative fairness perceptions:

The examples of the problems include appraisers' lack of important facts, unclear standards for performance appraisals, appraisers' inattention to the importance of appraisals, appraisers' unpreparedness for reviewing employee performance appraisals, appraisers' dishonest and insincere appraisals, appraisers' lack of appraising skills, employees not being informed about their appraisal results, organizations' lack of appropriate systems for rewards and penalty to support appraisals, no discussion between appraisers and appraisees, and appraisers' unclear appraisals (p. 64).

The ineffective management of the process has impacted the desire for a work environment conducive to the effectiveness and fairness of performance appraisals (Na-Nan et al., 2021). If problems continue with the appraisal process, employees promoted to management positions will continue the vicious cycle contributing to the ongoing reduction of employee retention, enforcing the need to mitigate the problems (Na-Nan et al., 2020).

Beer (1981) notes the predominant objective has been to find a way to deal with performance appraisal effectiveness problems, such as preventing managers' avoidance of the proper process, which causes employees to become defensive and reluctant. According to Armstrong & Taylor (2020), performance appraisals typically focus on wrongdoing rather than the future development of employees —disconnecting the link between the employee and the needs of the business. One of the most common sources of error in performance appraisal is personal bias (Bright & Black, 2019). Due to its seemingly superficial nature, employees resent the performance appraisal process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Moreover, Black and Bright (2019) posit that effective performance appraisals must demonstrate high levels of validity and reliability.

Many suggestions have been advanced to lessen the effects of bias and inaccuracy in the performance appraisal process (Black & Bright, 2019). Employees believe that managers lack the skills to conduct the process properly and have a tendency for biased decisions (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). In turn, personal bias can impede the fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal due to issues such as personal preference for an individual and sexual or racial bias (Black & Bright, 2019). Methods include ensuring appraisers observe their assigned appraisees, minimizing the number of ratees per rater to

minimize rater fatigue, and guaranteeing the rater can recognize bias/error in the appraisal process (Bright & Black, 2019). Organizations utilize many different types of performance appraisals to evaluate employee performance.

Types of Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are cyclical evaluations of employees' job performance concerning an organization's projections and goals (SHRM, 2022). According to Levinson (1976), the performance appraisal process serves three primary functions:

1. Provide clear, concise performance feedback to employees.
2. Serve to modify employee behaviors towards efficient work practices.
3. Provide data to managers to assist with promotions, compensation, and retention decisions.

Furthermore, performance appraisal results have been used to make decisions that influence organizational outcomes (SHRM, 2022). Studies suggest that 90% of Fortune 500 companies use multi-source feedback to appraise employees (Dai et al., 2010; Edwards & Ewen, 1996; Parikh & Phugat, 2019). This literature review focuses on the three performance appraisal methods. Each technique differs in who is appraised, how performance is assessed, and how often. The methods this literature review explores include forced distribution system (FDS), 360-degree-feedback, and management by objectives (MBO).

Forced Distribution System. According to Duffy and Webber (1974), the two chief types of performance appraisal systems that studies have focused on are absolute and relative. Chattopadhyay and Ghosh (2012) postulate that employees' performance is appraised against standards pre-determined by the organization in an absolute rating

system. In a relative appraisal system, employees in relative positions are appraised by comparing them to other employees. Both methods have benefits and drawbacks, but studies have pointed out that the relative appraisal system is superior to the absolute appraisal system (Heneman, 1986; Wanger & Goffin, 1997).

As a relative appraisal process, the forced distribution system (FDS), also known as "forced ranking," is an appraisal method widely used in companies around the globe that determines and compares employees' performance against one another (Chattopadhyay & Ghosh, 2012). FDS is a process that requires managers to assess how well employees perform compared to their peers (Grote, 2005). As a management process, FDS forces managers to discriminate amongst high and low performers by ranking relative performance rather than pre-determined goals (Grote, 2005; Guralnik et al., 2004; Hao, 2021). For example, with a traditional performance appraisal method, the managers determine how well an employee performs individually, but with FDS, the manager determines how well an employee performs compared to other employees in their same role or department (Grote, 2005).

Deemed the "vitality curve" by Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric (GE), FDS uses the bell curve to rank employees (Tichy & Sherman, 2001). According to Grote (2005), about 10% of employees rank at the bottom and are offered an opportunity to develop through training, be placed on probation, or be involuntarily terminated. Additionally, the top 20% of the curve are generously rewarded for their stellar performance, while 70% remain in the middle (Grote, 2005). The pressure of the bell curve can encourage employee performance to a certain extent, but more than likely, the pressure will undermine employee perceptions, diminishing performance (Vaishnav et

al., 2006). Using the relative comparison approach, FDS helps managers validate decisions for talent management strategies, such as training and development, succession planning, and selecting future leaders (Grote, 2005).

The controversial performance appraisal process that grades employees against one another and not against performance standards have been used by Fortune 500 giants including, GE, Goldman Sachs, American Express, Heinz, and Microsoft (Grote, 2005). Experts estimate that 20% of Fortune 500 companies use the FDS appraisal method, which the number continues to grow (Bates, 2003). FDS was developed to alleviate discriminatory practices and rater leniency, known as one of the most troublesome rating errors (McBriarty, 1988; Kane et al., 1995; Chattopadhyay & Gosh, 2012). Blume et al. (2009) report that the four key elements of FDS include consequences for employees with performance, incentives for top-performing employees, feedback rate, and size of comparison groups. A less controversial appraisal process adopted by many organizations is 360-degree feedback. The process utilizes multiple raters to appraise performance and does not compare employees to their peers.

360-Degree Feedback. Feedback plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between required employee performance and employees' perceived performance (Vashishth, 2011). Moreover, performance feedback can benefit individual and team performance—improving employee motivation, fairness perceptions, and retention (Herman et al., 2012). Around 1930, military scientist Johann Baptist Rieffert established a methodology to select military officer candidates, further developed in the 1950s at the Esso Research and Engineering Company, documenting the earliest recorded use of surveys (Bracken et al., 1997). In line with Atkins and Wood (2002), the surge in internet use opened the door

to conducting online appraisals with surveys, increasing the popularity of multi-source/multi-rater feedback over the years. Using feedback in which employees are appraised by peers, multiple supervisors, and subordinates gained momentum, leading to 360-degree feedback (Bracken et al., 1997; Rogelberg, 2007).

The term 360-degree feedback refers to a multi-source appraisal process of obtaining information from all viable internal and external sources (Beehr, 2001; Brutus et al., 1998; Furnham & Treglown, 2021; Garavan et al., 1997; Milliman et al., 2002). According to Roberts (2003), participatory performance appraisal serves as an element of performance appraisal considered as a fundamentally fair, effective performance appraisal process. Bernardin and Beatty (1987) posit that 360-degree feedback could improve performance and manager-employee interaction. Feedback is a crucial element of 360-degree feedback, which is also shared by the management by objectives appraisal process.

Management by Objectives. Introduced by Drucker in 1954, management by objectives (MBO) is an appraisal system incorporating multiple features to establish good management practices: involvement in goal setting, making decisions, and objective feedback (Rodgers & Hunter, 1991). According to Drucker (1954), a base of captivating theory reinforces each process. Rodgers and Hunter (1991) reveal three steps of MBO, which are as follows:

1. Goal-setting with continuous appraisal and improvement of objectives.
2. Collaborative management to encourage understanding of objectives.
3. Managers deliver objective feedback to employees.

MBO is a process by which employees and management collaborate in goal-setting by defining objectives and comparing employee performance against the set objectives (Olibie & Ofojebe, 2014; Paul, 1997; Rossi & Warglien, 1999). Stewart (1993) posits that people drive MBO results to influence innovation through this method.

According to Locke et al. (1981), the most replicable finding in management literature is the progressive relationship between task satisfaction and goal setting. Goal setting in work environments significantly impacts employee performance and satisfaction with work (Harrington & McCaskill, 2022; Steers & Porter, 1974). Lathan and Locke (1979) establish "goal theory" and explain that performance motivation increases when employees receive feedback on specific and achievable goals. Likewise, goals influence employee performance based on action, effort, and follow-up actions over time (Locke, 1967; Ma, 2015; Miles, 2012; Strycharczyk, 2018). Additionally, research indicates that successful performance motivates employees towards increased productivity (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Sleiman & Savah, 2018; Uka & Prendi, 2021).

Despite the importance of the MBO employee performance appraisal technique, as with all other methods, it has advantages, such as creating a competitive edge and the disadvantage of being difficult to practically apply (Islami et al., 2018; Thomson, 1998). Continuous research and analysis exist for the MBO method (Islami et al., 2018). According to Usrof and Elmorsey (2016) and Thomson (1998), Douglas McGregor, John Humble, and George Odiorne contributed to the performance appraisal techniques which developed over many years. The method empowers organizations to set and achieve objectives through proper planning, control, and organization of resources (Olibie & Ofojebe, 2014). According to Rodgers and Hunter (1992), a performance appraisal

process such as MBO may not be ineffective due to implementation but rather perceived as an unfair and ineffective organizational process.

Fairness Perceptions of Performance Appraisals

Perceived fairness is an individual's analysis of goals opposed to outcomes and the perception of fair and unbiased results (Tseng & Kuo, 2014). According to Adams (1963), there are three primary types of fairness perceptions. Narcisse and Harcourt (2008) explain that fairness perceptions are either distributive, procedural, or interactional. Employees determine work fairness based on firsthand experiences. Literature related to fairness perceptions involves organizational trust and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). Specifically, organizational trust is the trust employees have for the organization, its processes, and its ability to remain fair and consistent (Galford & Drapeau, 2003). According to Organ (1988), organizational citizenship behaviors promote effective organizational performance through employee behavior. In research related to organizational behavior, fairness remains an area of interest (Akram et al., 2020; Greenberg, 2011; Moon, 2017). Ambrose and Schminke (2009) reveal that empirical evidence proposes that when managers and organizational leaders treat employees fairly, work behaviors become intrinsically positive.

Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisals

Pioneering research by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) postulate that employee perceptions remain contingent upon Human Resource outcomes to achieve the desired employee performance, perceived work culture, and expected behaviors, which management must delineate. For centuries philosophers ruminated about the act of

perception. According to Noë and Thompson (2002), perception as a philosophy explores the mind metaphysically, seeking to answer the question of perception, the nature of perceived consciousness, and how a perceptual experience can fit into a broader interpretation of the nature of the mind.

Employee Fairness Perceptions of Performance Appraisals

Fairness perceptions of employee performance appraisals have become the primary focus of the performance appraisal process. Fairness associates with justice and researchers adopt several definitions. Peiró et al. (2014) describe perceived fairness as any environmental element perceived by persons or cooperatives as fair based on usual standards. Tseng and Kuo (2014) also note that perceived fairness is an individuals' analysis of goals opposed to outcomes and the perception of results being fair and unbiased. Fairness in organizations remains important because it affects the behaviors of employees and workplace results and hence, can cultivate the successful overall operation of organizations (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

The perceptions of employees represent an imperative role in the performance appraisal process. According to Greenberg and Baron (2003) as a topic, fairness is an individuals' perception of fairness in an organization. Singh and Mishra (2016) contend that the perceived fairness of employee performance appraisal is influenced by an employees' overall commitment and level of job satisfaction. Perceived fairness was first used by John Adams, a workplace and behavioral psychologist, in the 1960s. Research on perceived fairness is linked to Adam's equity theory and is described as distributive, procedural, or interactional. According to Lind and Tyler (1988), the core dimension of justice, procedural justice, tackles the perception of fairness as the accepted practice of

organizational decision-making. Employees' perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness can impact organizational performance.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is defined as an organization's actual results measured against its intended results (Alfred et al., 2012; Murali et al., 2017). Likewise, organizational performance equates to the collusive summation of the performance of all employees (Getnet et al., 2014). Obisi (2011) insists that organizational performance and subsequent effectiveness are only accomplished when employees are fairly and continuously appraised. Hassan et al. (2013) postulates that appraisal fairness is the catalyst that governs employees perceived fairness and prompts satisfaction that maximizes organizational performance.

According to March and Sutton (1997), organizations are purpose mechanisms. The failure of organizations to implement effective performance appraisal processes hinders them from realizing their targeted organizational performance, which impacts competitive advantage (Obisi, 2011). Regrettably, the appraisal process is often characterized by personal influence, which impedes the fairness and objectivity of the process (Obisi, 2011). Performance appraisal is essential to support employees' behaviors towards accomplishing organizational performance (Murali et al., 2017). Historically, human capital has been the most valuable asset in organizations, and employee performance appraisal practices serve as an innate aspect of the organization's life cycle (Getnet et al., 2014). This study will explore employees perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention.

Summary

This chapter examines a phenomenon through an in-depth overview of the four theoretical frameworks of human capital, equity, expectancy, and organizational justice theory. The theories serve as a foundational base of the literature to guide this study. This literature review presents an analysis of the employee perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on retention. The literature review shows that performance appraisal influences retention and employees' desire for fair talent management processes.

The literature reveals the central components of organizational justice as interactional, procedural, and distributive. The justice perceptions uncover unfairness, error, and inequality in the performance appraisal process and could help determine perceived fairness and injustice in the performance appraisal process by citing unfairness perceptions. The talent within an organization sets the tone for success or failure. An organization must focus on talent management from the time of hire throughout an employee's tenure (Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021; Wahyuningtyas, 2015). Implementing fair and effective employee performance appraisal processes may help improve overall organization performance.

CHAPTER III – RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research methodology to explore employees' perceptions of performance appraisals. Crotty (1998) defines research methodology as an approach that shapes the researchers' choice to utilize a specific method linked to the outcome of a study. According to Buckley et al. (1976), the research methodology includes the researcher's approach to finding and solving problems. Qualitative research is appropriate for researchers' exploring a new field or intending to discover issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this study, the researcher focused on discovering issues affecting employee fairness perceptions, specifically how perceived fairness of performance appraisals influenced employee retention.

The importance of qualitative research includes interpreting how the realities of society develop and how participants experience the social significance of phenomena studied (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research governs a person's or a groups' ideas about societal issues. The research design used for this qualitative study includes the phenomenological approach. The approach highlights the investigation and understanding of the interpretation of one's lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). The researcher used phenomenology to focus on the lived experiences of employees.

Managers in organizations who conduct performance appraisals must be conscious of the process and understand the implications of the employee's experience and perceptions of the process. This study aimed to determine if employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisals influences employee retention. Through virtual, semi-structured interviews, the researcher answered the guiding question of this

study, “How does employees’ perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness influence employee retention?”

The literature review and theories associated with this study serve as the foundation that guides the research objectives. The researcher’s use of phenomenology aims to develop the researcher’s understanding of employees’ perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on retention. According to Nutakor (2019), performance appraisal fairness is linked to the enhancement of employee perceptions and leads to employee retention. The findings of this study may assist in bridging the gap between anomalies in the past, and present literature as support for performance appraisals continues to waiver (Nutakor, 2019). According to Mackenzie et al. (2019), organizations’ overall performance appraisal processes are ambiguous. The ambiguity lies in the innocuous content and criteria, as questions and strategies materialize in an ineffective one-size-fits-all approach (Mackenzie et al., 2019). Finkelstein (2019) reveals that leaders must personalize their appraisal processes, especially as it relates to employee development.

Research Objectives

The researcher used a qualitative research methodology with a phenomenological approach to explore employees’ perceived fairness of performance appraisals. The remaining sections of this chapter will describe the research design, population and sampling, Institutional Review Board, instrumentation, data collection, confidentiality, the role of the researcher, validity and reliability, trustworthiness, data analysis, and summary. The following research objectives guide this study:

RO1 – Describe the demographics of participants (job role, gender, age, and employment tenure).

RO2 – Explore the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

RO3 – Explore the fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

RO4 – Explore the influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees.

Research Design and Methodology

This study utilized a phenomenological research method using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) theoretical orientation approach informed by phenomenology, idiography, and hermeneutics. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), IPA factors provide perception from the view of participants. The IPA is a qualitative approach that aims to postulate detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl first articulated phenomenology in the 1900s and was one of the most influential 20th-century philosophers (Beyer, 2020). Husserl defines phenomenology as the science of core perceptions, centered on intentionality, approached plainly in the first person (Beyer, 2020). Additionally, Moustakas (1994) posits that phenomenology is a research method that allows researchers to develop a rich understanding of a phenomenon based on participants' lived experiences. In a

phenomenological study, the researcher analyzes the thought behind a specific phenomenon (Ejimabo, 2015). Lived experiences in qualitative research represent the researchers' understanding of the participants' human experiences and preferences related to the participant's perceived understanding (Given, 2008). Phenomenology undertakes disciplines whose subject matter calls for interpretative approaches as the subject interprets human experience, intentions, human beliefs; hermeneutic in nature (George, 2020).

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). According to McCaffrey et al. (2012), in the past 25 years, the development of hermeneutics as a research approach remains valuable for research that includes the need to relate to humans. Hermeneutics plays a role in research requiring an interpretative approach concerning the intentions of human beliefs, actions, and the meaning of their experiences (George, 2020; Mantzavinos, 2014; Ramberg & Giesdal, 2005). In addition to hermeneutics, phenomenology is also idiographic in nature. Idiography is defined as the concern for individuality and the commitment to rigorous analysis of subjective phenomena (Moses & Knutsen, 2012).

Idiography

Idiography serves as the final theoretical underpinning of IPA. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), IPA is idiographic, and researchers using this approach are committed to exploring in-depth experiences before adopting general claims. Idiography focuses on details of individuals' lived experiences of a specific topic (Love et al., 2020). Moreover, Smith (2004) reveals support for the qualitative methodology, as the

interview process is the most favored and feasible approach to capture accounts idiographic in nature. In this study, the researcher explored factors common to participants. Using IPA helped explore the objectives of this study by capturing employee perceptions of their organization's performance appraisal process.

Population and Sampling

According to Trochim (2006), a population includes a similar group of persons who become the primary focus of the study. In context, a population consists of a comprehensive fixed set of people who serve as the target group for the study (Kadam & Bhalerao, 2010). The target population is the total set of units used to make inferences from the data and defines the units intended for generalization (Lavrakas, 2008).

Determining the sample size is imperative in research methodology (Kaur, 2021).

Selecting a sample involves the researcher choosing the correct number of participants to include in the study (Kaur, 2021). The sample size derives from the population. Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) denote that researchers conduct studies based on a sample of subjects rather than total populations.

