

The Nexus of Employee Attitudes Towards Performance Appraisals and its Impact on Employee Performance in the Zimbabwean Manufacturing Sector

الصلة بين مواقف الموظفين إزاء تقييمات الأداء وأثرها على أداء الموظفين في قطاع الصناعة
التحويلية في زمبابوي

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Abstract:

Objectives: The study sought to examine the relationship between employee attitudes towards performance appraisal and its impact on work performance in the manufacturing sector using Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited as a case study. This was in response to the general negative feelings against the performance appraisals by employees in the manufacturing sector.

Methods: The researchers used an inductive research approach which recognizes that meaning emerges through interaction with participants of the study and adopted the realism philosophical position. The study used the case study research design and convenience sampling technique was adopted, thereby allowing the researchers to conveniently select 55 cases up to saturation point. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to solicit for information from the participants of the study which included both managerial and non-managerial staff. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative responses from participants.

Results: The major findings of the study highlighted that the company under study is faced with negative employee attitudes towards performance appraisals. Hatred, bitterness, resentment, anger, competition among the employees were prevalent attitudes that the workforce exhibited against the appraisal system in place. Erosion of trust, antagonism and lack of team work among the workforce both in supervisory and non-supervisory levels was the greatest challenge faced by the organization studied. Regardless of the challenges faced, managerial participants concurred in stating that the performance appraisals in place brought about positive changes to the organization, exhibited by a steady increase in production due to competition among the employees which in turn led to meeting of targets.

Conclusion: The researchers recommend that the Human Resource department should train and create awareness to about the entire performance management process so as to eliminate resentment towards the process. Furthermore, the Human Resource department should explore the introduction of self-rating performance appraisal methods where the employee can set targets and then monitor and rate own performance against set targets after a given period of time.

Keywords: Performance appraisal; Employee Performance; Performance Management System; Employee Attitudes.

الملخص:

الأهداف: سعت الدراسة إلى دراسة العلاقة بين مواقف الموظفين إزاء تقييم الأداء وأثره على أداء العمل في قطاع الصناعة التحويلية باستخدام شركة Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited كدراسة حالة إفرادية. وكان ذلك استجابة للمشاعر السلبية العامة إزاء تقييمات الأداء التي أجراها الموظفون في قطاع الصناعة التحويلية.

المنهجية: استخدم الباحثون نهجًا بحثيًا مبتكرًا يعترف بأن المعنى يظهر من خلال التفاعل مع المشاركين في الدراسة واعتمدوا الموقف الفلسفي الواقعي. واستخدمت الدراسة التصميم البحثي لدراسة الحالة وتم اعتماد تقنية أخذ العينات الملائمة، مما سمح للباحثين باختيار 55 حالة بسهولة حتى نقطة التشبع. واستخدمت المقابلات المعمقة شبه المنظمة لالتماس معلومات من المشاركين في الدراسة التي شملت موظفين إداريين وغير إداريين على حد سواء. واستخدم التحليل المواضيعي لتحليل الردود النوعية من المشاركين.

النتائج: أبرزت النتائج الرئيسية للدراسة أن الشركة قيد الدراسة تواجه مواقف سلبية لدى الموظفين إزاء تقييمات الأداء. وكانت الكراهية، والمرارة، والاستياء، والغضب، والمنافسة بين الموظفين هي المواقف السائدة التي أظهرتها القوة العاملة ضد نظام التقييم المعمول به. وكان تقليص الثقة والعداء وعدم وجود عمل جماعي بين القوة العاملة على كل من المستوى الإشرافي وغير الإشرافي أكبر تحد تواجهه المنظمة التي خضعت للدراسة. وبصرف النظر عن التحديات القائمة، وافق المشاركون الإداريون على القول بأن تقييمات الأداء القائمة أدت إلى تغييرات إيجابية في المنظمة، أظهرتها زيادة مطردة في الإنتاج بسبب المنافسة بين الموظفين مما أدى بدوره إلى تحقيق الأهداف.

الخلاصة: يوصي الباحثون بأن تقوم إدارة الموارد البشرية بتدريب وإذكاء الوعي بشأن كامل عملية إدارة الأداء بغية القضاء على الاستياء من العملية. وعلاوة على ذلك، ينبغي لإدارة الموارد البشرية أن تستكشف إمكانية الأخذ بأساليب تقييم الأداء ذاتي التصنيف حيث يمكن للموظف أن يضع أهدافًا ثم يرصد ويصنف الأداء على أساس أهداف محددة بعد فترة زمنية معينة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقييم الأداء؛ أداء الموظفين؛ نظام إدارة الأداء؛ مواقف الموظفين.