Population

Creswell (2007) denotes the importance of selecting the appropriate participants for interviews to ensure willingness for vulnerability and truthfulness in order to obtain reliable data for the study. Participants for this study met specific criteria. Participants must hold mid-level manager positions. Participants must also be employed at the organization for a minimum of two years and have participated in at least one annual performance appraisal. The minimum of two years of employment requirement ensured meaningful managerial relationships have developed, employees understand the

organization's performance appraisal process, and the participant's performance has been evaluated. Study participants are required to work at a specific Fortune 500 company.

According to Fortune (2020), Fortune 500 companies are ranked by aggregate revenues for the corresponding fiscal year. Companies stabilize economic growth, and employees are an essential asset to the organization (Aslam et al., 2015). Fortune 500 companies benefit from examining factors influencing employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process (Harrington & Lee, 2015; Harrington & McCaskill, 2022; Law & Tam, 2007). According to Capelli and Tavis (2016), one-third of U.S. corporations and 60% of Fortune 500 companies adopt an enforced rating system making the appraisal process less about individual performance but instead ranks employees against each other. According to Aslam et al. (2015), companies must gain employee satisfaction and commitment, motivating improved performance outcomes. The proposed population for this study includes full-time mid-level managers within various functional areas of a Fortune 500 company. The researcher selected a smaller group of participants from the population for the sample.

Sampling

The researcher used purposeful sampling for this study. Patton (2002) explains purposeful sampling as a standard in qualitative research that involves identifying and selecting data-rich events related to a phenomenon. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest that purposeful sampling involves one's aspiration to discern, comprehend, and acquire perspectives from proficient professionals in an occupational area. According to Patton (2015), participants must be familiar with the specific research topic when using

purposeful sampling. Suri (2011) denotes that purposeful sampling allows researchers to choose participants that meet the criteria for the study.

According to Baker and Edwards (2012), determining the exact sample size in qualitative research is difficult due to its exploratory and subjective nature. According to Sandelowski (1996), qualitative research sample sizes are generally smaller than quantitative studies. Juxtaposed with quantitative research, which typically requires a large sample, qualitative research uses a smaller sample through approaches such as purposeful and snowballing sampling strategies (Creswell, 2003). Further, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) reveal that a fixed number does not determine the number of participants in qualitative research studies; instead, this is determined by guiding research questions, resources, analysis of progress, and information collected to support the study.

According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the qualitative researcher determines a sufficient number of interviews to achieve data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) also reveal that some researchers reach saturation with small samples (i.e., three) while others require a larger sample (i.e., 10) to understand that saturation is about attaining a depth of understanding and not about a specific number. In qualitative research, saturation focuses on quality and not quantity and is reached when no new information emerges across participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Importantly, saturation is emphasized in qualitative methods, requiring ending data collection when substantive information no longer emerges (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Hennink and Kaiser (2019), saturation, a principle used in qualitative research, determines when adequate data from a study can develop into a robust and acceptable understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher in this study

refrained from adding participants after reaching data saturation when additional perspectives or new data could not be attained.

Smith et al. (2009) suggest sample sizes for student studies range between three to six and four to 10 for professional doctorates or researchers unfamiliar with IPA. Further, Creswell (2013) denotes that phenomenology studies generally include three to 10 participants. In phenomenological studies, sample sizes can range from two to 25 participants (Alase, 2017). According to Smith et al. (2009) and Creswell (2013), the suggested sample size in qualitative research falls between three and 10 participants. Furthermore, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) denote that IPA research studies have been published with as little as one and up to 15 participants. According to Turpin et al. (1997), the appropriate number of participants in doctoral studies ranges from a sample of six to eight. As indicated, the size of the sample can vary greatly for qualitative research.

The number of participants for this study was minute compared to the number of employees working at the Fortune 500 company. For this study, the researcher's sample size ranged between four to 10 participants based on the emergence of new themes. In this study, the sample size was determined by gathering willing participants from a Fortune 500 company to share their lived experiences of the performance appraisal process within their organization. In addition, the researcher included three senior-level managers to triangulate the data. Triangulation aligns numerous perspectives and a broader understanding of the phenomenon (Hastings, 2010).

Through initial communication with the organization's Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP), the researcher defined participant criteria, as previously stated,

and requested a list of names of employees that met the criteria and were willing to participate in the interview process (see Appendix A). The researcher conducted interviews once the participant sample was determined. Before sampling, the researcher ensured all informed consent requests were signed as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Institutional Review Board

According to Shadish et al. (2002), the IRB “monitors research with human participants by reviewing the experimental and informed consent procedures for ethical problems” (p. 283). The study involved human participants, therefore requiring the researcher to follow IRB guidelines at The University of Southern Mississippi. The IRB serves as an ethics committee protecting human participants in research through independent review of the ethically acceptable proposals for human research (Grady, 2015). The researcher will submit the proposed study to the IRB for approval following proposal approval from the dissertation committee. Documented IRB approval is required before data collection begins (see Appendix B). As a matter of ethics and to uncover potential bias in this study, the researcher specifically addressed the role of the researcher in the IPA process.

Role of the Researcher

Sutton and Austin (2015) denote that in qualitative research, the role of the researcher attempts to retrieve the feelings and thoughts of participants. Qualitative research’s interpretative nature inhibits the absolute elimination of bias in data collection and analysis and develops a resolute conclusion through the researcher's lens (Creswell, 2003). According to Merriam and Tisdale (2002), the researcher discovers latent beliefs

obscured in daily dialogues. Moreover, the primary role of the researcher is to protect participants and their data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this IPA study, the researcher presented a straightforward evaluation of employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisals through the unearthing of thematic synthesis from participants' lived experiences. This study included virtual interviews of participants who may share the same perceptions as the researcher on the performance appraisal process and its influence on employee retention.

Reflection or reflexivity is required in qualitative work on behalf of the researcher to provide readers with perspective and understanding of the research process (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Reflexivity refers to the researcher's acknowledgment of their role in a particular study (Finlay, 1998; Frey, 2018; Lambert et al., 2010). The objective of reflexivity is for the researcher to identify personal beliefs that may unconsciously impact the research through realizing how their agenda affects the research (Ackerly & True, 2010; Frank, 1997; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jootun et al., 2009; Morse, 1991; Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991). Reflexivity presents limitations, yet it personifies candor and trustworthiness; essential intrinsic traits of the method (Creswell, 2003). Journaling occurred before the implementation of in-depth interviews and during, but only to capture nonverbal behaviors that add to the context of the participants' verbal responses. The researcher should not ignore personal biases but reflect upon articulating ideas and partialities through reflexivity, granting readers a greater understanding of filters through questions posed (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

According to Creswell (2003), the personal self becomes inextricable from the researcher-self. The researcher acknowledges the presence of personal bias as an outcome

of data collection and analysis. The researcher will follow IPA guidelines leveraging hermeneutics to assist with interpretation. According to Sutton and Austin (2015), bias is not inherently adverse; although unavoidable, the researcher should be forthcoming through comprehensible and well-defined articulation to readers.

In prior years, the researcher served as an employee at a Fortune 500 company in the financial services industry. In this previous role, the researcher was a ratee in the performance appraisal process in the organization. Additionally, the researcher worked in a management role for many years at a Fortune 500 company and served as the rater of subordinates. In addition to an awareness of researcher bias, participants should have an awareness of the purpose and goals of this study.

Informed Consent

Participants as human subjects were informed of the purpose of the study. The researcher ensured that all participants submitted informed consent documentation. Creswell (2013) denotes that the researcher must obtain written permission from all participants in phenomenological research. The researcher sent an email to prospective participants. Once emails were returned from willing participants, the researcher sent a follow-up email to prospective participants detailing the interview process and the purpose of this study. The willing participants received the consent form (see Appendix C) via email, following a confirmation to proceed in the research. The researcher protected the participants' privacy by exercising confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Ethical concerns must be considered in qualitative research as the researcher participant relationship required the researcher to protect participant information by

maintaining informed consent and confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009; Sanjari et al., 2014). The researcher followed all guidelines specified by The University of Southern Mississippi's IRB, ensuring that all participants' identifying demographics, such as names, organization, and characteristics obtained during communication, remain only with the researcher. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher assigned pseudonyms in place of participants' names on all materials associated with the research. The assigned pseudonyms were used throughout this study and presented in data collection, data analysis, and results. According to Given (2016), the researcher should ensure all findings are administered and disclosed with reverence in the most appropriate ways. Participation in this study did not present risks to participants (i.e., the researcher will not disclose the company or study participants' legal names). The researcher also informed participants they could withdraw from the study at any time. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services code (45CFR 46.115(b)) all investigators must retain IRB records for three years minimum after research completion (n.d.). Following the 3-year retention period, the researcher will shred and destroy participant consent forms.

As specified in the data collection process, the researcher audio recorded each interview. Recorded data and consent forms are locked in a separate file cabinet at the researcher's home, isolated from the researcher's personal belongings for a maximum of three years. The researcher will maintain non-identifying data indefinitely for future research studies. Due to the nature of this qualitative research study, the researcher maintains participant confidentiality as IPA research requires interaction with human

subjects. Data collection occurred through interviews with the researcher serving as the primary instrument.

Instrumentation

According to Smith et al. (2009), when researchers conduct a phenomenological study, they obtain data directly from individuals experiencing the phenomenon. The phenomenology approach provides researchers the best opportunity to recognize the subconscious forethought of research participants' lived experiences (Alase, 2017). This qualitative research methodology imparts additional ascendancy to the exploratory proficiency required for researchers to investigate and conduct their research studies (Alase, 2017). The researcher served as the primary instrument for this study and developed combined interview protocol, script, and question guide. The combined guide includes semi-structured, open-ended questions for mid-level managers (see Appendix D). The in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviewing method remains the most popular in IPA research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The researcher conducted virtual interviews to explore and identify employees' fairness perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on retention. According to Oltmann (2016), face-to-face interviews are the most reliable qualitative research method. Interviews provide the researcher with in-depth information related to the beliefs and experiences of participants (Turner, 2010). Extracting firsthand accounts rich and thorough with information from participants serves as the researcher's primary focus (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher utilized the semi-structured interview process previously described to conduct interviews. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews involve dialogue amongst

the researcher and participants steered by flexible procedures such as asking additional follow-up questions, inquiring for detailed understanding, and annotations for later review. The semi-structured interview presents the researcher with the opportunity to ask questions in an expedient order (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Further, the semi-structured interviewing process supports the researcher in personalizing the process from interview to interview (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

According to Creswell (2007), many interview designs exist to acquire concentrated and valuable data through qualitative analyses. Legard et al. (2003) note that an in-depth interview should seem natural. According to Silverman (2013), the researcher should prepare an interview guide with questions to serve only as a guideline during the interview process. Gall et al. (2003) note three typical formats for qualitative interview design, which include (a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach, and (c) standardized open-ended interviews. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to collect participant perceptions.

For this study, the researcher used the standardized open-ended interview technique, allowing participants to contribute detailed information and grant the interviewer an opportunity to inquire further based on interviewee responses (Gall et al., 2003). To maintain consistency, the researcher followed a researcher-developed script in addition to following the interview protocol. The use of open-ended questions allowed for a detailed contribution from participants, enabling the researcher to probe and create a journal of follow-up questions. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), semi-structured, in-depth interviews require participants to respond to preset open-ended questions and are used extensively by researchers.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose that the semi-structured interview allows participants to discuss information related to their lived experiences and perspectives. McNamara (2009) confirms that open-ended questions are essential during interviews. The researcher created the interview questions by developing a questionnaire and an interview guide that included semi-structured questions. The instrument helped the researcher align employee experiences with their perceptions of the organization's performance appraisal process. The researcher posed questions that gathered participants' experiences as ratees receiving performance appraisals. The questions focused on performance appraisal fairness and effectiveness and the influence on employee retention.

The instrument consists of 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions prepared by the researcher. Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 interview questions for a phenomenological study. According to Smith et al. (2009), the most crucial aspect at the beginning of an interview includes building rapport with the participant. Using the IPA interview process, the researcher focused on putting participants at ease. The researcher understands that the content and course of a good interview may change (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, the researcher must be willing to make minor adjustments to interview questions based on participant responses (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher explored employees perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on retention by developing interview questions inspired by the Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal questionnaire created by Iqbal et al. (2019) (see Appendix E).

Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal Survey

The EPA measures the purpose and effectiveness of performance appraisal failure in organizations based on employee perceptions and reactions (Iqbal et al., 2019). The researcher used the EPA survey questionnaire as a guide to create the interview questions for this study with the authors' permission (see Appendix F). The instrument assisted the researcher in capturing employees' lived experiences of the performance appraisal process.

Interview Questions

The interview guide includes 16 open-ended questions. The first section contains preliminary questions, the second section contains performance appraisal effectiveness questions, the third section contains perceived fairness of performance appraisal questions, the fourth section contains retention questions, and the final section asks demographic questions.

The first section includes three introductory interview questions that serve as thought-provoking questions to help encourage participant interaction and response—in turn, allowing the researcher to build rapport and establish trust with the participants. According to Vale (2013), prompting questions explore the unknown as they analyze the validity of assumptions. The interview questions are reflective and prompt the participants to dig deeper into their history with the organization. The first question asks participants how long they have served in their current role and what they enjoy most. The second question asks how long the participants' have been employees with their organization. Finally, the third question asks if the participants have been promoted and explains their promotion history with the organization. The next section of questions

prompts participants to describe their performance appraisal experience in their organization and determine if the process is effective.

Effective Performance Appraisal

The second section asks participants four questions on performance appraisal effectiveness. The first question asks participants how often the performance appraisal process occurs and explains the process. The second question asks if participants clearly understand their employer's expectations and if they are offered the opportunity to share feedback during the performance appraisal process. The third question asks participants if they have experienced bias during the appraisal process and if improper comments have been made by their supervisor during their performance appraisal. The fourth question asks participants to describe how they feel about the performance appraisal process at their organization and if there has been any change since their last appraisal. The next section of questions prompts participants to describe their fairness perceptions of the performance appraisal process.

Perceived Fairness

The third section asks participants three questions on how they perceive the fairness of the performance appraisal process at their organization. The first question asks participants how they perceive the performance appraisal process within their organization, whether it is fair, reflects their work, and how much time is given to the process. The second question asks participants if the performance appraisal process is effective and to explain the appeal process if they disagree with their performance appraisal results. The third question asks participants if the supervisor is ethical during the performance appraisal process based on their perception of ethics and if subjectivity

is an issue during the appraisal process. The next section of questions prompts participants to describe their perceived fairness of performance effectiveness to help determine the influence on retention.

Retention

The fourth section asks participants two questions. The first question asks participants if they are willing to help the organization succeed and if they plan to maintain employment at the organization for the next five years. According to Zenger and Folkman (2015), earlier research examines performance appraisal feedback from 320,000 employees in various organizations which reveals that the most unhappy employees were mid-level managers with tenure between five to 10 years. The second question asks participants if the results of their performance appraisal impacted their decision to remain employed with the organization. The final section asks demographic questions.

Demographics

The fifth and final section collects demographic data. According to Allen (2017), demographic questions grant researchers access to participants' backgrounds providing context for data collection to analyze and describe participants. The researcher asked six demographic questions. The first question asks the participants' age. The second question asks the participants' gender. The third question asks the participants to reveal their highest level of education. The researcher includes a mapping of research objectives linked to each interview question described above.

Table 1 presents the interview questions. Participants' interview questions link to the four research objectives guiding this study. Table 1 illustrates the four research objectives mapped to each interview question. The researcher developed a proper

interview schedule to organize the interview process and collect data necessary for thematic analysis.

Table 1

Research Objectives linked to Interview Questions

Research Objectives (ROs)	Interview Questions
RO1 Describe the demographics of participants (i.e., job role, gender, age, and employment tenure).	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q14, Q15, Q16
RO2 Explore the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.	Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q10, Q13
RO3 Explore the fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.	Q8, Q9, Q10, Q13
RO4 Explore the influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees.	Q11, Q12, Q13

Interview Schedule

The novice IPA researcher should focus on the interview using an interview scheduling guide (Smith & Osborn, 2015). An interview schedule assisted the researcher in engaging in the interview process, increasing interviewer responsiveness, and enabling active listening skills. The researcher optimized interview time as the interview schedule served as a guide to explore participants’ perceptions broadly and methodically while keeping the interview focused on the desired course of action (Jamshed, 2014). The interview schedule aims to organize the interview process and helps prepare and frame the process. The researcher used an interview guide as part of the interview procedures to cultivate a comfortable and inviting experience for online Zoom participants. The

researcher utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis to organize and disseminate the data.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The interpretive phenomenological analysis is consistent with its phenomenological origins seeking to recognize meanings attached to individual human experiences by exploring experiences on its own terms (Smith et al., 2009). Creswell (2013) denotes IPA organizes and assembles analyzed data as defined by participants received in the data collection process. According to Tomkins (2017), IPA uses methodical exploration of one's personal experience. The core objective of IPA research is to investigate and understand individuals lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith et al. (2009) state that IPA explores how individuals make sense of paramount life experiences. The core objective of IPA research is investigating and understanding individuals lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Subsequently, IPA expands well beyond being solely descriptive as the researcher is obligated to deliver an interpretive explanation of participants' experiences within their individual milieu (Noon, 2017).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Method

Framed by Smith et al. (2012), IPA is a qualitative research approach investigating how individuals make sense of their key life experiences. The IPA is the methodological approach to examining meaningful work and consists of three scopes: phenomenological, heuristic, and idiographic. The IPA approach aligns with qualitative research as it has a phenomenological foundation and explores lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), interpretive researchers examine the experience to create a context of an individual's circumstances.

The methodology of IPA is described as double hermeneutics having a dual interpretation process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008). According to Smith and Osborn (2008), initially, study participants create meaning of their world followed by the researcher interpreting the meaning and making sense of the meaning. Using the IPA approach, the pragmatic elements of a study will increase due to the relationship cultivated through the approach, which allows researchers to progress simultaneously with their participants (Alase, 2017). In this study, responses from participants supported the researcher in interpreting and comprehending delineated experiences.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Process

Smith et al. (2009) denote that analysis occurs with six steps in IPA studies. Although the six steps are not a required guideline of IPA, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) assert IPA offers flexible guidelines to adapt according to the research objectives. The researcher will follow Smith et al.’s (2009) data analysis guidelines for this study. An illustration of the six IPA steps is depicted in Figure 2.

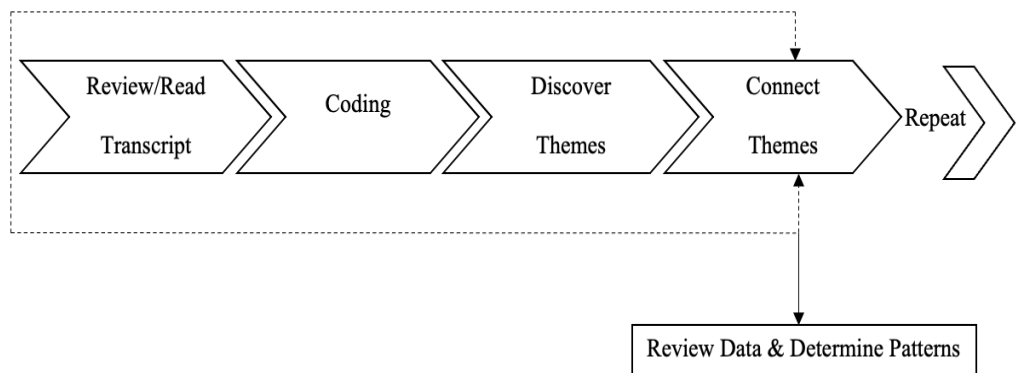


Figure 2. Data Analysis Process.

IPA six-step journey adapted from Smith et al. (2009).

The first and second steps complement one another. Step one involves reviewing, reading, and re-reading the transcript to understand the data. The researcher read and reviewed for errors and made corrections as needed. The researcher read transcripts multiple times and listened to audio recordings of the interviews. Using in-depth interviews as a sole method cannot efficiently elucidate a phenomenon requiring additional measures to validate the process. Therefore, the researcher transcribed recorded participant responses for accuracy. The researcher reviewed the transcribed documents two to three times to confirm accuracy. This process allows researchers to make sense of the data involving close interpretative engagement on behalf of the participants (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009).

In the second step, the researcher coded the data seeking additional indicators of a shift in the conversation with participants. The coding process allows the researcher to transform data collected into meaningful categories through labeling and organizing recurring themes to determine the relationships between them (Allen, 2017). This iterative process facilitates finding new information not prominent in preliminary readings (Jeong & Othman, 2016). The researcher coded by hand, accessed NVivo for coding and theme development, transcribed digital recordings to capture interview content in its entirety, and used open-ended, semi-structured, virtual teleconference interviews to garner participants' lived experiences.

Step three involved the identification of emergent themes. According to Smith et al. (2009), the researcher must develop concise emerging themes significant enough to be reminiscent of the source from which themes originate. The researcher paid close attention to emerging themes as they reflected possible participant concerns with

employee fairness perceptions, specifically how perceived fairness of performance appraisals influence employee retention. Creswell (2014) posits the narrative is prepared with no more than six themes, and once themes are determined, the researcher should delineate the accurate implications of the data. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), researchers that conduct IPA studies should focus on depth rather than breadth of the study. The researcher's attention to original data sources and guidance by the literature ensure the addressing of emerging themes (Jeong & Othman, 2016).

Steps four and five involve finding connections between emergent themes and repeating steps one through four (Jeong & Othman, 2016). According to Smith and Osborn (2007), clustering connects themes in qualitative research. The researcher notated to develop categories through the creation of nodes. A node is an assortment of references about a specific theme gathered through coding (QSR International, n.d.). The categories consisted of all common themes discovered in the coding process. The researcher repeated the initial steps to validate the data analysis process to increase the study's trustworthiness. According to Yardley (2017), when the six steps methodically assimilate, they heighten rigor and trustworthiness requirements. According to Polit and Beck (2014) and Connelly (2016), trustworthiness is the degree of confidence in a researcher's methods, data, and interpretation.

Finally, step six involves the researcher seeking patterns from all interviews (Jeong & Othman, 2016). The researcher categorized, analyzed, and interpreted data through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis or finding themes breaks down and organizes rich data in qualitative research (Rosala, 2019). According to Smith et al. (2009), patterns cluster based on information regarded as significant by the researcher.

Rosala (2019) notes that coding observations and notations lead to discovering themes. The six-step analysis process contributes to the researcher's delineating participants' shared experiences. The researcher aimed to alleviate personal bias to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

Validity and Reliability

Researchers can use various sources to increase the study's validity (Yin, 2014). According to Patton (2015), studies with a sole source are prone to errors such as researcher bias and loaded interview questions. The researcher used validation tactics to support the validity of this study. Validity rationalizes how the data collected by the researcher covers the area of investigation (Ghuri & Gronhaug, 2005). Validating perspectives alleviate ethical concerns in research, such as confidentiality, beneficence, and informed consent from the beginning until the end of the study (Creswell, 2013; Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).

Additionally, Leung (2015) asserts that qualitative research validity conveys the aptness of data, tools, and procedures. In-depth interviews as a sole method cannot efficiently interpret a phenomenon alone, requiring additional measures to validate the process. According to Creswell (2013), credible studies are developed through validity. Therefore, validity and reliability remain critical components of research overall (Brink 1993; Tappen, 2011). The researcher used member checking, reflexivity, and triangulation strategies during data collection and data analysis for this study. A description of each concept used to ensure the validity and reliability of the study follows.

Member Checking

In qualitative research, member checking serves as a vital aspect of developing trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stake, 1995).

According to Birth et al. (2016), member checking, also known as respondent validation, is a method for exploring the credibility of results. The member checking strategy grants participants the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy, increasing validity and reliability. This strategy ensures data is reported accurately. Merriam (2002) posits that member checking would allow a review of the researcher and participant's data to corroborate accuracy before adding the information to the study results. The researcher also used reflexivity to enhance credibility and alleviate bias while documenting employee perceptions.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity limits the researcher's influence related to the direction and outcomes of this study. In qualitative research, reflexivity monitors and enriches the researchers' accuracy considering the researcher's firsthand experiences and beliefs (Cutcliffe, 2003). Reflexivity encompasses journaling for individual introspection and facilitates understanding of unanticipated encounters in research to improve the researcher's personal awareness (Meyer & Willis, 2018; Oliphant & Bennett, 2020). Furthermore, reflexive journaling assists researchers in recalling experiences that may otherwise be overlooked, encouraging iterative efforts to understand and resolve research (Meyer & Willis, 2018). The researcher's adoption of reflexivity served as a form of validation in the triangulation process.

Triangulation

Triangulation, a form of data cross-checking, encompasses several data sources to validate themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). According to Maxwell (2005), triangulation decreases risks that the researcher's conclusion will only reveal systemic biases and limitations of a specified data collection method. Utilizing the methodological triangulation process, the researcher adopted the IPA framework to ensure interview and research questions related to the participants' experiences. Triangulation is a secondary validation process to elucidate corresponding characteristics of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999).

In addition to conducting 10 semi-structured, virtual interviews with mid-level managers in a Fortune 500 company, the researcher also conducted three interviews with senior-level managers to triangulate the data (see Appendix G). Touted by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), triangulation is the direct approach to improve internal validity in qualitative studies. The process of triangulating increases the quality and credibility of a researcher's study by offsetting the concern that findings are the product of a single, possibly biased method of the researcher's own beliefs (Patton, 2015). The researcher reviewed participant interview transcripts to uncover themes to determine if the themes were similar to those from the triangulated interviews (senior-level managers). The triangulation process involved detecting recurring words and phrases between the two groups of managers to connect the themes between the groups.

Finally, the researcher reviewed the interview responses and cataloged them into themes based on the participants' perceptions. According to Creswell (2013), additional perspectives grant researchers' the capability to validate their findings. According to

Patton (2015), qualitative researchers triangulate various perspectives through observations and auditory perception. Triangulation involves gathering information from numerous sources to substantiate the validity of the data collected (Lillie & Sippola, 2011; Yin, 2012). In summary, triangulation supports the trustworthiness of the study through improving validity, reliability, and credibility.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of results lies at the core of effective qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). Polit and Beck (2014) define trustworthiness as the degree of confidence in the researcher's data, analysis, and procedures. According to Miles et al. (2014), disclosing researcher bias is the foundation of trustworthiness. Researchers must establish protocols and methods essential to their study considered laudable by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the criterion for trustworthiness includes (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) confirmability, (d) authenticity, and (e) transferability. The researcher's intrinsic biases and views reflect throughout the study's metaphysical assumptions and conceptual perspectives. The researcher mitigated personal bias by implementing pilot interviews to test the efficacy of interview questions, member checking that allowed participants to validate their responses, and triangulation with senior-level managers to ensure responses were plausible. The following section includes the detailed data collection plan, which consists of the number of weeks scheduled to complete this study, a breakdown of phases, and tasks associated with this study.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, data collection is necessary for the researcher to understand participants' perspectives and experiences related to the study's objectives (Creswell, 2013). The researcher coordinated schedules with participants to conduct interviews via Zoom teleconferencing at a convenient time for the participant. In research, coordinating meeting times most suitable for participants' is a technique for improving response rates (Dillman, 1978). According to Frohlich (2002), it is vital to maximize response rates for three specific reasons (a) when non-response is high; there is a risk that data will be biased, (b) many studies require a fair number of responses for validity, and (c) high response rates reflect research relevance and rigor of the study in the eyes of those the researcher wishes to influence. Tedin and Hofstetter (1982) denote that participants are more likely to respond if they perceive the researchers' study as relevant.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection process began once the researcher received approval from The University of Southern Mississippi's IRB and the researcher's dissertation committee. The researcher conducted two pilot interviews. The pilot interview serves to test the appropriateness of the interview questions and to help the researcher improve the interview guide prior to conducting the actual interviews (Abdul Majid et al., 2017). The pilot interview also helped the researcher become comfortable asking the interview questions. According to Malmqvist et al. (2019), the pilot interview further increases the study's validity, reliability, and credibility. The researcher used pilot interviews to assess potential researcher bias as at one point in her career she was a member of the study's

population. Chenail (2011) denotes pilot interviews serve to create an interview protocol that helps produce proposed data and alleviates potential researcher bias. The data collection plan is organized into three phases.

Phase I

The researcher sent an introductory email (see Appendix H) to the participants' detailing the study and introduce the researcher to confirm participation in the initial phase. Before interviews were scheduled, the researcher sent an informational email to prospective participants, explaining to recipients that participation remains optional. The informative email also included consent forms with the request to read, sign, and return to confirm participation. Following the informational email, virtual interviews were scheduled, confirming the date and time.

Phase II

In Phase II, the researcher sent reminder emails (see Appendix I) to confirm participation. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), most IPA interviews last no more than 1 hour. Therefore, for this study, interviews with each participant did not exceed 60 minutes. Once willing participants were identified, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to document relevant observations and self-reflection. According to Patton (2002), it is best to keep note-taking to a minimum during in-depth interviews to avoid distractions. The researcher developed notes to determine if additional questions or responses were necessary during the one-on-one virtual interview process.

In-depth interviews typically use audio recordings to capture data, and researchers transcribe the data collected later (Rosenthal, 2016). The researcher conducted virtual interviews utilizing Zoom and a digital voice recorder to ensure that all

details were captured. The researcher used the professional automated transcription service Rev.com to transcribe interview audio recordings following the virtual interviews. The transcription process can be long and tedious; hence, the expertise of the transcriber is essential (Rosenthal, 2016).

Finally, the researcher emailed a copy of the transcripts to participants for review. This practice is known as member checking. Member checking is a validation technique that examines data credibility by returning results to participants to review for accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). Through member checking, the participants validated transcribed data for accuracy (see Appendix J). Participants were granted three days to notate changes on the initial transcript which allowed the researcher to implement required changes into the final transcript. Participant validation of transcripts allowed the researcher to move forward in the analysis process and identify emerging themes.

After the participant transcription review, the researcher reviewed transcribed data for emerging themes utilizing IPA to find common themes in interview responses. The researcher used manual hand-coding and NVivo to analyze participant responses. Once member checking responses were received, the researcher sent thank you emails to the study participants (see Appendix K).

Phase III

The final phase, Phase III, concludes the data collection phase. In this phase, the researcher ensured that all data collection tasks were completed and move forward to report the final results and conclusions. Table 2 illustrates the three phases of data collection planned for this study. The degree of confidence in the researcher's data allowed for proper transition into the data analysis phase of the study.

Table 2

Data Collection Plan

Week	Task
Pre-Study Week 0	<p>Received approval from The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB).</p> <p>Conducted a "pilot test" interview.</p>
Phase I Week 1-3	<p>Sent an email to invite prospective participants.</p> <p>Received confirmatory emails from participants stating their willingness to participate.</p> <p>Sent informed consent to confirmed participants and request the form be read, signed, and returned.</p> <p>Sent an email to schedule interview dates and times.</p>
Phase II Week 4-8	<p>Sent a reminder email to participants to confirm scheduled interviews.</p> <p>Conducted interviews and record each session.</p> <p>Sent recorded audio to the transcription service following each interview.</p> <p>Emailed transcribed data to participants to review for accuracy (edit transcripts as needed).</p> <p>Reviewed transcribed data for themes.</p> <p>Determined saturation.</p> <p>Documented self-reflection for each interview in a journal. Continue journaling for reflexivity.</p> <p>Sent post-interview thank you email to participants.</p>

Table 2 (continued).

Week 9 From interviews, determined codes and themes.

Triangulated interview data.

Phase III

Week 10-11 Completed data analysis.

Week 12-16 Complied final results and conclusion.

Data Analysis

Following the data collection phase, the researcher utilized the IPA and NVivo software to analyze interview transcripts for this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), for video, audio, and document files, NVivo is the most used qualitative software. NVivo is the most effective tool for analyzing qualitative data and is the most recommended qualitative software (Ali & Lodhi, 2017). NVivo software will assist the researcher in analyzing and interpreting data using the IPA approach. According to Hutchison et al. (2010), data must be collected correctly through interviews. The researcher used NVivo research software, which assisted in the data transcription process by arranging, analyzing, and interpreting data.

The data was coded both by hand and electronically in this qualitative data analysis. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), data analysis, along with the reporting of interviews, occurs concurrently as other analyses and reporting occur. Analysis using IPA assists the researcher in utilizing the interview methodology to collect data and explore rich, in-depth interpretations of participants' life experiences. According to Patton (2002), qualitative analysis takes the reader into the intimate

environment of the participant and involves a dense description of the content presented during in-depth interviews.

Table 3

Data Analysis Plan

Objective	Data Collected	Data Category	Data Analysis
RO1	Job role, gender, age, and employment tenure	Nominal/ordinal	Descriptive statistics
RO2	Effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes
RO3	Fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes
RO4	Influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes

Data analysis can be divided into three stages and include (a) reducing the text; (b) exploring the text; and (c) and integrating the exploration (Attride-Strling, 2001).

Interview data should be coded before the development of themes. Hutchison et al. (2010) reveal that the capability of NVivo is best for coding for consistency during the logical progression in its entirety. According to Creswell (2001, 2012a), coding divides and categorizes text to develop explanations and broad themes in the data.

The researcher analyzed data by hand, categorizing the interview text into meaningful, convenient segments. The researcher then used NVivo to create nodes that

organize interview text into topics based on similarities. Emerging themes were identified once data was analyzed and divided into multiple categories. The word recognition feature also helps cultivate themes the researcher does not recognize easily (QSR International, 2019). According to Creswell (2007), it is likely that if one were to identify weaknesses in the open-ended interviewing process, the difficulty would be found within coding the data.

The significance of utilizing codes in research is to organize information before determining its significance (Hutchinson et al., 2010). NVivo allows the researcher to code data and categorize it into various categories (QSR International, 2019). As suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008), the data analysis helped determine when saturation was reached as no new information emerges from the researcher's analysis. At the point in the data collection and analysis process when no new themes emerged, the researcher concluded that saturation had been reached, and the interviewing process ended.

Summary

This chapter presents the research to explore employees' perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process and determine the influence on employee retention. The chapter presents details of the research design and methodology. Population and sampling procedures, instrumentation, and data collection followed. This chapter concludes with concerns of confidentiality and the prominence of the role of the researcher, validity and reliability, and trustworthiness. The remaining chapters will include research results, findings, conclusions, and further research recommendations.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

This study explores the performance appraisal experiences of mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 Company to determine perceived fairness and factors influencing employee retention. In addition to exploring mid-level managers' experiences, the researcher identified the perspectives of senior-level managers meeting the same criteria as a means of triangulation. This chapter presents the data collected, emergent themes and sub-themes, resulting from the data analysis. Data collection was guided by the research objectives of this study, including participant demographics, perceived effectiveness of performance appraisal, perceived fairness of performance appraisal, and perceived influence of employee appraisal on retention. The results of this study derive from interpretive phenomenology collected through virtual interviews. The data offer insights into participants' lived experiences.

This chapter highlights employees' lived experiences of the performance appraisal process and presents the results of this study. This chapter begins with the researcher's explanation of the data analysis. Ten mid-level managers and three senior-level managers from a Fortune 500 company shared their experiences through virtual, one-on-one interviews regarding their perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process within their organizational unit. Data analysis was conducted to determine findings related to the overarching research question, “How does employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness influence employee retention?”

Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, the IPA approach assisted in gathering perspectives to explore participants' lived experiences. Participants shared their perceived fairness of the

performance appraisal process and its influence on remaining employed with the organization. IPA is a qualitative approach that allows the researcher to analyze participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, IPA is helpful due to its attentiveness to empower the participant to narrate the complete account of their experiences and the researcher's ability to decipher the account (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This requires strong engagement from the researcher to probe into significant details presented by the participant. Thus, allowing the researcher the opportunity to comprehend the intricacy of the explored phenomenon despite the size of the population (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA focuses on making sense of participants' experiences. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), the researcher's inquiry is refined by IPA's inductive, interpretative analysis, which explains the information presented but grounds it resolutely in a close analysis of what the participant shares. For this study, the researcher conducted thirteen virtual, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of employees having a minimum of two years of experience at a Fortune 500 Company. The third-party transcription service, Rev.com was utilized by the researcher to transcribe interview audio. Following the recorded interview audio transcription, the researcher emailed transcripts to participants for the member-checking process to ensure the transcripts' accuracy.