1 Introduction

Performance appraisals (PA) have fundamentally been recognized globally as the most effective and efficient tool for evaluation of employee performance. A firm's overall performance is however often attributed to dominant factors such as inadequate government support or managerial competencies whereas there are silent factors such as performance management system which plays a crucial role in evaluating employee performance and provide feedback to organizations (Mashavira, 2020). Globally, the effective and efficient evaluation of employee's performance in both the service and goods sector is regarded as most important activity in every organisation and is perceived to have meaningful correlation with organisational success and growth (Armstrong, 2018; Walsh, 2018). This activity is referred to as the Performance Appraisal System (PAS). This is a process that each organisation has outlined to be followed or used by managers or superiors to ascertain the level of performance of their employees. Apart from being used as an employee performance evaluation tool, it is used in motivating staff which in the long run may help in boosting employee satisfaction especially if rewards are attached to certain levels of performance. The incremental effect of these performance management dynamics, according to Kwame and Kankam (2018), can lead to a significant increase in both staff and organisational performance.

Furthermore, PAS helps in providing the necessary information for management to make informed, critical, and effective decisions regarding compensations and benefits (Boxall & Purcell, 2018). Performance appraisal provides a foundation for critical HR activities namely, training and development needs (Naming, 2017), layoffs, staffing, pay raises, and discipline (Cropanzano & Stein, 2019). Performance appraisal (PA) has been studied widely over the last few decades, yet scholars continue to argue about their validity and merits Chory & Westerman, 2019; Flaniken, 2019). Regardless of the importance of performance appraisal, its implementation has caused some challenges and confusion in large organizations, as was observed in the Ghanaian study at the Trauma and Orthopaedic Specialist Hospital (TOSH), (Kwame and Kankam, 2018).

This study therefore sought to conduct an analysis of the nexus of employee attitudes towards performance appraisals and its impact on employee performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited a manufacturing company in Zimbabwe. Performance appraisal is one of the oldest management tools available, and the problems associated with it are equally well established (Beer, 2017). According to Beer (2017) many of the problems in performance appraisal stem from the appraisal system itself, the objectives it is intended to serve, the administrative system in which it is rooted, and the forms and procedures that make up the system. The performance system can be blamed by employees if the criterion for evaluation is poor, and the technique used is cumbersome.

In the study made by Roberts and Reed (2018) among 120 seasoned managers drawn from five different large US organizations titled "why managerial performance appraisals are ineffective", the majority (83%) of the respondents argued that managerial performance appraisal is destined to fail because of (among the many reasons cited) the perceived unclear performance criteria or ineffective rating instruments used. According to Deborah and Brian (2017) organizations need to have a systematic framework to ensure that performance appraisal is "fair" and "consistent". Even if the system is well designed, problems can arise if the raters (usually supervisors) are viewed by employees as not cooperative and untrained (Ivancevich, 2018). This is often because they have not been adequately trained or have not participated in the design of the program.

According to Cook (2019), performance appraisals suffer from four major problems namely biases, politicking, impressions management and undeserved reputation. Biases could be consciously or unconsciously because of age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, attitudes, and fundamental values of the raters, and personal like or dislike. On the other hand, Mashavira (2020) argue, employees believe there is some evidence uncovering the reasons why managers deliberately give low performance ratings to the subordinates: (a) to shock someone back on to a higher performance track; (b) to teach a rebellious subordinate a lesson; (c) to send someone a message that they should consider leaving the organisation; (d) and to build a well- documented record of poor performance to speed up terminations. Roch & O'Sullivan (2020) argue that the problems associated with performance evaluation can also be attributed to the employees. For instance, their attempt to create unnecessary impression and work area ingratiation.

Although performance appraisal is regarded as one of the oldest management tools, it is suggested by many researchers through literature that it plays a pivotal role in supporting firm growth (Chatiza, Mubvundu & Chisango 2021), especially the manufacturing sector. In the context of the Zimbabwean manufacturing sector,

where firms operate in a highly competitive environment, it becomes imperative to assess the relationship between employee attitudes towards performance appraisals and their subsequent impact on overall employee performance (Sixpence, Tapera, Ukpere 2023).

1.1 Aim of the Study

The study aimed at analysing the nexus between employee attitudes towards performance appraisals and its subsequent impact on employee performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited. The researchers were motivated by the negative employee attitudes towards the performance appraisal in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. The researchers endeavoured to establish the subsequent impact of employee attitudes on performance appraisal process and the resulting performance outcomes of employees in the Zimbabwean manufacturing companies.