Following Smith et al.'s (2009) IPA process to analyze the transcribed data, the researcher performed the defined steps: (a) reading and re-reading transcripts to ensure the accuracy of transcribed interviews, (b) note-taking/coding transcript data to note similarities, (c) unearthing emergent themes based on redundancy and relevant keywords,

(d) connecting cohesions amongst emergent themes and identifying connections, (e) reiterating initial steps, and (f) reviewing gathered data and determining patterns.

Implementing IPA assisted the researcher in conducting a thematic analysis to convey the significance of discovered themes. Thematic analysis is a research method for classifying, exploring, categorizing, defining, and recording themes found in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nowell et al. (2017) argue that thematic analysis can be used across various research questions and epistemologies. Codes were formed as central themes based on keywords and phrases, and subthemes developed from the main themes. According to Creswell (2014), coding data is a systematic process in which exact accounts are analyzed and categorized into themes symbolic of the phenomenon of interest. Using IPA enabled a technique to analyze and develop emerging themes.

The data analysis plan outlined in Table 4 aligns with the research objectives, data collection, and analysis method. The research objectives, as outlined, delineate the demographic information, effectiveness of the performance appraisal process, fairness of the performance appraisal process, and influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees.

Table 4

Data Analysis

Objective	Data Collected	Data Category	Data Analysis
RO1	Job role, gender, age, and employment tenure	Nominal/ordinal	Descriptive statistics
RO2	Effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes

Table 4 (continued).

RO3	Fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes
RO4	Influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees	Text	Content analysis Recurring themes

The combination of IPA and use of NVivo software in the data analysis process assisted in retrieving in-depth employee perspectives to further guide exploration of participants' lived experiences. The researcher imported transcripts into NVivo to create cases for participant demographics and identification of theme nodes using keywords and like responses from each participant. The software enables categorization and analysis of imported data. The initial retrieved data included participant demographic data used to identify demographics as indicated in RO1.

The researcher gathered related material to generate data "nodes" to identify the most frequently mentioned ideas and relevant text. The data analysis included the grouping of like terms based on participant responses. Using NVivo, coding schemes were developed based on repetition in the data to identify patterns and themes, which were then grouped to determine the frequency of keywords in participant responses. Excerpts from interviews were compared to interpret and reveal participants' mutual or shared experiences.

Participant Demographics

ROI: Describe participants' demographics (i.e., job role, gender, age, and employment tenure).

The first research objective describes participant demographics. The characteristics identified by the researcher included age, education, and employment tenure of participants from one organization supporting diversified locations. A list was presented of employees willing to be interviewed from a multinational Fortune 500 organization with locations across the United States and other countries. Employees worked in a variety of roles with a minimum of two years of experience. The study used purposeful sampling to recruit employees meeting the specific criteria in order to identify data-rich events related to performance appraisal.

The virtual one-on-one interviews allowed the interviewer to see participants and document their gender visually. The researcher received a list of fifteen willing participants from the company who agreed to be interviewed. The researcher sent an introductory email to potential participants who agreed to learn more about the study. To triangulate the data, three senior-level managers from the organization were included in the list of fifteen potential participants.

Of the initial 15 participants, three senior-level managers and 10 mid-level managers were interviewed, yielding 13 responses. This study reached the point of saturation with the first ten participants. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2019), saturation is important as it specifies a sign of data validity and is incorporated into principles to measure the quality of qualitative research. Table 5 captures participant demographics, including age, gender, tenure, and educational level.

Table 5

Mid-level Manager Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Highest Education Level	Tenure in Organization	Manager level
Patrick	59	Male	Master's degree	23	Mid-level
David	47	Male	Bachelor's degree	2	Mid-level
Donna	53	Female	Bachelor's degree	23	Mid-level
Robert	56	Male	Doctorate	22	Mid-level
Thomas	48	Male	Associate degree	21	Mid-level
Stanley	40	Male	Bachelor's degree	11	Mid-level
Jonah	56	Male	Associate degree	23	Mid-level
Mary	57	Female	Bachelor's degree	34	Mid-level
Naomi	51	Female	Master's degree	2	Mid-level
Gary	50	Male	Master's degree	12	Mid-level

Note: Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

The researcher triangulated the data using three senior-level managers with two or more years of experience at a Fortune 500 Company (See Table 6). The senior-level managers' tenure ranged from 20-34 years while mid-level managers' tenure ranging 2-34 years with an average tenure of 20 years. The responses from senior-level managers were aligned with the experiences of mid-level managers.

Table 6

Senior-level Manager Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Highest Education Level	Tenure in Organization	Manager Level
Kenneth	50	Male	Bachelor's degree	20	Senior-level
Sam	63	Male	Bachelor's degree	34	Senior-level
Oliver	52	Male	Master's degree	26	Senior-level

Note: Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

The researcher captured participant demographics in distribution lists, including mid-level and senior-level managers. Participants' ages ranged from 40-63, with the majority in their fifties (See Table 7).

Table 7

Age Distribution List

Age	<i>n</i>
40	1
47	1
48	1
50	2
51	1
52	1
53	1
56	2
57	1
59	1
63	1

The researcher asked participants about their highest level of education during the demographic portion of the interview. All participants attended college and acquired associate to doctorate level degrees. As shown in Table 8, the majority of participants attained a bachelor's degree.

Table 8

Education Level Distribution List

Education Level	<i>n</i>
Associate degree	2
Bachelor's degree	6
Master's degree	4
Doctorate	1

The researcher required participants to meet the criteria specified in Chapter III, which included a minimum of two years of service at a Fortune 500 company. As shown

in Table 9, participants' tenure ranged from 2-34 years. Five of 13 participants' tenure in the organization ranged from 21-24 years of service.

Table 9

Tenure Distribution List

Tenure	<i>n</i>
2-5	2
6-10	0
11-15	2
16-20	1
21-24	5
25-30	1
31-34	2

The final demographic identified the participants' gender. This study consisted of a majority of male participants serving as mid-level and senior-level managers. All senior-level managers were male, while mid-level managers were a combination of both male and female.

Table 10

Gender Distribution List

Gender	<i>n</i>
Female	3
Male	10

Data Arrangements and Themes Associated with Employee Perceptions

The researcher determined five themes based on participants' responses (See Figure 3). The themes were categorized and linked to this study's research objectives. In this study two themes linked to RO2. The first theme is process effectiveness with subthemes (a) lack of benefits in the performance appraisal process, (b) consistency of

the performance appraisal process, and (c) performance-based performance appraisal process. The second theme is supervisor relationship with subthemes (d) supervisor support and (e) supervisor feedback. The third theme fairness is linked to RO3, with subthemes (f) discrimination, (g) pre-determined rankings, and (h) performance appraisal process accuracy. The final two themes are purpose and intent to stay which link to RO4. Serving as the fourth theme is purpose with subthemes (i) promotion and (j) financial benefits. Lastly, theme five is intent to stay with subthemes (k) tenure, (l) company culture, and (m) performance appraisal outcomes.

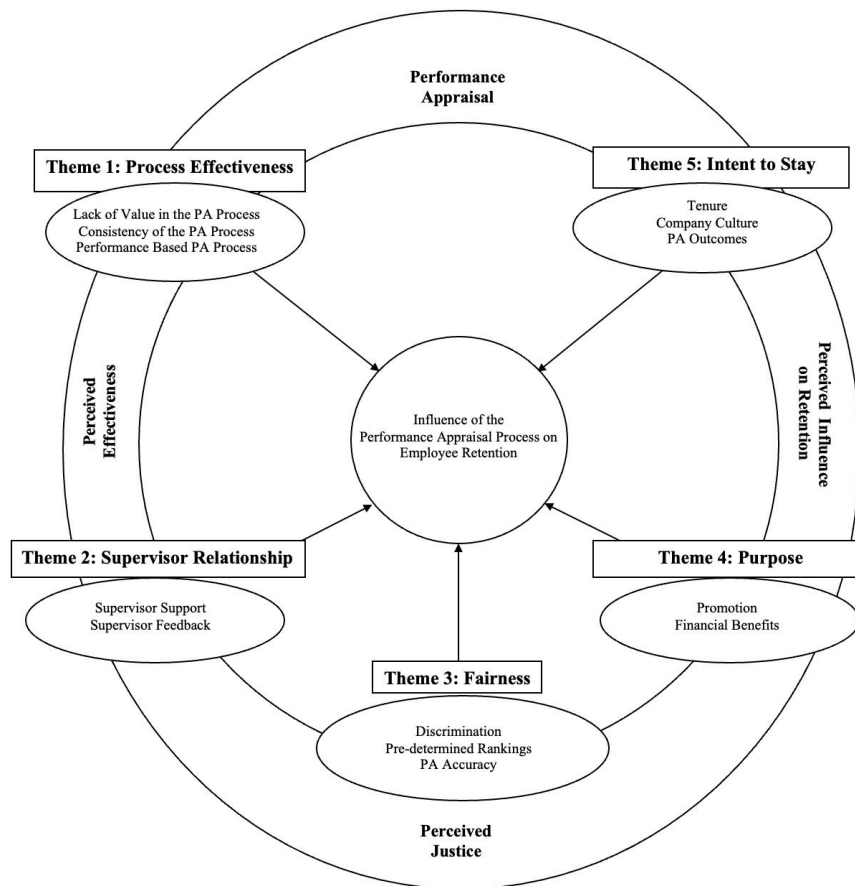


Figure 3. Theme and Subthemes of Employees' Perceptions of Performance Appraisal.

The researcher grouped each theme by the corresponding research objective. RO1 described participant demographics, RO2 encompasses theme one process effectiveness and theme two supervisor relationship and explored participants' perceived efficacy of the performance appraisal process. RO3 encompassed theme three, fairness, and explored participants' perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process. RO4 contains themes four, purpose and theme five, intent to stay.

Perceived Effectiveness

RO2: Explore the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

Perceived effectiveness is the personal probability that a process will have credible impact (Suka et al., 2017). Participants identified the perceived effectiveness of the performance appraisal process at their organization. As shown in Table 11, the theme process effectiveness includes lack of value in the appraisal process, consistency of the performance appraisal process, and the performance-based performance appraisal process as results related to employees' perceived effectiveness.

Table 11

Process Effectiveness and Supervisor Relationship: Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	<i>n</i> (Mid-level)	<i>n</i> (Senior-level)
Theme 1: Process Effectiveness	Lack of Value in the PA process	6	1
	Consistency of the PA process	7	1
	Performance-Based PA process	8	0
Theme 2: Supervisor Relationship	Supervisor Support	7	3
	Supervisor Feedback	5	1

Theme 1: Process Effectiveness

The theme process effectiveness is described as the successful implementation of the performance appraisal that yields beneficial results. Participants identified lack of value in the performance appraisal process, consistency of the performance appraisal, and performance-based performance appraisal process as components that determine performance appraisal process effectiveness (See Figure 4).

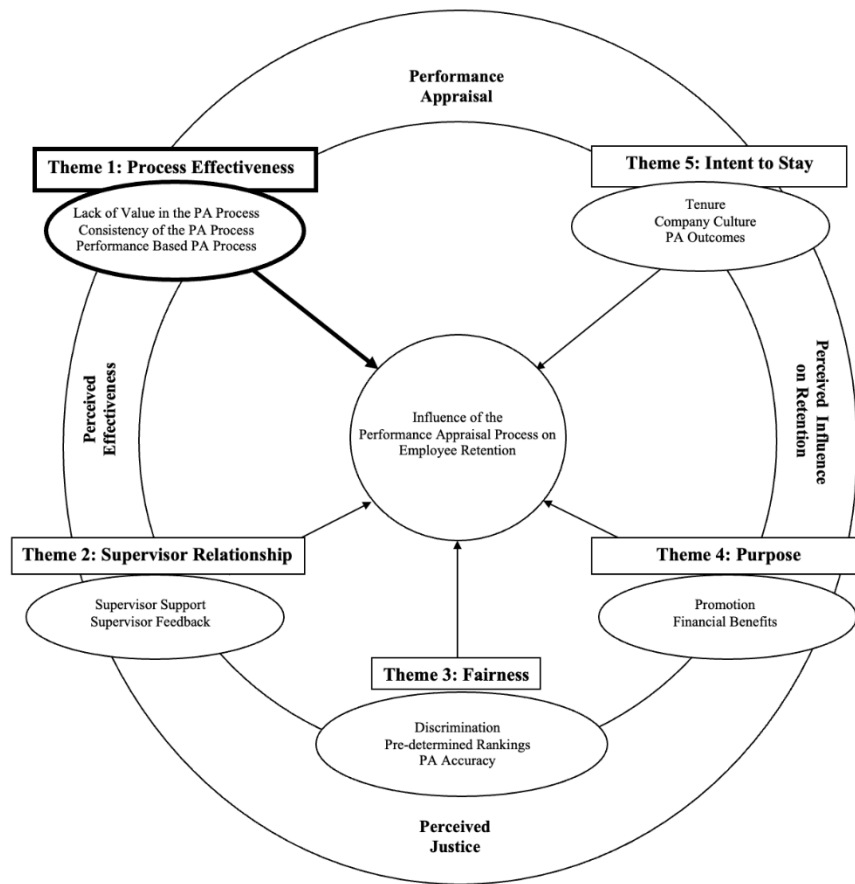


Figure 4. Effectiveness Perception Factors that Influence Retention.

Participants discussed experience outcomes that determined appraisal process effectiveness. The participants were asked to reflect on whether they believed the performance appraisal process was effective at their organization. One participant,

Thomas, reflected on all levels of evaluation in the organization. He said, "I don't feel like their performance evaluation is very effective." Similarly, Oliver discussed his perception as a senior-level manager and explained why he believes the performance appraisal process is not effective and how it potentially could be improved. Oliver stated,

No, we don't do what we're supposed to do. What good leaders do is they meet at least monthly with what we call one-to-ones, right? So that at the end of the year, your appraisal or your performance is not a surprise, right? So that's kind of like the best-known method for effective leaders. You know you meet with your team every month or, at a minimum quarterly just to review their progress, but that's not necessarily a standardized practice, if you will. So, for those managers that meet regularly with their team, it's very effective. For those that don't, you know, you have a lot of dialogue and a lot of back and forth at the end of the year when you do your appraisals because sometimes the folks don't agree with what the leaders put down.

Subtheme: Lack of Value in the Performance Appraisal Process. For this study, lack of value in the performance appraisal process refers to the disadvantages of the performance appraisal process that contribute to employees' lack of value for the process, causing retention setbacks at the company. Participants conferred their lack of interest in participating in the process and whether they believed the performance appraisal process was necessary. Patrick stated,

No, not really. And what I mean by not really is the instrument sucks, I mean, it's just not a good instrument, but the instrument was developed by HR, so that's totally out of our realm. However, my immediate supervisor doesn't really have

the authority to make the changes that I think would be necessary.

Jonah explained that his lack of value in the performance appraisal process stems from time constraints. He explained,

You know, it is kind of painful just to deal with it when it comes around, you know, a little bit because it is time-consuming. You know you have all your other business going on, and it'll chop a chunk of time out of your schedule.

Naomi, unable to find the benefit of the performance appraisal process, shrugged her shoulders. She laughed and explained,

I'm probably a lot harder on myself than anyone could ever be. At our level, it's unnecessary. We just feel like let's just get it over with for us. So regardless of what's said, it really didn't matter to me anyway—being honest.

Subtheme: Consistency of the Performance Appraisal Process. Consistency, in this study, refers to the employee's expectation that the performance appraisal process will be used to rate all employees on a standard set of competencies aligned with job responsibilities; and managers will hold all employees to the same set of standards. Participants discussed the need for consistency by reflecting on the efficiency of the performance appraisal process. Gary shared, "sometimes you have to go way above and beyond what your job function is no matter how well you perform your particular job" In addition, he stated,

In my company, there's a lot of other things that they want you to do outside of your job in order for you to be recognized. So sometimes your job may not call for you to go outside; you know a particular boundary, right? It may not give you a reason to really interact with some people in other groups. So, the expectation is

that you will do other extracurricular activities so that you could touch those different areas. I guess my only criticism, although I understand why it needs to be evaluated, is unfortunately, you can't just be evaluated on the job that you're paid to come there and do.

David notes the manager's contribution to the consistency of the performance appraisal process, and from his perception, "every manager has a different interpretation of what's expected in the performance appraisal and how much engagement needs to occur."

Naomi believes that no matter your efforts, the manager will determine how you rank based on their focus. She stated,

In a lot of cases, I think when you have the numbers, they are going to dictate it all anyway. So, it depends on who that manager was a year ago. I had a different manager who was about the effort that you put in that had a lot to do with how you were rated versus the one I had before was all about the numbers. So, 70% is based on numbers, and if my numbers aren't there, it's going to dictate where I fall on the rankings. Leadership is going to dictate what I'm going to get anyway, so what's the point to have a discussion?

Subtheme: Performance-Based Performance Appraisal Process. In this study, performance-based is a process that assesses employees' job performance and contribution to the organization's goals. The participants in this study discussed many aspects of the performance appraisal process. The most fundamental element was the emphasis on performance measurement. For instance, Patrick talked about his concern about the validity of the process. In his experience, there was no agreed upon

measurement; it was an annual process carried out by the management team. He shared,

In most cases, it is a piece of paper put in a file because it's somebody's job to calculate or collect this information. So, it's not as sincere as some organizations.

It's almost a regime or a ritual that has to be done.

In addition, Stanley's perception of whether the performance appraisal process in the organization is performance-based was as follows: "Sometimes yes and sometimes no. And when it's not, then you have to self-identify the items that you know would excel you past just the meets expectations." In general employees have a better understanding of performance measurement standards when positive relationships are established with their supervisor.

Theme 2: Supervisor Relationship

In organizations, employee performance is closely connected to the supervisor's relationship with their employees (Hampton, 2019). In this study supervisor relationships is related to the perceived support participants received from their supervisor to achieve success based on performance appraisal results. Participants discussed their belief that poor communication and lack of feedback lead to the perceived unfairness of the performance appraisal process. Participants identified the relationship with their supervisor as valued in the performance appraisal process in the organization. The subthemes derived from participant interviews related to supervisor relationships include (a) supervisor support and (b) supervisor feedback (See Figure 5).

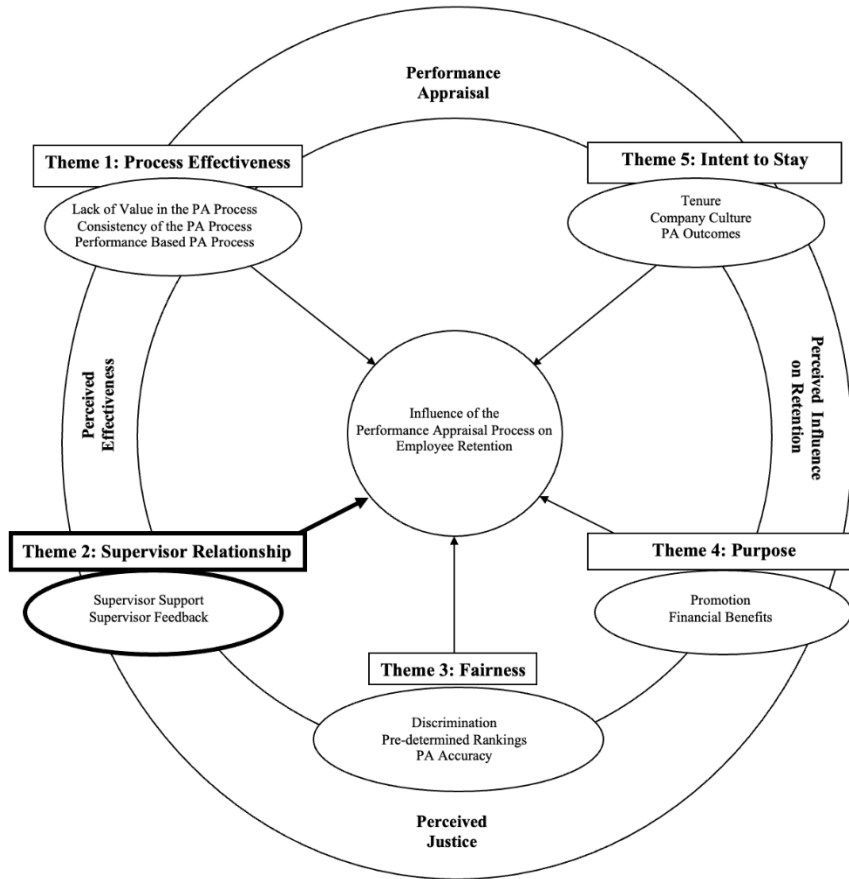


Figure 5. Supervisor Relationship Factors that Influence Retention.

Subtheme: Supervisor Support. The researcher in this study defines supervisor support as the additional investment or effort from their supervisor to support them with meeting personal, professional, and organizational goals set before, during, or after the performance appraisal process and professional development opportunities. Seven of 10 participants agreed that supervisor support is a valued aspect of the performance appraisal process and influences the decision to remain in the organization. David recalled the importance of having support from a supervisor and the outcome of not having it. He stated,

Everybody doesn't have the benefit of having a supervisor that really cares about their performance and their appraisal process, you know, and puts effort into it. I would say that's probably based upon the relationship with your direct manager, you know, how engaging they are, how well they are communicating. So, now all that's being prefaced with the fact of having a good supervisor. You know and somebody who's interested in my career development and not having to fight that individual. Some folks have different views about who needs to be in senior management sometimes.

Mary discussed that it's important to be allowed to grow in your role if it's made known to your supervisor. She conferred that professional development was one of the most important ways a supervisor can support employees. Mary stated, "If I say I want to be more technical, I should be given the opportunity to do that. Yeah, I think that's why the performance development process is so important that if you make it known that you want to move on to something else, then those opportunities are brought to you."

In addition, Patrick states that supervisor support in the form of professional development is "the most important part in the evaluation process that's not even evaluated." As it relates to his feelings towards the performance appraisal process, he stated, "so it's a mixture." He continued,

There's a question on there [the evaluation] that asks is there training that you need that would help you to do your job. Or is there some professional development organization that you found that would assist you in doing your job? Are there some courses or whatever, we ask that question as a part of the performance evaluation, and that part is based on their [employees] input and

their suggestions. That part works perfect. Because most of the time, I would know. I mean, it could be as small as the fact I can remember one year, I would always give a guy a task of doing an Excel sheet. He would have this information. And I would say, send it to me in Excel. Well, hell, I didn't know. He didn't know Excel. And so, during the evaluation, he finally told me he was like, I need to go to a class. So, what did we do that next year? We found him a class. And that all came about because of the performance evaluation. Sometimes it's a good part because it gives you direction as well, as we were able to talk through them. Matter of fact, what do you need from me? What can I provide to you to assist with that I'm not doing? So that part works. It's just that it is not tied to necessarily pay increase. It's the check in the box that kind of outweighs it sometime.

Subtheme: Supervisor Feedback. Feedback, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is "the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Supervisor feedback, in this study, is the verbal support in the form of direction or recognition received that reinforces the performance appraisal results. When participants were asked if they had suggestions for the performance appraisal process, five of 10 mid-level managers and one of three senior-level managers conveyed that supervisor feedback was an expectation. Thomas explained, "I've asked for that feedback. And I just think that we do a poor job."

Kenneth, a senior manager, is a firm believer in "constructive criticism" and recalled his experiences. He believes the most crucial aspect of the appraisal is "strictly ensuring the concerns of the employee is heard." He denotes,

Whether positively or negatively, sometimes negative is the best feedback, but they cannot sidestep negative connotations. If we want to grow as the team and a corps, we use those times in a one-on-one to reinforce our culture and our core values.

In a lengthy discussion, Sam, a senior manager, noted his thoughts concerning a supervisor's need and ability to deliver feedback during the performance appraisal process. He believes "the good manager is aware of that." He continues to discuss his experience in his organization:

Hopefully, [the supervisor] will try to ease the tension for that individual [employee] because it really shouldn't be a contentious kind of situation. It should be truly an evaluation of what that person does. Unfortunately, a lot of times, the manager, I believe, doesn't do a good enough job telling where the employee came up short, but we do a good job when you're doing good. But I think with feedback, there is less to become problematic or concerned about. So, if we have a good relationship, then when I have to say you were less than ideal on a thing, you know I'm being open and honest. I'm not only telling you to get it, but I'm also telling you, hey, this is an area that I thought you could have done better. I'm pretty specific about what it is. I think the more feedback you can give employees on concrete things and not, well, you just didn't perform well because that will piss somebody off. So, I think if you can really give tangible points like why they did something extremely well or why they didn't do as well as you expected, they [performance appraisals] usually go pretty well.

Supervisor feedback is necessary to ensure the performance appraisal process is fair.

Perceived Justice

RO3: Explore perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees.

Participants identified their perceived justice of the performance appraisal process as mid-level managers. Through responding to open-ended questions, participants articulated their justice perceptions of the performance appraisal process. Participants provided sentiments on the perceived justice of the performance appraisal process based on possible experiences of bias and subjectivity. Table 12 illustrates employees perceived justice of the performance appraisal process which includes Theme 3, fairness, and three subthemes, discrimination, pre-determined rankings, and performance appraisal process accuracy.

Table 12

Fairness: Theme and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	<i>n</i> (Mid-level)	<i>n</i> (Senior-level)
Theme 3: Fairness	Discrimination	9	1
	Pre-determined Rankings	4	2
	PA Process Accuracy	6	2

Theme 3: Fairness

Perceived fairness is the employee's perceptions of fair or unfair performance appraisal practices in this study. In addition, performance appraisal fairness includes employees' perceptions of bias and discrimination. Three interview questions prompted participants to discuss their perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process at their organization. As illustrated in Figure 6. Theme 3: Fairness emerged from the data.

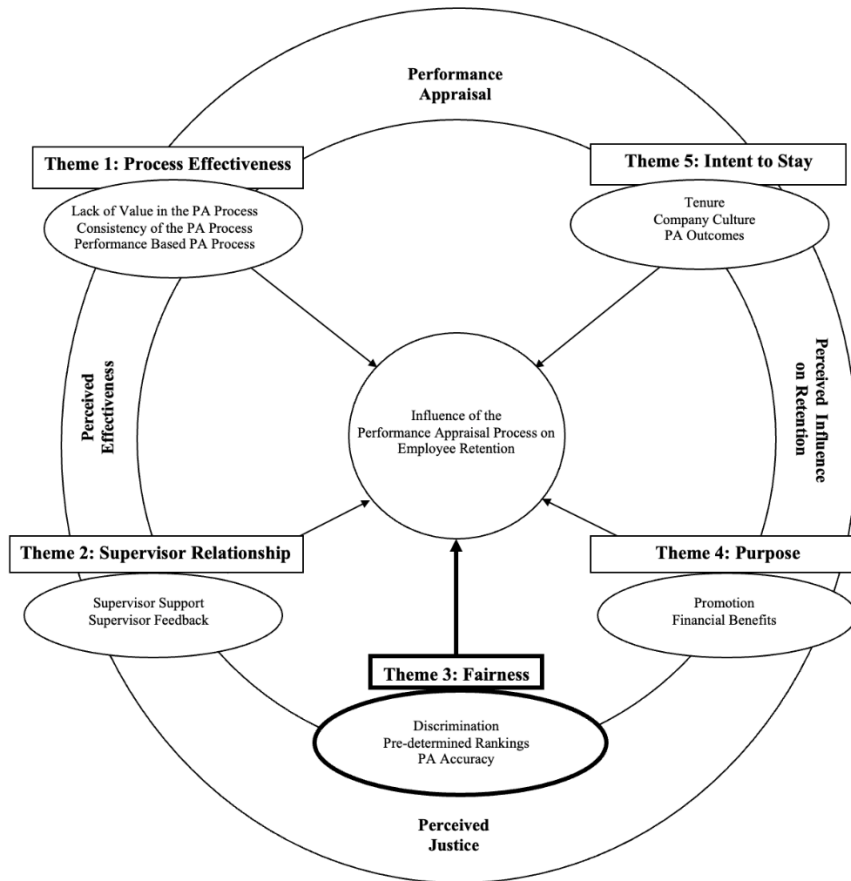


Figure 6. Fairness Factors that Influence Retention.

The interview questions led participants in this study to examine multiple aspects of fairness related to talent management concepts and the performance appraisal process.

Participants were asked if they believed the performance appraisal process in their organization was fair, and Sam, a senior-level manager, responded, "absolutely not," followed by laughter. For instance, Patrick dove deep into the process and described how the unfairness of the performance appraisal process has been beneficial to unqualified individuals. Patrick laughed and stated,

I've seen where there have been some promotions and some reorganization or some rewards given to individuals that you just wonder, what the hell? Where was

I? What happened? How did this happen? Not for my sake, but I've had some people on my team that I thought would have qualified and could do some things that should have been, I guess, elevated and promoted that were kind of looked over, and it wasn't based on their performance. I mean, their performance had been great. It was just that, for whatever reason, they were not [promoted or rewarded]. So those are the things that kind of hindered our process and the mere fact that if it was based on performance, that's one thing. But you see a lot of changes and a lot of promotions within the organization that's not necessarily tied to performance. It's who you know, or who knows who, that may not be the best thing.

Three subthemes were identified under the fairness theme: discrimination, pre-determined rankings, and performance appraisal process accuracy. The quotes from participants from the highlighted subthemes are as follows:

Subtheme: Discrimination. Discrimination is the "unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation" (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Nine of 10 mid-level managers and one of three senior-level managers cited discrimination in their organization's performance appraisal process. Six of ten mid-level managers specifically referenced discrimination in relation to unfairness.

Sam, a senior-level manager with a frank tone, explained, "I think all categories, race, sex, all of them play a role. I really do. I mean, I want to say it's human nature." He continued,

There are people that have strong biases on certain issues than they do others, okay. Case in point, I was in a meeting sitting, and we were talking about this and that. For one of my employees, who happens to be African American, the points that they were making [white counterparts] to minimize this individual was their communication skills wasn't up to par, or their communication skills were not at the same level as people that were on their level. They were talking about verbal as well as written. You know, I could acknowledge that some of the written subject and verbs may not always been totally right. And so, you know, I didn't like it, it was touchy for me, but it was true. I just wouldn't have weighted it the same weight that these individuals, but here's where the problem came in, and this is when it really got turned back. When an Asian person comes through, and they said English is the second language. I said, yeah, but we don't speak, Chinese, so his communication skills got to be with everybody at this same level. He does not get a pass because English is the second one. Y'all wouldn't give passes to nobody else. Y'all said good luck. So yeah, there are biases, and things can get contentious real quick.

Additionally, David reflected on the need for fairness as it's vital for employees to succeed. He mentioned,

If you don't fit the stereotypical role, they [direct supervisors] may not want to put you in for those certain assignments that get you the visibility with the senior managers that allows you to get tapped on the shoulder to, you know, take on more roles and responsibilities.

In addition to discrimination, participants perceive pre-determined rankings as unfair in the performance appraisal process.

Subtheme: Pre-determined Rankings. The researcher defines predetermined rankings as established or predefined rankings based on a distribution curve despite the implemented agreed-upon performance objectives and goals. Mid- and senior-level managers accepted this system as the typical business practice but found it unfair. Gary feels things tend to get personal when he's required to rank employees below their actual work efforts and output. He admits,

It's hard when you have a number of people that report to you, and everybody's kind of, you know, busting their butt every day, and you know everyone's working hard and everything. Because of the way the system is set up, you have to put some people in the average, right? And some people in above average and some people exceeds, right? Because they won't let you put everyone in above average, and they won't let everyone go into an exceeds [ranking]. Right? It's like that whole bell curve type setup. And so sometimes I think that personal feelings have to come into play.

Nine out of 10 participants mentioned predetermined rankings or designated performance buckets when asked to explain the performance appraisal process at their organization. Naomi states, "you can feel like it's unfair." In addition, as a senior-level manager, Sam declared,

And so, you know, they do that bell curve. People will tell you they don't, but they're lying [laugh]. So, it's going to only be a certain amount of A's, a certain amount of B's, and a certain amount of C's, and most of them, a lot of them will

end up being C's. You're competing for the higher mark, and the competition is stiff, and each manager is really pulling for their own employees. Whereas the employees think the manager is against them. It's the craziest thing in the world, but they think we're against them.

Finally, Robert also shared his understanding of how the performance appraisal process in the organization is predefined. He reported,

So, the thing that is interesting, I would say, an unofficial number; in most cases, I would say that they did look at a skew okay. That there were X percentage rated as ones [or the top], the majority of the people were in the middle, and then you had a percentage that was at the bottom.

Participant responses revealed that pre-determined rankings decreased performance appraisal accuracy.

Subtheme: Performance Appraisal Process Accuracy. The researcher defines performance appraisal process accuracy as the rater's ability to mitigate bias and subjectivity to align performance appraisal with an employee's actual performance and business objectives. Participants were asked if they perceived the performance appraisal process as biased. Stanley, a mid-level manager, discussed performance appraisal accuracy as a factor influencing his perception of performance appraisal effectiveness. He recalled,

I would say, currently, right now, yes. Some of it has happened. Even in the past, and I say it is based on the set of individuals that were reporting [supervisors].

They were using some of their own personal experiences and things they thought, like hey, because I dealt with this, then it is the way that it has to be. You will

have to deal with it, which may not necessarily be the true factor there. This previous supervisor stated one of the advancement positions took 20-plus years to get to that position. And that is the direction they thought it was going to take, you know, me to get to that. And I was like, it's no way. And they're like, yes, it's going to. I'm like, no, it's not. So, it's all based on you know, personal [experiences] and people are human. So, you know you can only deal with what you know. And so, I think that the subjectivity is all based on their personal experiences in many cases.

Likewise, Naomi discussed her perception of bias and subjectivity regarding the performance appraisal process. She stated,

My former boss was about himself [has not experienced an appraisal with current supervisor], so that went right back to him. Okay. So that's one reason why he wasn't very objective. It was, these are the numbers, and this is why. And so, you can't be objective if you're single-focused on one thing. So that was the end all be all to everything, but numbers don't dictate a hundred percent the effort that's put into what you do every day.

When supervisors allow bias and subjectivity to define employee performance appraisal outcomes, employees are more inclined to resign, therefore, decreasing the organizations retention rates.

Perceived Influence on Retention

RO4: Explore the influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees.

The researcher defines perceived influence as the employee's perception of the performance appraisal process on the intent to stay with the organization. Participants answered semi-structured interview questions, and based on responses, Theme 4, purpose, was developed with subthemes of promotion and financial benefits, and Theme 5, intent to stay, with subthemes of tenure, company culture, and performance appraisal outcomes. Once the themes were identified, the subthemes were categorized based on comparisons of participant responses (See Table 13).

Table 13

Purpose and Intent to Stay: Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	<i>n</i> (Mid-level)	<i>n</i> (Senior-level)
Theme 4: Purpose	Promotion	6	1
	Financial Benefits	6	1
Theme 5: Intent to Stay	Tenure	3	0
	Company Culture	7	1
	PA Outcomes	6	0

Theme 4: Purpose

Purpose is defined as "something set up as an object or end to be attained" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this study, the researcher defines purpose as participants' desire for significant rewards to connect to the outcome of the performance appraisal process. Subthemes of (a) promotion and (b) financial benefits were areas revealed by participants which contributed to the participants' feeling of purpose related to the

performance appraisal (See Figure 7). Participants identified purpose as significant in the performance appraisal process and contended that without a sense of purpose, the process is not valuable.

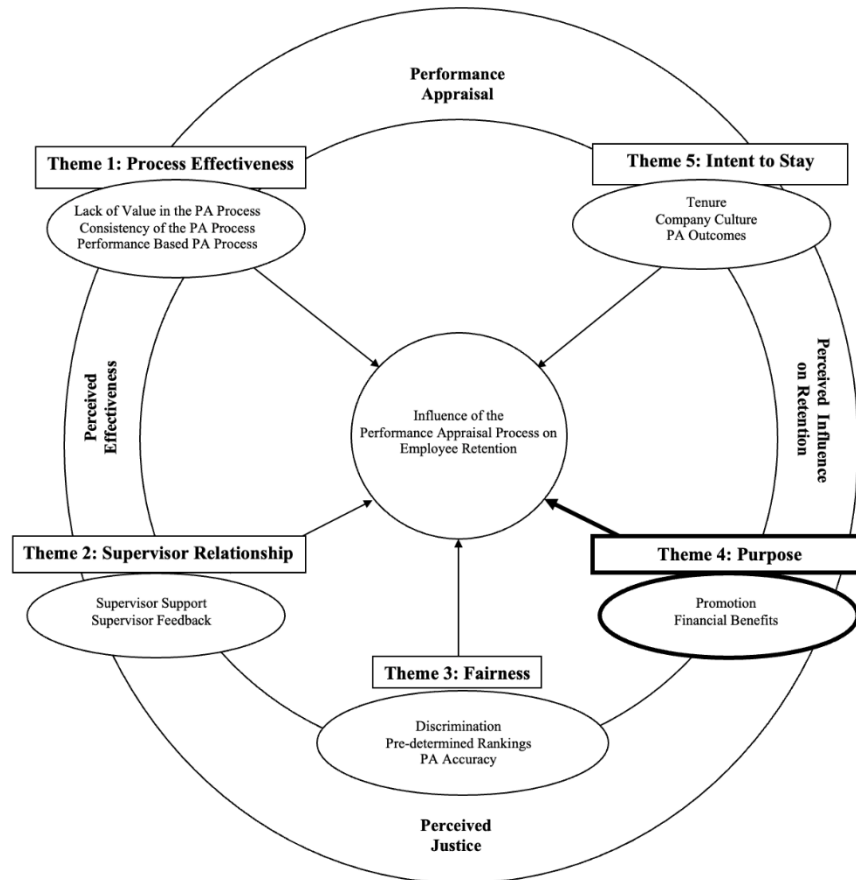


Figure 7. Purpose Factors that Influence Retention.