1.2 Problem statement

There have been notable increases in the use of performance appraisals in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. However, there have been some challenges in understanding the link between employee attitudes towards performance appraisals and how this subsequently affect employee performance. Despite their widespread use as a tool for evaluating and improving employee performance appraisals, limited research has been carried out to examine how employee attitudes toward performance appraisals affect the employees' actual performance in the manufacturing sector. As a result, there was a need to investigate the nexus between employee attitudes towards performance appraisal and its effect on employee performance.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To identify the employee performance appraisal methods used at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited.
- To examine the effects of employee attitudes towards performance appraisal on work performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited.
- To examine the extent of contribution of performance appraisal to employee performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited.
- To identify the employee attitudes that are prevalent at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited which affect employee appraisal outcomes.

The study was expected to clearly show the relationship between employee attitudes and performance appraisals and the subsequent impact on employee performance as may be generalised to manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. Improving organisational productivity (performance) has emerged as one of the primary objectives of human resource management. Organisational performance is the synergistic sum of all employees' performance in the organisation. Given this, employee performance must be carefully planned, coached, and evaluated to ensure that it is consistent with the interests of organizations. Performance evaluation enables organizations to reward and promote effective performers while directing ineffective performers to developmental programs or other personnel actions that are critical to the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (Mount, 2018). Longenecker and Fink (2019) cited several reasons that formal performance evaluations are to stay in organizations. Formal evaluations, they argue, are required to justify a wide range of human resource decisions, including pay raises, promotions, demotions, and terminations. This function, if properly exercised by organizations, can serve several purposes, mainly administrative and developmental in nature. According to them, formal evaluations are required to justify a wide range of human resource decisions such as pay raises, promotions, demotions and terminations. Furthermore, this function, if properly exercised by organizations, can serve several purposes, mainly administrative and developmental in nature.

2 Literature Review

The study was underpinned by the Social Comparison Theory by Festinger (1954).

2.1 The Social Comparison Theory – Festinger (1954)

In the history of evolution, the capacity to compare oneself to others is an ancient and powerful biological trait that is present in many animals. It was not until 1954 when Festinger first proposed the theory of social comparison where he suggested that people had the drive to assess their opinions and abilities by comparing

themselves with the others (Crusius et al., 2022). Dal and Xiao (2016) explain that human beings have an inborn desire to evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others. The social comparison theory assumes that Social Comparisons Orientation (SCO) affects a variety of work outcomes, especially when employees compare themselves with other employees (Dal & Xiao, 2016). Thus, the attitudes of employees towards performance appraisals and its impact on employee performance may also be influenced by the Social Comparison theory which states that employees respond differently when performance feedback is given depending on the quality of comparisons, they build between themselves and their co-workers (Gino & Staats, 2016). As a result, the impact of performance appraisal may be affected by the value of comparisons that individual employees make between themselves and their counterparts. Furthermore, Dal and Xiao (2016) and Gino and Staats (2011) assert that employees compare themselves upwards or downwards, whereby upwards they compare themselves with those doing well in their work which may force them to, improve their performance, whilst some employees can also compare themselves downwards whereby they compare themselves with those doing badly which may lower their self-esteem and lead to poor performance.

Gino and Staats (2011) and Crusius et al. (2022) established that many organizations lack objective standards for measurement and comparisons and as result workers resort to comparing themselves with their counterparts in order to assess their performance. Consequentially, comparisons amongst co-workers play a huge impact on performance appraisal and how they affect employee performance. Thus, the results of how individual employees compare themselves with co-workers may affect employees' attitudes and perceptions towards performance appraisals which ultimately affect their performance. Many studies have demonstrated that persons with high SCO are fond of comparing themselves with others, as they spend more time comparing and they gain stronger emotional experience from the activity, (Gibbons et al. (2020). It has been demonstrated that SCO can have an impact on several outcomes, including risk perceptions and one's subjective well-being. Improved work performance is one of the most popular outcomes in organisational behaviour which can easily be influenced by social comparison among employees. The quality of a person's work is referred to as their job performance. Every organisation aims for great performance because it yields high profits. Therefore, for many years, academics and leaders have been studying a variety of aspects that have an impact on job performance, (Gino and Staats, 2011).