Subtheme: Promotion. The performance appraisal process is an indispensable tool used by organizational leadership to effectively reward, recognize, and motivate employees based on their performance (Joseph, 2014; Owoyemi & George, 2013; Park, 2014). Promotion is managed through an organization's human resources division, raising an individual to a more important, influential, or higher-ranking position (Cambridge

University Press, n.d.). One senior-level manager and six mid-level managers discussed promotion as a result of the performance appraisal process. Jonah, when asked to explain if anything was achieved following his last performance appraisal, he chuckled and stated,

Well, I got a new job. I got a pay raise. I went up a pay grade, a complete pay grade, and all that. So yes, I have accomplished goals, but this wasn't even in my goals, this job at this point in time, this was not even on the horizon. The job was actually posted, and I didn't put in for it. And then I got called from somebody in another state out west. He wanted to know why I didn't put in for the job.

Similarly, Thomas advised,

Well, I've said it a few times. Yeah. I don't sit idle. My mom used to say to leave it better than you found it and keep the main thing the main thing. So that's a couple of mantras that I live by, and the main thing is family and then work if I had to prioritize those two. But when I'm outside of the premises and not working, I give everything outside of here, my heart. And when I'm here [at work], I do the same. And in 21 years, I've made a nice progression for somebody who never expected to be here.

Participants in this study shared that financial gain is an included benefit of the promotion process.

Subtheme: Financial Benefits. The researcher defines financial benefits as the monetary rewards participants receive as a result of the performance appraisal process. According to Savov et al. (2022), financial benefits serve as an organizational element that can drastically influence talent retention. In Mary's experience, "the financial rewards

have been invaluable." When participants were asked if the performance appraisal process influenced pay, Jonah stated, "my performance, I guess you would say it as a supervisor, is appraised or evaluated every year. And my pay follows suit as to how my performance has been over the course of that year." In addition, Oliver explained,

Yes, but in terms of pass or fail. So, if you met the goals, you received the recommended annual merit increase, right? Basically, just the cost-of-living adjustment. But if you were deemed as a needs improvement or underperforming, then you could get 0% or something less than what the standard recommendation was.

Participants in this study shared that financial benefits influenced their intent to stay with the organization.

Theme 5: Intent to Stay

Participants discussed their intent to remain employed with the company in the fifth and final theme for this study. Intent to stay refers to employees deliberate and predetermined purpose to remain in an organization (Bangwal & Tiwari, 2019).

Participants were asked if the performance appraisal process influenced their decision to stay and if they have considered leaving the organization. Participants mentioned unfair perceptions could occur due to the supervisor's failure to execute a fair performance appraisal process and therefore, impact intent to stay. The subthemes developed based on participant responses include (a) tenure, (b) company culture, and (c) performance appraisal outcomes (See Figure 8).

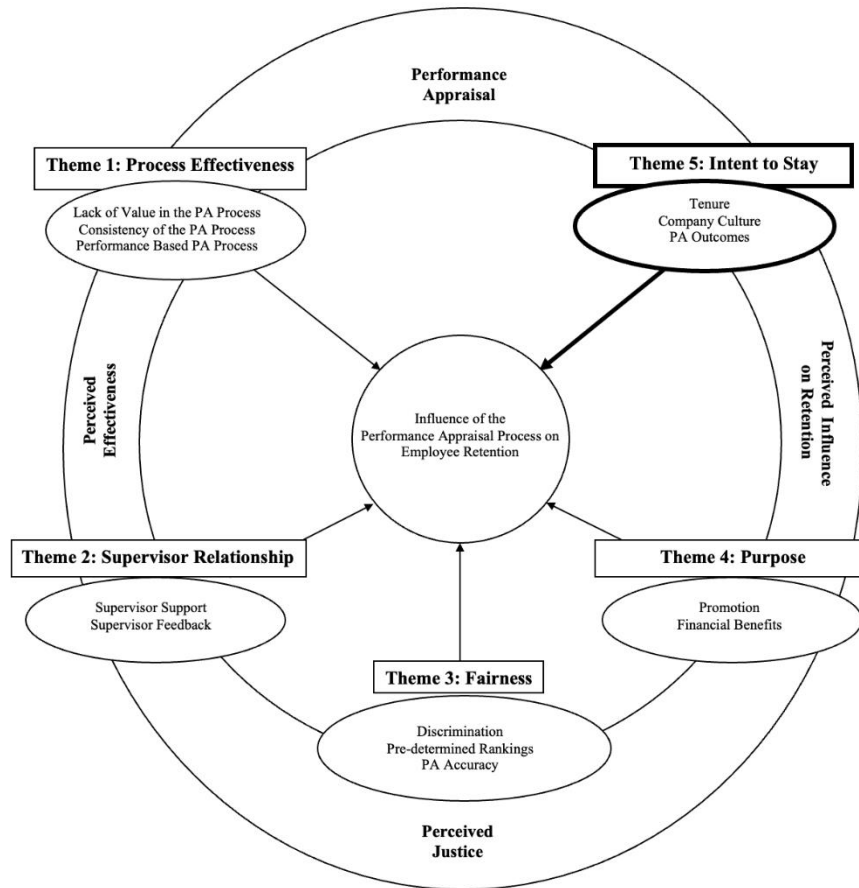


Figure 8. Intent to Stay Factors that Influence Retention.

Subtheme: Tenure. The participants in this study discussed different aspects of why they chose to remain employed at their organization. Tenure measures the time employees' have maintained their employment (OECD, 2001). Participants discussed tenure as a factor of their intent to stay as time invested and experience with the organization minimized the impact of the performance appraisal process. For instance, Mary discussed how she has the autonomy to do what is needed based on her tenure. She states, "I'm 34 years in, so, at this point, I'm doing what I want to do."

Another participant, Patrick, described his experience of having tenure as a benefit to maintaining employment with his organization. He stated,

I have 37 years in, and I don't give a flip about the appraisal. Are you talking about my appraisal, or are we talking about their appraisal that I do? I don't. All I need is my keys and my phone. I think it's a tenure thing. I think it's an age thing. I think the mere fact that I could go home and wait on the mailman. However, I will tell you that it also is a confidence thing because I probably had the same philosophy 20 years ago. I know what I know, and I do what I'm supposed to do. Therefore, people may struggle to find jobs based on the economy, but realistically it may not be the same as what I'm doing, but I'll find something. So that kind of adds to even my evaluation of my team. We always talk through any issues that we have, but I also let them know that if this isn't working for you, start looking.

In addition to tenure, participants mentioned company culture as significant in influencing their intent to stay employed with the organization.

Subtheme: Company Culture. In this study, company culture is the overall organizational perception of the performance appraisal process, work conditions, and reflection of the work environment as perceived by employees. Participants revealed their work conditions and measured work requirements against challenges when discussing company culture. Mary, a mid-level manager with 34 years of tenure, admits,

I have considered leaving. I've actually gotten to the point where I was pretty far down the path, and my husband asked an important question. It was, are you leaving because you don't want to do this work or are you leaving because of maybe an individual? And every time, it's always been because of an individual.

The best advice I've been given in my career is if it's an individual, give it six months, and it'll probably change.

Participants were asked how the performance appraisal process is perceived by coworkers and to provide an overall outlook by others in the organization.

Oliver described the general perceptions of his coworkers. He explained, It's quite honestly perceived as let's just get it over with. You already know what it's gonna be at the beginning of the year [results]. So why are we going through this song and dance and wasting your time and wasting my time? Let's just move on and get it over with, you know. If you didn't do anything egregious for the most part, you're going to fit in that middle bucket that 80% bell curve. Most of the people are gonna be right there in the middle. You're gonna have a couple of people that are on the outside edges that didn't do a good job. You're gonna have very few people on the other edge that hit it out of the park. But for the most part, everyone knows where they're gonna be. So, it kind of devalues the meaning behind sitting down [for the evaluation]. There's some value in talking to people every month or talking to people at the end of the year for retention purposes, you know, they think people value and feel important when they know where they stand, and they like that constant feedback.

Likewise, participant Robert shared the consensus from his coworkers on their overall perceptions of the performance appraisal process. He stated,

I think most people look at it as a check-the-box kind of thing. I think that if people are going to give performance evaluations, I think they should be more meaningful. So, I think that if you are going to make it meaningful, probably be

able to spend more time giving people feedback, but I also understand everybody does not need the same amount of feedback.

Subtheme: Performance Appraisal Outcomes. In this study, performance appraisal outcomes are the results of the performance appraisal process focused on the influence on employee retention. Five mid-level managers and one senior-level manager established that the performance appraisal process, including results, impacts employee retention. David agreed, "It does. We just had a conversation with our senior vice president for HR on this specific thing about why folks leave the company." In addition, Gary stated,

Yeah, I think it definitely has influenced, you know, my staying with the company because I was at a company before, and the compensation that we got didn't really compare. Right. So, the fact that people here pretty much expect bonuses, and the compensation is, I don't want to say, well, I guess, I mean, it's pretty generous. I don't know if I want to say generous because I mean, we do work for it, and we work hard for it, but you know, compared to what I've seen at other companies, it's definitely nothing to sneeze at. So, yeah, I think that my results from my performance definitely have influenced my decision.

Another participant Kenneth a senior-level manager, discussed his interaction with his reports in an attempt to spread the importance of a manager's role in employee retention. He states that he knows retention is the most important aspect of his job and the organization. He posits,

Once we understand our precept, things will get better. As far as our managers' responsibilities, I preach one thing, I said retention has got to be the number one and foremost drive of anything we do each and every day. And sometimes,

supervision gets a little lackluster look on their face when we go through employee evaluations, but I remind them an employee doesn't leave the company. He leaves a bad supervisor. So, we look at retention from a departmental basis in order to make improvements too. And that'll be weighted on their performance later on in the year.

Participants perceived fairness and effectiveness as validating performance appraisal experiences faced in the organization. The discussions highlighted a need for a more in-depth focus on employees' perceived fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. Following the conclusion of participant interviews, the researcher evaluated the participants' replies which facilitated the development of emergent themes. The development of emergent themes aided the researcher in further investigating the defined research objectives for this study.

Research Objectives and Theme Association

In this study, four research objectives were identified. The conclusion of thirteen interviews resulted in five themes and 13 subthemes of employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness. RO1 emphasizes participant demographics such as age, job role, and employment tenure. RO2 explores the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees. Participants in this study shared their perceptions of the effectiveness of performance appraisals as mid-level and senior-level managers at a Fortune 500 company. Participants identified two themes which support RO2: process effectiveness (three subthemes: lack of benefits in the performance appraisal process, consistency of the performance appraisal process, and performance-

based performance appraisal process) and supervisor relationship (two subthemes: supervisor support and supervisor feedback).

Additionally, RO3 explores the perceived fairness of the performance appraisal process as perceived by employees. Participants in this study shared their perceptions of performance appraisal fairness as mid-level and senior-level managers at a Fortune 500 company. Participants identified fairness (three subthemes, discrimination, pre-determined rankings, and performance appraisal process accuracy), in support of RO3. RO4 explores the influence of the performance appraisal process on retention as perceived by employees. Participants in this study shared their perceptions of the influence of performance appraisal on retention. Participants identified two themes, purpose (two subthemes, promotion, and financial benefits) and intent to stay (three subthemes: tenure, company culture, and performance appraisal outcomes) in support of RO4. Table 14 illustrates the association of recurrent themes and objectives.

Table 14

Research Objectives and Theme Association

Research Objectives	Themes	Subthemes
RO1	Demographics (job role, gender, age, and employment tenure)	0
RO2	Effectiveness	3
	Supervisor Relationship	2
RO3	Fairness	3
RO4	Purpose	2
	Intent to Stay	3

Summary

Participants discussed their lived experiences in Chapter IV, which provided participant interview responses for data analysis. IPA and NVivo software was utilized to code and categorize interview transcripts for data analysis. As a result, five themes and 13 subthemes were determined exploring participants fairness and effectiveness perceptions of the performance appraisal process and the influence on employee retention. Emergent themes derived from the data analysis were connected to the research objectives and the corresponding subthemes.

Participants shared that notwithstanding the unfairness and lack of effectiveness of the performance appraisal process, promotions and financial benefits remained a benefit of the process. This study validated findings through member checking, reflexivity, and triangulation to assess accuracy. Chapter V presents findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS

This study explored mid-level managers' lived experiences and fairness perceptions regarding performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on retention. The research evaluated performance appraisal progress corresponding with the gap identified in the literature. Chapter V contains a summary of the study and discusses findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Furthermore, Chapter V includes limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. The researcher analyzed participants' perceptions through the lens of equity theory (Adams, 1963), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), human capital theory (Becker, 1962; 1993), and organization justice theory (Greenberg, 1987).

Summary of the Study

Employee perceptions become a reality; driving human capital practitioners to rethink ways to retain employees in the organization (Dy, 2015). Talent management practitioners embrace performance management, which reviews and builds on employees' assets, increasing employee engagement, job performance, and commitment, thereby reducing turnover (Scott et al., 2022). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore employees' fairness perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and reveal how perceived fairness influences employee retention. This study required mid-level managers' perceptions and was collected from employees at a Fortune 500 company.

Informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, the researcher used IPA to analyze and interpret data. In addition, NVivo software assisted in the organization of interview data. Participants selected through purposeful sampling

contributed their experiences by attending virtual one-on-one semi-structured interviews and explored employees' perceptions and the influence of perception on employee retention. Participant selection criteria included job role, gender, and employment tenure. Ten mid-level managers and three senior-level managers voluntarily offered their in-depth individual experiences with the performance appraisal process in their organization. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and imported into qualitative software for analysis. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study resulted from data analysis via theme and subtheme connection. Themes and subthemes were derived from participant responses and linked to the four research objectives identified in this study.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this study, three findings related to the problem capture employees' fairness perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention. Participant narratives provided factors that contribute to performance appraisal effectiveness and employee retention. Participants offered recommendations for fair and effective performance appraisals. The findings in this study align with existing literature. Analysis of study participant responses and recommendations cultivated theme development, constitutes three findings for this study.

Finding 1. Employees perceive the performance appraisal process to lack value which decreases retention in the organization.

Interview responses implied that employees are not pleased with performance appraisal implementation in their organization. In this study, employees' perceptions of their supervisor's commitment to an effective performance appraisal process influenced

their intent to leave the organization. In organizations, employees judge and assess their supervisors based on perceptions. Additionally, as an integral part of effective performance appraisal, accurate feedback was expected and highly desired by participants in this study. Employees conveyed that the performance appraisal was a “check the box” event that did not align with their performance or work contributions, alleviating efficacy in the process.

Conclusion. In this study, employee expectations are not being met, leaving them unable to find value in the process. Vroom (1964) defined expectancy as an employees' belief that a particular outcome is based on their expectations and efforts. Employees expressed that proper performance appraisal implementation is a priority and expectation. In association with the literature managers' lack of attention to talent management concepts leads to high employee turnover (Hughes & Rog, 2008). When there is value, employees are self-motivated and contribute to the organization's performance (Vroom, 1964). The employees' standpoint and perspective on fair or unfair implementation of appraisals influence the success of the overall process (Oladapo, 2014). Performance appraisal effectiveness is contingent upon proper implementation.

The effectiveness of any endeavor depends on its level of correctness to serve the highest value of the organization as a whole (Iqbal et al., 2019). The performance appraisal process must generate performance feedback, whether negative or positive to assist in reciprocally aligning both employee and supervisor perspectives. Ilgen et al. (1979) and Rietsche et al. (2021) determine that performance feedback influences individual employee performance, significantly impacting organizational outcomes.

Recommendation. Organizations can implement a system that allows employees to contribute feedback regarding the performance appraisal process. According to Adams (1965), organizations must recognize that employee input is a critical component of an effective performance appraisal process. Moreover, change is inevitable, and organizations should be receptive to change when needed. According to Carpi et al. (2017) and Iqbal et al. (2019), an effective performance appraisal process is tied to an organization's leadership team's ability to make timely adjustments to their process if the current system proves ineffective. The primary goal of performance appraisal is to improve both employee and organizational performance. Improving the human factor of performance appraisal will assist in increasing employee commitment (retention) and organizational outcomes. Effective performance appraisal implementation can be a step toward organizations' comprehensive human capital development strategy (Iqbal et al., 2019).

Finding 2. Employees' relationship with their supervisor influence the performance appraisal process and retention.

The relationship between supervisors and their employees influences the performance appraisal experience and employees' perceptions of the process. Employees expect the performance appraisal process to be positive, transparent, accurate, and effective. Transparency and positive reinforcement from supervisors can be motivational tools supporting employee expectations and organizational success.

Conclusion. When used appropriately, the performance appraisal process can help establish strong relationships between the rater and ratee (Iqbal et al., 2019). Employees' experiences during the performance appraisal process did not align with their

expectations based on their input and expected output. In alignment with the literature, Adams' (1963) equity theory focuses on individual contributions and the expected outcome for given inputs. Employees in this study attribute their perceptions of the ineffectiveness of the performance appraisal process to their supervisors' inability to properly implement the process based on lack of relationship and results not tied to their actual performance. Ratees' (employees) must be satisfied with their rater (supervisor). According to Iqbal et al. (2019), in the performance appraisal process, the rater is the gatekeeper, and when ratees perceptions align to their expectations, they deem the rater superior. As cited in the literature, when retention rates are low in organizations, unhealthy relationships with supervisors and company culture play a role (Oladapo, 2014).