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

From other related studies the consensus is that employee attitudes towards performance appraisals affect their effectiveness (Boruett et al., 2021). In their studies in Kenya Boruett et al. (2021) established that in the country's Ministry of Education, performance appraisals are less effective due to employees' perceptions of performance appraisals, employees feel that performance appraisals are bureaucratic with little or no relevance towards improving employee performance. Thus, the attitudes of employees towards performance appraisals are a determinant of their success or failure. If performance appraisals are properly used, they may have a beneficial effect on organizations, however, due to their subjective nature, less importance has been attached to them (Anjulo, 2017). A study by Anjulo, (2017) established that employees were not satisfied with their organizations' appraisal process, have got negative attitudes towards it and it is meant to control the employees.

A study by Idowu (2019) discovered that the failure of the performance appraisal system to meet the employees' perceptions of justice and their expectations may lead to negative attitudes towards performance appraisals, as a result, this may affect employees' motivation ultimately leading to reduced employee performance. HR professionals must understand and influence the employees' attitudes toward performance appraisals. If employees have negative attitudes towards appraisals, it may affect their performance in the workplace. In another study conducted by Shinwari and Rahimi (2018), it was established that when appraisals are fairly done employees become motivated which is reflected in their work output. However, if the performance appraisal is not properly done employees become bitter thereby affecting their performance (Shinwari & Rahimi, 2018). Thus, it can be ascertained that employees' attitudes towards performance appraisal may ultimately affect their performance. Similarly, Ali (2012) also established that employee attitudes towards performance appraisals have a significant effect on employee performance. As a result, it may be concluded that the attitudes of employees toward performance appraisal systems being adopted by an organisation may affect their performance. As a result, organizations have to ensure that performance appraisals are fairly done which may help create positive attitudes towards performance appraisals.

2.3 Overview of Performance Appraisal

Dwomoh et al. (2019) argue that over 80% of the UK-based companies evaluated, expressed some dissatisfaction with the performance appraisal system (PAS) because it fails to motivate employees, despite the long-standing recognition of the importance of the labour force to the success of businesses. Bowles and Coates (2020) as cited in Dwomoh et al (2019), claim that a sample of 48 UK businesses, accounting for 68 percent, are unhappy with the scheme. Additionally, the level of satisfaction with a PAS may vary naturally depending on a worker's position within the company. Despite widespread opposition, PAs have evolved into an integral part of UK institutions' management structures. 2009 research by the London-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) provides evidence for this claim, showing that 80% of HR professionals perform PAs (Jozwiak, 2019). According to Jozwiak, management consulting firm Hay Group found that 30% of business leaders and 50% of government personnel believe that evaluations are merely a box-ticking exercise.

Owing to its widespread implementation in multiple places, performance appraisal (PA) has been employed extensively to improve the performance of employees and business performance since the resuscitation of trade and industry on a global scale in India (Sing and Vadivelu, 2019). Previous research by Chowdhury (2018) had shown that practically all institutions try to monitor the outcome of their staff's work through an assessment procedure. Chowdhury (2018) contend that incentives are given to those who achieve more productivity while those who underperform are penalised, much like in a reward and punishment system. Like several other authors, he criticizes PAs by asserting that some PA practices are driven more by reviewer interests than by worker success. The perspective of Sing and Vadivelu (2019) appears to be similar to Chowdhury's. Sing and Vadivelu (2019) established that the Indian culture is characterised by "hierarchy and inequality" and stress that employees value their relationships with their managers more than the demands of their jobs. As a result, this perception affects the employee attitudes towards performance appraisal.

Radebe (2019) established that provincial governments are under pressure from the government and the public they serve to perform better. In order to boost their work output, local councils in South Africa have resorted to Performance Appraisals. Additionally, PAs provide performance feedback to employers and help them address performance related issues brought up during reviews. The entire achievement of any institution's goals depends on the productivity of each individual employee (Seotlela and Miruka, 2020). PA gives managers the chance to create an expansion plan that will boost output through corrective actions and skill development (Hayford, Yiadom and Owusu, 2017)