Recommendation. The recommendation for ensuring effective performance appraisal implementation is to ensure supervisors are properly trained on their organization's performance appraisal process. This includes processes that focus on interpersonal relationships to aid in supervisor relationship building. Criteria such as interpersonal relationships have been used to assist organizations in assessing performance (Bernardin & Russel, 1993). Strong employee-employer relationships benefit the organization as a whole. This study supports the notion that supervisor support remains a goal in performance appraisal. Developing supervisors in proper performance appraisal implementation is necessary for an effective performance appraisal process. Proper training should occur prior to supervisors carrying out employee performance appraisals. Performance appraisal implementation must be streamlined, simple, and a

uniform process. Prospective training could include the following best practices for an effective performance process:

1. Supervisor-employee relationship building – encourage open communication, ongoing feedback, and interactions to help establish relationships.
2. Delivering feedback – developing supervisors’ comfort levels to deliver constructive and supportive feedback that’s objective, free of bias, aligned to individual employee goals, and organizational objectives.
3. Action planning – Supervisors must be trained on action plan development as employees must be offered an opportunity to develop due to corrective feedback or develop for promotion to the next level. Accountability and follow-up tactics should be implemented to certify that the performance appraisal process is effective.
4. Performance appraisal accuracy – train supervisors on proper documentation and effective communication techniques for employee performance based on the organization’s appraisal instrument or set performance standards.

Finding 3. Employees perceive that justice is a requirement for fairness in the performance appraisal process and is required to retain employees in their organization.

As a construct that influences turnover, organizational justice has been studied frequently. Employees described how they have experienced injustice through discrimination, rater bias, rater subjectivity, or pre-determined performance rankings in their organization. When employees perceive inequity and the performance appraisal is implemented unfairly, the process will be unsuccessful.

Mid-level managers in this study recognize that fairness in the performance appraisal process influenced commitment and intent to stay employed at their organization. Conversely, when employees find the performance appraisal process unfair, retention decreases. Employees agreed that fairness is a critical factor in the performance appraisal process and can dictate employees' success and commitment to the organization. Juxtaposed to employees who experienced injustice in the appraisal process, other employees found the process fair.

Conclusion. Employees in this study perceived the performance appraisal process as unfair, deeming it inadequate and ineffective due to appraiser bias and subjectivity. One of the most common sources of error in performance appraisal remains personal bias (Bright & Black, 2019). In defining performance appraisal fairness, employees identified inequity as a primary factor influencing their perception of the performance appraisal process. As discussed by employees, the rater's ability to remain objective and equitable opposed to subjective and biased, influenced performance appraisal fairness. Gruman and Saks (2011) suggest that performance appraisals are a source of dissatisfaction for employees because the appraisals are perceived as biased or irrelevant.

Employees make two primary considerations when determining fairness of their contributions, first, whether their contributions and provisions are fair and second, whether practices implemented by their supervisors to determine provisions were just (Colquitt et al., 2001; Klotz et al., 2012). Employees determine appraisal fairness based on their firsthand experiences. The way employees respond to the performance appraisal process influences the outcome of the entire process, including fairness perception, truth, and overall achievement (Iqbal et al., 2015). Organizational justice refers to employees'

fairness perceptions in the workplace and practices of fairness (Greenburg, 1986). Equivalent to Greenburg's (1987) organizational justice theory, procedural justice focuses on an individual's experiences of justice and injustice and fairness in processes (Tyler, 2001).

In this study, employees did not perceive the performance appraisal process as fair, which is required for procedural justice. Processes are perceived as fair when they are accurate, consistent, unbiased, and ethical (Colquitt et al., 2013; Greenburg, 1987). Furthermore, organizations with a high justice climate tend to have more effective performance and less absenteeism due to employees shared positive perceptions (Colquitt et al., 2002; Martínez-Tur & Moliner, 2017). In this study, employees believed that justice is based on their ability to voice their beliefs regarding the performance appraisal process. Study results reveal that an organization's investment or lack thereof in human capital impacts employees' fairness perceptions. According to Drábek et al. (2017), human capital is the most esteemed component of any organization, furthermore, it is necessary to ensure organizations prosper and retain employees.

Recommendation. The recommendation for ensuring a fair and just performance appraisal process in addition to acknowledging employees' perceptions, is to ensure supervisors focus on building organizational trust through alleviating bias, injustice, and subjectivity. Specifically, literature related to fairness perceptions involves organizational trust and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). Organizational trust is employees' trust for the organization, often the collective trust of the leadership team, its processes, and its ability to remain fair and consistent (Galford & Drapeau, 2003). According to Hancock et

al. (2018), establishing trust in performance appraisal requires supervisors to communicate clear expectations, which results in more fair and effective coaching.

The performance appraisal must remain focused on an employee's contribution to the organizational goals through their role. In support of the recommendation, research related to organizational behavior and fairness remains an area of interest (Akram et al., 2020; Greenberg, 2011; Moon, 2017). Supervisors must be keenly self-aware and accept that they may have unconscious biases. Organizations should recognize that employees have specific expectations related to the performance appraisal process and outcomes. In identifying employee expectations, organizations must help train leaders to manage employee expectations regarding the process.

Discussion

Employees willingly shared their perceptions, both positive and negative based on their individual experiences in the workplace. Fair and effective performance appraisals support employee development and commitment while simultaneously contributing to organizational goals. Employees emphasize that fairness in the performance appraisal process not only shaped their supervisor-employee relationship, but also determined performance appraisal process effectiveness, fairness, purpose, and their intent to stay employed with the organization. Performance appraisals are the gateway to employee and organizational success. Employees should be supported to develop or improve their skillset through the performance appraisal process, therefore, increasing employee trust and engagement in the process.

The exploration of mid-level and senior-level managers' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness provides insight into talent management factors

influencing employee retention. Employee perspectives may encourage organizational leaders to reevaluate the performance appraisal process companywide. Employees believe their organization must be charged with stabilizing the performance appraisal process to ensure it is fair and effective on all levels and for all employees. Current literature on a fair and effective performance appraisal process insists that the perceived fairness of employee appraisals is influenced by an employees' overall commitment and level of job satisfaction (Singh & Mishra, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

In carrying out this research, limitations exist. According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), limitations impose restrictions out of the researcher's control. Therefore, four limitations exist for this study: (a) access, (b) sample, (c) trustworthiness, and (d) generalizability.

Access

First, this study requires access to a particular population to initiate the interview process successfully. The researcher used Zoom videoconferencing, and each interview lasted no more than one hour. According to Archibald et al. (2019), there are possible disadvantages to using a video conferencing tool, such as connection difficulty and call quality issues. The time available to study the research problem was limited. The researcher realized that access to the population limited the timeframe to collect data, and the initial data collection period was only suitable for some participants.

Sample

Second, the sample for data collection was limited to participants currently employed as mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 company, which impacted or limited

responses. In order to mitigate the risk of revealing participants' identities, the researcher used pseudonyms to protect personal information. In addition, pseudonyms assisted in keeping participant interview responses confidential. According to Given (2008), a pseudonym is a fictitious name assigned to give individuals confidentiality. The organization remained confidential and was referred to by its Fortune 500 status.

Trustworthiness

Third, trustworthiness is a predominant concept that conveys researcher-employed methods to ensure rigor and credibility of a study (Frey, 2018). In this study, the credibility of participants was essential and assisted in articulating findings. Polit and Beck (2014) postulated that the most important principles are confidence in the truth of the research and the results. Responses to interview questions relied solely on the authenticity and participation of managers. Finally, responses may be biased if participants currently perceive performance appraisals as unfair.

Generalizability

In qualitative research, studies are meant to examine a specific phenomenon or problem (Leung, 2015). However, Leung (2015) posits that with an increasing trend of information synthesis, the evaluation of generalizability is becoming relevant in many qualitative studies. Generalizability is the degree to which study results can apply to the entire population (Polit & Hungler, 1991). According to Leung (2015) and Myers (2000), due to the nature of qualitative studies, generalizability is not an expected attribute. In this study, the researcher focused solely on full-time mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 company. Although this research may provide insight into other organization types, the focus of this study was limited to the defined demographics.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research exploring employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness can assist in developing a more fair and effective performance appraisal process. In this study, mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 company shared their lived experiences of the performance appraisal process. Exploring the experiences of all employees in the company could provide more in-depth insight into more diverse populations (management and non-management staff). An exploration into the perspectives of all employees may reveal additional fairness and effectiveness perceptions to aid organizations in redefining or restructuring the performance appraisal process.

Further, future researchers can highlight the perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention from Fortune 500 and non-Fortune 500 employees. Illuminating the experiences of employees from Fortune 500 and non-Fortune 500 companies can assist in determining if the experiences of employees at Fortune 500 companies differ from those without the esteemed designation. Conducting a quasi-experimental study could help determine the similarities and differences between the two groups. In addition, a longitudinal study could assist in exploring possible additional influences on employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisals.

Lastly, Fortune 500 employees who perceive the performance appraisal process as fair and effective should be studied. Interviewing employees with overall positive perceptions and experiences can help organizational leaders properly implement the performance appraisal. Studying how organizations deliver fair and effective

performance appraisals should assist with fairness perceptions, which could impact employee retention.

Summary

Chapter V offers a summary of the study, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. This qualitative study was implemented using the IPA approach to understand employees' fairness perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to explore employees' perceptions of performance appraisal effectiveness and reveal how perceived fairness influences employee retention. In addition, the researcher used NVivo research software to assist in arranging, analyzing, and interpreting data for theme development.

The research offers insight into the failure of performance appraisal processes and the impact on organizational outcomes. Participants reflected on their lived experiences to assist in assessing the gap. According to participants' responses, the researcher categorized themes based on effectiveness, fairness, and retention. First, participants cited process effectiveness and supervisor relationship as factors influencing perceived effectiveness. Second, participants cited fairness as a factor influencing perceived justice of the process. Finally, participants cited purpose and intent to stay as factors influencing perceived influence on retention. Participants discussed their perceptions surrounding performance appraisal implementation along with issues of fairness.

In this study, the results support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In addition, the study's findings are supported by the theoretical framework, which includes theories that explore employee perceptions and expectations. The theories

presented in this study include equity theory (Adam, 1963), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), human capital theory (Becker, 1962, 1993), and organizational justice theory (Greenberg, 1987). Collectively the theories form a theoretical framework highlighting the importance of Human Capital Development, including the effectiveness of performance appraisals, effective people management, talent development, and the importance of employee perceptions in the workplace.

In this study, the researcher explored the experiences of mid-level and senior level managers at a Fortune 500 company to gather employees' perceptions of talent management factors [specifically performance appraisals] that influence retention. According to Oladapo (2014), retention rates reflect management's focus (or lack of focus) on performance appraisal and proper implementation. Based on participant interview responses in this study, the performance appraisal process is deemed unfair and ineffective. Employee perceptions of fairness and effectiveness, among other things, contributed to the Great Resignation.

The Great Resignation presented extraordinary challenges for organizational leaders. Highlighting that leadership teams must ensure that training and development plans are readily available to assist both supervisors and employees in tough times. Performance appraisals assess performance and, when properly implemented, can serve as a relationship-building and communication tool that helps establish a solid organizational culture. In addition, organizational leaders must implement intensive rater training to ensure proper relationship building and implementation to help combat declining retention rates. According to Costa (2017), talent management processes should seek to retain the most talented individuals in the workforce. The proper training and

implementation of performance appraisal processes will help change employee perceptions to assist in garnering buy-in for organizational goals, in turn, developing human capital. According to Thornton (2016), talent management is a comprehensive approach to enhancing human capital, enabling organizations to drive results and deploy processes to alleviate challenges by aligning business objectives.

Reevaluating performance appraisal process effectiveness in the future will increase human capital efficacy in organizations. A more effective workforce means a more successful organization. Fair and effective performance appraisal implementation will help advance organizations' comprehensive human capital development strategies (Iqbal et al., 2019). Human capital development aids in the analyses of employees, and a fair and effective performance appraisal process can assist in sustaining individual and organizational growth.

APPENDIX A – Approved List of Participants



February 3, 2022

Cherica Buckner



Thank you for your interest in interviewing our supervisors and managers. Our Human Resources Business Partner spoke with our legal department regarding the request. [Redacted] has strict policies on discussing our policies and programs. While our employees cannot speak to you on behalf of the organization, I can provide you a list of individuals who meet your criteria and are willing to participate in your interviews.

The following employees have agreed to interviews and meet your participant criteria.
Requested participant criteria

- Full time status
- Mid-level manager
- Employed 2+ years with the organization
- Completed a minimum of one performance appraisal

Name	Email Address
1.	[Redacted]
2.	[Redacted]
3.	[Redacted]
4.	[Redacted]
5.	[Redacted]
6.	[Redacted]
7.	[Redacted]
8.	[Redacted]
9.	[Redacted]
10.	[Redacted]
11.	[Redacted]
12.	[Redacted]
13.	[Redacted]
14.	[Redacted]
15.	[Redacted]

Will [Redacted] be cited in your final document? Your request mentioned incentives. Our employees cannot accept incentives. Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Thank you,



From: Cherica Buckner
Sent: Monday, August 9, 2021 10:58 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Research Support

Greetings [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to review my request. I am a Ph.D. student at The University of Southern Mississippi. As a part of this program, I am preparing to conduct research exploring the performance appraisal experiences of employees at a Fortune 500 company. The research involves interviewing employees meeting the following criteria:

- Full-time status
- Mid-level manager
- Employed 2+ years with the organization
- Completed a minimum of one performance appraisal

I aim to determine if employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisals influences their decision to remain within an organization.

I would like to conduct individual, semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes) face-to-face or via a video communication platform (due to COVID-19). My objective is to obtain feedback (based on lived experiences) on the performance appraisal process and how it impacts an employee's decision to stay (whether negative or positive). The process will be completely confidential, and the company name nor the names of employees will not be disclosed.

In summary, this study's data will be used to assist with my research topic at The University of Southern Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of my dissertation. This study may also help organizations understand employee fairness perceptions, resulting in developing a more efficient and effective appraisal process, increasing retention rates. I have also attached a list of proposed questions to ask during the interview process.

To begin, I need your assistance by providing a letter of support for the research. Please support by replying to this email and agree to provide:

- Email addresses of employees who meet the stated criteria
- Approved meeting space or available area at your organization to conduct interviews

Please let me know if additional information is required. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best,

Cherica Buckner

Doctoral Candidate

The University of Southern Mississippi

APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter

Office of
Research Integrity



118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5116 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6756 | WWW.USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-411
PROJECT TITLE: EXPLORING EMPLOYEES' PERCEIVED FAIRNESS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL EFFECTIVENESS AND THE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION
SCHOOL/PROGRAM School of Leadership
RESEARCHERS: PI: Cherica Buckner
Investigators: Buckner, Cherica~Annulis, Heather~
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10-May-2022 to 09-May-2023

Donald Sacco

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX C – Consent Form

[Date]

Project Title:

Exploring Employees' Perceived Fairness of Performance Appraisal Effectiveness and the Influence on Employee Retention

Principal Investigator: Cherica Buckner
Phone: (832) 598-4760
Email: cherica.watson@usm.edu
College: Business and Economic Development
Department: Human Capital Development

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 company and their perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention.

Description of Study:

This study explores your performance appraisal experiences in a Fortune 500 Company. A Zoom interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio-recorded, and transcription will be made available for your review to verify accuracy.

Benefits:

The study will provide knowledge and feedback on performance appraisal effectiveness and how employee perceptions influence organizational retention rates. As a participant, you will receive a copy of the study results.

Risks:

There are no known or expected risks associated with your participation in the study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity and responses will be confidential. You will receive a pseudonym as your identifier during the study. Only you and I will know your identity.

Alternative Procedures:

No alternative procedures are available. If you decide to withdraw or end participation after we begin, you may do so without penalty, consequence, or without providing a reason.

Participant's Assurance:

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601-266-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided in the Project Information Section above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant's Name: _____

Consent is hereby given to participate in this research project. All procedures and/or investigations to be followed and their purpose, including any experimental procedures, were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding the research and procedures was given. Participation in the project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time with penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to the Principal Investigator with the contact information provided above. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

Research Participant	Date	Person Explaining the Research	Date
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APPENDIX D – Interview Protocol/Script (Mid-level Managers)

This study focuses on exploring the lived experiences of mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 Company related to their perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness. The study will also examine if employee perceptions impact employee retention. The interview protocol is as follows:

- The interview will begin with the researcher informing the participant of the approximate length of the interview, how the research may influence change, and the participant's right to end the interview at any time.
- The researcher will gain written consent from the participant and answer any questions regarding the study and confidentiality.
- The researcher will ask the participants basic demographic questions, followed by questions related to their perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and experiences while working at a Fortune 500 Company. Each semi-structured question is designed to gather information regarding the participants' lived experiences.
- The researcher will ask the participants to describe their fairness perceptions and the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in their organization. Participants' will also be asked if the performance appraisal effectiveness impacts their decision to remain with or leave the organization.
- The interview will address the demographics of mid-level managers in a Fortune 500 Company.
- Questions will aim to discover themes about the perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness at a Fortune 500 Company.

1. Start the interview:

- a. Ask the participant for permission to record the interview.
- b. Begin recording
- c. Ask semi-structured, open-ended interview questions.
- d. Use prompts and thought-provoking questions as needed to help the interviewee maintain focus.
- e. Stop the interview at the 60-minute mark or ask to continue if not finished.

2. After the interview:

- a. Thank the participants for supporting the research.
- b. Explain that research results are available to interested participants once the university approves the study.
- c. Address any concerns and answer questions.

3. At the conclusion of the meeting:

- a. Explain that the transcribed data will be emailed for review and validation.
- b. Explain member checking and its importance in validating research.
- c. Email the transcripts to participants to revise or approve.
- d. Request a 3-day return on the validated documents. If documents are not returned, the researcher will assume the transcript is correct.

Introduction:

Before we start with the interview process, I would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in my study. I am a Ph.D. candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, and I am currently in the data collection phase of my dissertation. My study focuses on employees' perceived fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal process and the influence on employee retention. It will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete this interview. Please feel free to take a break at any time during the interview. I will record the interview for transcription purposes; however, a pseudonym (alias) will serve as your identifier. To maintain confidentiality, I will not record personal information, such as your name or email. Your name will not be associated with the study in any way. Please feel free to speak honestly and openly. Do I have permission to record the interview?

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Interviewee /Alias: _____

Start time: _____ End time: _____

[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol #22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

Interview Guide (Mid-level Managers)

1. Tell me about your role in the organization?
 - a. What do you enjoy most about your role?
2. How many years have you been employed with your organization?
3. Tell me about your promotion history. Have you ever been promoted during your tenure with the organization?
4. Explain the performance appraisal process in your organization. How often is your performance appraised?
5. Does your supervisor allow you to share your views and feelings during the performance appraisal process?
 - a. Based on your supervisor's expectations, do you have suggestions for performance appraisal improvements in your organization?
6. Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable during the appraisal process? If so, what particular questions or actions make you feel this way? Can you elaborate?
 - a. Explain why you believe or don't believe the overall performance appraisal process at your organization is bias-free? Explain.
7. Tell me how you feel about your previous performance review?
 - a. What if anything has been achieved since your last review?
8. Do you value the appraisal process? Why? Describe how the performance appraisal process is perceived in your organization?
 - a. Do you think the process is fair? Why or why not?
 - b. Do your performance appraisal results reflect your work efforts?

- c. Do you believe a sufficient amount of time is dedicated to the performance appraisal process in your organization? If so, in what way? If not, in what way?
- 9. Tell me about your organization's appeal process if you disagree with the outcome of your performance appraisal. What has your experience been with the appeal process? Do you know about the appraisal experience of others? Is your performance appraisal experience the same or different than others? Can you tell me more?
 - a. Tell me how employee performance is rated in your organization? What are your supervisor's performance expectations? Did you receive an effective performance appraisal based on your supervisor's expectations? Explain.
 - b. What does effective performance feedback look, feel, or sound like to you?
- 10. Does your supervisor deliver constructive feedback when appraising your performance? Does your supervisor stay on track or divert from the organization's planned appraisal process? What behaviors or processes lead you to this opinion?
 - a. Does your supervisor attempt to reduce subjectivity (bias) when appraising your performance? In what ways?
- 11. Do you think your performance helps you achieve your goals?
 - a. Where do you see yourself within this organization in the next five years? Does your performance appraisal help with achieving this?

- b. Would you recommend this organization to friends and family?
 - c. Have you considered leaving this organization?
12. Did your performance appraisal experience or results influence your decision to remain an employee with the organization?
13. Do you have comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview? What question did I not ask that you would have liked me to ask about performance appraisal?
14. What is your age?
15. What is your gender?
16. What is your highest level of education?

Exit Statement:

Thank you for meeting with me today. As we previously discussed, in about a week, I will email you the transcript of this interview and ask that you review the transcription to ensure your responses are correctly documented and that you agree with the summary. All interested participants will receive a copy of the study results. Do you have any questions before we end the interview session? Again, thank you!

APPENDIX E – Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal (EPA) Survey Questionnaire

Important Terms/Concepts

- Performance Appraisal: A formal evaluation of the quality of an individual's performance in an organization.
- Rater: A person who appraises/evaluates the performance of an employee. You might call him/her the boss, supervisor, manager, etc.
- Ratee: A person whose performance is appraised/evaluated, you might call him/her employee, subordinate, worker, operative, etc.
- Outcome of Performance Appraisal: This is what a ratee receives based on his or her performance evaluation, it can be promotion, demotion, pay raise, etc.
- Procedures of Performance Appraisal: Procedures adopted by the rater and the Administration (e.g., HR department) for carrying out the performance appraisals, it might include standardized forms, meetings, review, feedback, etc.

Guideline

Please indicate your extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statements encircling the relevant number as per scale given below:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = ⑤
- Agree = ④
- Neutral = ③
- Disagree = ②
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = ①

**Survey of Performance Appraisal Effectiveness
(for Telecom Organizations)**

Following statements refer to purposes of performance appraisal assumed in your organization.

	⑤ = Strongly Agree (SA)	④	③	②	① = Strongly Disagree (SD)
A1. Performance appraisal helps determine whether to promote, retain or terminate an employee.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
A2. Performance appraisal determines what raise in salary someone should receive.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
A3. The performance appraisal process documents and recognizes employee performance.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
B1. Performance appraisal lets employees know where they stand.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
B2. Performance appraisal is used to provide feedback about employee performance.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
B3. Performance appraisal identifies individual strengths and weaknesses.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C1. Performance appraisal helps employees know that how they can contribute to organizational effectiveness.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C2. Performance appraisal provides with information about organizational goals.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C3. Performance appraisal helps employees understand the organization's vision and strategy.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C4. Performance appraisal provides clear goals one can direct attention to.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C5. Performance appraisal helps employees prioritize between different work activities.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
C6. Performance appraisal helps employees see coherence between their own work and the performance of their department	⑤	④	③	②	①
D1. Performance appraisal provides information about what employees are responsible for accomplishing.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
D2. Performance appraisal provides information that helps make positive changes in the job itself.....	⑤	④	③	②	①
D3. Performance appraisal provides information about what employees actually do in their jobs.....	⑤	④	③	②	①

With reference to the following statements, being an employee, please unveil your opinion about yourself.

	Ⓢ = Strongly Agree (SA) ----- ① = Strongly Disagree (SD)	SA ----- SD
E1. I am rewarded fairly considering the responsibilities I have.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
E2. I am rewarded fairly for the amount I put forth.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
E3. I am rewarded fairly for the stresses and strains I have in my job.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
E4. I am rewarded fairly for the work I have done well.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F1. I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organization succeed.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F2. I feel very little loyalty to this organization (R).....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F3. I would take almost any job to keep working for this organization.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F4. I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F5. I am proud to be working for this organization.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
F6. I would turn down another job for more pay in order to stay with this organization.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G1. I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G2. When I feel that the image I am portraying is not working, I can readily change it to something that does.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G3. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G4. Once I know what the situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G5. In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
G6. I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I find myself in.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
H1. I receive frequent and continuous feedback on how I do my job.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
H2. I receive clear and direct information about my work performance through continuously provided feedback.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
H3. I rarely get feedback, except for formal feedback systems such as performance appraisal.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
H4. In my job, I am continuously informed about what I have done well or what I could have done better.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
H5. I know little about what my colleagues think about my work performance.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
I1. I know exactly what is expected of me.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
I2. I feel certain about how much authority I have on the job.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
I3. I know what my responsibilities are.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	

Keeping in mind the last performance period (Quarter, semi-annum, or annum) and its evaluation, you may score the following statements by revealing your true opinion about your performance appraisal and its outcomes.

	Ⓢ = Strongly Agree (SA) ----- ① = Strongly Disagree (SD)	SA ----- SD
J1. The outcome of my performance appraisal reflects the effort I have put into my work.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
J2. The outcome of my performance appraisal is appropriate for the work I have completed.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
J3. The outcome of my performance appraisal reflects what I have contributed to my organization.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
J4. The outcome of my performance appraisal is justified, given my performance.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K1. I have been able to express my views and feelings during the process of performance appraisal.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K2. I have been influential over the outcome of my performance appraisal arrived at by its procedures.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K3. Procedures of performance appraisal have been applied consistently.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K4. Procedures of performance appraisal have been free of bias.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K5. Procedures of performance appraisal have been based on accurate information.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K6. I have been able to appeal the outcome of my performance appraisal arrived at by its procedures.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
K7. Procedures of performance appraisal have upheld ethical and moral standards.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
L1. My rater has treated me in a polite manner.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
L2. My rater has treated me with dignity.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
L3. My rater has treated me with respect.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
L4. My rater has refrained from improper remarks or comments.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	

In my organization all Concerned, e.g., raters, ratees, and Administration ...

W1. ... clearly understand the purpose of performance appraisal.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W2. ... are perceived to be fair.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W3. ... are perceived as open and honest with one another.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W4. ... believe that the appraisal process should allow the employees an opportunity to openly discuss their performance.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W5. ... attempt to reduce subjectivity in performance evaluation.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W6. ... put in a sufficient amount of time into the formal performance appraisal.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	
W7. ... are professional in their conduct.....	Ⓢ 4 3 2 ①	

- X1. Age:
- ① 18-24 years
 - ② 25-34 years
 - ③ 35-44 years
 - ④ 45-55 years
 - ⑤ over 55 years
- X2. Gender:
- ① Male
 - ② Female
- X3. Education:
- ① Higher Secondary School = 12-year
 - ② Graduation = 14-year
 - ③ Masters = 16-year
 - ④ M.Phil/MS Degree = 18-year
 - ⑤ Doctoral Degree
- X4. With reference to performance appraisal, what role(s) you have been playing?:
- ① Rater
 - ② Ratee
 - ③ Both
- X5. Experience in telecom sector organization:
- ① Less than 3 years
 - ② 3 to 6 years
 - ③ 7 to 10 years
 - ④ 10 years or above
- X6. Position in the organization:
- ① Managerial/Officer
 - ② Employee/Subordinate
- X7. Type of your organization:
- ① Public Sector Organization
 - ② Business/Private Sector Organization

Thank You Very Much

APPENDIX F – Permission to Use EPA Questionnaire as a Guide

From: Cherica Buckner <Cherica.Watson@usm.edu>
Sent: Sunday, April 4, 2021 1:15 AM
To: Muhammad Zahid Iqbal <mzahid75@comsats.edu.pk>; s.akbar10@bradford.ac.uk <s.akbar10@bradford.ac.uk>; p.s.budhwar@aston.ac.uk <p.s.budhwar@aston.ac.uk>; zulfiqar.shah@wbs.ac.uk <zulfiqar.shah@wbs.ac.uk>
Subject: Survey Questionnaire Request

Hello,

My name is Cherica Buckner, and I am currently a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi. I've read your study "Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal: Evidence on the Utilization Criteria," and it has been beneficial as I'm writing on employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process.

I am interested in learning more about your study and requesting access to your survey questionnaire/s. Knowing the questions posed to participants will allow me to gain further insight into your study and help me determine how I should approach my methodology. I thoroughly enjoyed your study, and I'm looking forward to learning more about the instrumentation used that led to your results.

Best,

Cherica Buckner, MSA
Graduate Assistant | School of Education & Human Services
University of Southern Mississippi | Hattiesburg Campus
118 College Drive #5057 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406
J.B. George Building (JBG) | Phone: [601.266.5247](tel:601.266.5247)

Re: Survey Questionnaire Request

From: Muhammad Zahid Iqbal <mzahid75@comsats.edu.pk>
Sent: Sunday, April 4, 2021 2:17 PM
To: Cherica Buckner; s.akbar10@bradford.ac.uk; p.s.budhwar@aston.ac.uk; zulfiqar.shah@wbs.ac.uk
Subject: Re: Survey Questionnaire Request

Hi

Dear Cherica,

I thank you for taking interest in our contribution.

Please find the survey questionnaire that we used for our study.

Good luck with your doctoral research.

Dr. Muhammad Zahid Iqbal
Associate Professor
Department of Management Sciences
COMSATS University Islamabad
Islamabad Campus,
Park Road, Tarlai Katan,
Islamabad, 45550
Pakistan

Phone: 0092-9049-5338
Personal Website:
<http://ww3.comsats.edu.pk/faculty/FacultyDetails.aspx?UId=176>
University's Website: <https://comsats.edu.pk>

APPENDIX G – Interview Protocol/Script (Senior-level Managers)

This study focuses on exploring the lived experiences of senior-level managers at a Fortune 500 Company related to their perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness. The study will also examine if employee perceptions impact employee retention. The interview protocol is as follows:

- The interview will begin with the researcher informing the participant of the approximate length of the interview, how the research may influence change, and the participant's right to end the interview at any time.
- The researcher will gain written consent from the participant and answer any questions regarding the study and confidentiality.
- The researcher will ask the participants basic demographic questions, followed by questions related to their perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and experiences while working at a Fortune 500 Company. Each semi-structured question is designed to gather information regarding the participants' lived experiences.
- The researcher will ask the participants to describe their fairness perceptions and the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in their organization. Participants' will also be asked if the performance appraisal effectiveness impacts their decision to remain with or leave the organization.
- The interview will address the demographics of mid-level managers in a Fortune 500 Company.
- Questions will aim to discover themes about the perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness at a Fortune 500 Company.

1. Start the interview:

- a. Ask the participant for permission to record the interview.
- b. Begin recording
- c. Ask semi-structured, open-ended interview questions.
- d. Use prompts and thought-provoking questions as needed to help the interviewee maintain focus.
- e. Stop the interview at the 60-minute mark or ask to continue if not finished.

2. After the interview:

- a. Thank the participants for supporting the research.
- b. Explain that research results are available to interested participants once the university approves the study.
- c. Address any concerns and answer questions.

3. At the conclusion of the meeting:

- a. Explain that the transcribed data will be emailed for review and validation.
- b. Explain member checking and its importance in validating research.
- c. Email the transcripts to participants to revise or approve.
- d. Request a 3-day return on the validated documents. If documents are not returned, the researcher will assume the transcript is correct.

Introduction:

Before we start with the interview process, I would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in my study. I am a Ph.D. candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, and I am currently in the data collection phase of my dissertation. My study focuses on employees' perceived fairness and effectiveness of the performance appraisal process and the influence on employee retention. It will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete this interview. Please feel free to take a break at any time during the interview. I will record the interview for transcription purposes; however, a pseudonym (alias) will serve as your identifier. To maintain confidentiality, I will not record personal information, such as your name or email. Your name will not be associated with the study in any way. Please feel free to speak honestly and openly. Do I have permission to record the interview?

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Interviewee /Alias: _____

Start time: _____ End time: _____

[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol #22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

Interview Questions (Senior-level Managers)

1. Tell me about your role as a senior manager in the organization?
 - a. What do you enjoy most about your role?
2. How many years have you been employed with your organization?
 - a. How long have you been a senior manager?
 - b. When were you promoted to a senior-level manager?
3. How often do you appraise employee performance? Tell me about the process.
4. How do you allow employees to share their views and feelings during the performance appraisal process?
 - a. Based on your expectations, do you have suggestions for performance appraisal improvements in your organization? Why do you think it would work?
5. Do you believe you make employees feel comfortable or uncomfortable (consciously or unconsciously) during the appraisal process? If so, what particular questions or actions make you feel this way? Can you elaborate?
 - a. Did you notice, or was it brought to your attention?
 - b. Explain why you believe or don't believe the overall performance appraisal process at your organization is bias-free? Explain.
6. What is the process if employees disagree with the outcome of their performance appraisal? Do you offer an appeal process? Walk me through that process. What has your experience been?

7. Tell me how you rate employee performance in your organization. How do you communicate your expectations to your employees? How do you know employees understand your expectations?
 - a. Do you give effective performance appraisals? Explain.
 - b. What does effective performance feedback look like to you?
8. How do you think employees perceive the performance appraisal process in your organization? Tell me why you chose your answer.
 - a. Do your performance appraisal results reflect your employees' work efforts?
 - b. How much time do you commit to the performance appraisal process in your organization? Why don't you think this is an adequate amount of time? Why do you think this is an adequate amount of time?
9. How did your employees react to their previous performance review? Give me a few examples.
10. What if any changes have been implemented since the last performance review?
11. Are you willing to help your employees achieve their goals? What does it look like to help employees achieve their goals?
 - a. Where do you see yourself within this organization in the next five years? Does the performance appraisal process help with achieving this?
 - b. Would you recommend this organization to friends and family?
 - c. Have you considered leaving this organization?

12. How has your organization's performance appraisal process and results influenced your decision to stay with this organization?
13. Do you have comments you would like to add before we conclude the interview? What question did I not ask that you would have liked me to ask about performance appraisal?
14. What is your age?
15. What is your gender?
16. What is your highest level of education?

Exit Statement:

Thank you for meeting with me today. As we previously discussed, in about a week, I will email you the transcript of this interview and ask that you review the transcription to ensure your responses are correctly documented and that you agree with the summary.

All interested participants will receive a copy of the study results. Do you have any questions before we end the interview session? Again, thank you!

APPENDIX H – Introductory Email to Participants

Subject: (fill in the blank here)

Hello (Insert Name),

Your name was provided, and you were recommended to participate in this study.

This study explores the experiences of mid-level managers at a Fortune 500 Company to determine the influence of employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness on employee retention. If you choose to participate, I respectfully request that you:

- Complete the informed consent and return it by (date).
- Participate in an interview (approximately one hour) via Zoom.
- Provide information about your performance appraisal experiences at a Fortune 500 Company.
- Review the interview transcript for accuracy.

Your participation will offer insights into strategies employers can use to develop a more effective performance appraisal process which may help encourage employee retention. Additionally, you will receive a copy of the study results.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by emailing cherica.watson@usm.edu or calling 832-598-4760 no later than (date).

I look forward to talking with you further. Thank you,

Cherica Buckner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi

[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol #22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

APPENDIX I – Reminder Email to Participants

Hello (Participant's Name),

I am excited about our upcoming interview. Thank you for agreeing to share your experience as a mid-level manager/senior-level manager at a Fortune 500 company. As a reminder, the interview details are as follows:

- Interview scheduled on (date) at (time).
- Interview will take approximately one hour.

Please confirm your plan to participate in the interview via Zoom by replying to this email. I appreciate your willingness to assist with this study.

Sincerely,

Cherica Buckner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi
cherica.watson@usm.edu (832)-598-4760

[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol #22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

APPENDIX J – Member Checking Email

Dear (Participant's Name),

Thank you for participating in the research study of employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention. As discussed, attached is a copy of the interview transcription for your review. Please read the entire transcript, indicate responses you view as inaccurate, and revise where needed. Please contact me no later than (date) to make the suggested changes to the transcript.

If I do not hear from you by (date), I will assume no changes are required and that you accept the transcript as provided. Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have concerns or questions.

Best Regards,

Cherica Buckner
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Southern Mississippi
cherica.watson@usm.edu (832) 598-4760

[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol # 22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

APPENDIX K – Thank You Email to Participants

Dear (Participant's Name),

Thank you for participating in the research study of employees' perceived fairness of performance appraisal effectiveness and the influence on employee retention.

I truly appreciate your time and assistance provided. I wish you the best as you move forward in your professional endeavors.

Kind regards,

Cherica Buckner
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[Note: This project has been approved by the University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (protocol #22-411), which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.]

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