Using Zimbabwe's private and public sector perspective, (Mashavira, 2020), Performance Appraisals have been adopted in order to improve service delivery and ensure efficiency in the public sector. The introduction of Performance Appraisals has been a culmination of a number of reforms that have been adopted by the government of Zimbabwe since 1980. The reforms among others include the introduction of Result Based Management (RBM) which according to the African Development Fund (2017) have been adopted to enhance public sector accountability, service delivery, and increase connection between funding and outcomes. The government of Zimbabwe introduced RBM in 2005 and was used to produce ratings of what one accomplishes and how they perform. RBM performance appraisals shift focus from inputs and actions to outcomes. RBM is a cutting-edge management strategy in the public sector which helps public sector organizations make sure that their individual institutions departments, systems, and procedures are totally focused on achieving real, positive outcomes which enhance people's quality of life in the country, (Mayne, 2020). RBM is described by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (2017) as a management strategy based on management to achieve intended organisational outcomes through the integration of a philosophy and set of principles focused on results in all aspects of employee productivity management. Companies in the private sector have generally used a variety of performance evaluation methods that are accessible in the field of human resources. According to Gwata (2018), firms have a variety of approaches to assess performance, depending on the size, type, and timeframes for using PAs in the organisation. The common techniques have included, among others, the rating scales method, the paired comparison method, and the critical evaluation approach (Mayne, 2020).

2.4 Employee Performance Appraisal Methods in the Workplace

There are numerous ways to evaluate performance, depending on the organisation's size, type, and timescales for the use of PAs. Effective appraisal systems should reward effective personnel in addition to taking into

account the leadership skills, clarity, transparency, and impartiality of the appraiser. The discussion that follows will look at numerous performance evaluation techniques that are frequently employed by businesses.

2.5 The Rating Scales Method

The Rating Scale technique is used frequently in companies to evaluate an employee's performance. According to their performance, dedication, honesty, attitude, regularity, accountability, and sincerity, it grades employees on a scale of 1 to 10 for each category. Positive feedback is represented by 10, while unfavourable feedback is represented by 1. (Cynthia, 2019). A study by Septifani et al. (2020) established that rating scales are an effective way of measuring employee performance. Therefore, organizations that seek to objectively measure the performance of their employees should apply the rating scales as a way of assessing performance of their employees.

2.6 The Paired Comparison Method

In contrast to the straight ranking method, this method compares each employee with another person in the group individually. This method compares every member of a group at once. The method contrasts each employee with every other person in the group on an individual basis. Following all comparisons, the employees receive their final ranks based on the total comparisons. It is a method for comparing someone and their profession to another based on skill sets, the time it takes to complete tasks, knowledge, and other aspects (Freiser and Heimen, 2019). However, Goel (2023) established that even though it is effective as comparison is done on the basis of traits, it is time consuming and is therefore unsuitable for organizations with many employees.

2.7 The Critical incidents method

As observed by Fletcher (2020), Fitts and Jones' writings in 1947 formally established the approach for classifying pilot error experiences in reading and interpreting aviation instrumentation. Fitts and Jones choose to use the word "errors" rather than the phrase "severe events." In contrast to Fitts and Jones' methodology of data collection, data gathering during task execution is currently regarded as a defining condition for critical incident approaches. John Flanagan's paper "The Critical Event Technique," which appeared in the psychological bulletin in 1954, became the primary source for the critical incident technique. The critical incident technique was first introduced by Flanagan (1954) as a set of procedures designed to explain human behaviour by compiling accounts of events that had remarkable significance and met predetermined standards. Work sampling is another name for this approach. The management creates lists of claims about the employee's highly and poorly effective behaviour. These significant occurrences or situations reflect either the excellent or subpar behaviour of employees while working. The manager keeps logs on each employee in which he periodically records significant instances of the individual's conduct. These documented significant incidents are considered when evaluating the workers' performance at the conclusion of the rating period.

2.8 The Confidential Report System

Gillen (2018) argues that when promoting or transferring any employee, government organizations typically use the confidential report method. It can also be used to gather information about a worker and help in decision-making. The superior creates a confidential report after evaluating an employee's knowledge and work quality, character and conduct, absences, punctuality, unlawful absences or leave without authority, capacity to supervise and manage, integrity, and honesty. The superior may add comments if necessary. This report will remain confidential and won't be distributed to anyone. Ultimately, private reports will be delivered to the appropriate decision-makers.

2.9 The Checklist Method

Simply put, a checklist is a list of objectives or assertions that characterise the worker and his actions. The checklist comes with a set of phrases the ratter can use to describe how well the employees are performing their duties. The checklist approach has been modernised with the weighted list. This means that depending on the question, the weighting of each question's significance may be same or different. This strategy may reduce appraiser or human bias (Grote, 2019).

2.10 The Customer feedback method

This method of performance evaluation is unquestionably one of the most trailblazing ones currently available, claim Junlin and Guoqing (2018). The client feedback approach is used, especially for sales representatives who are active in the business's sales activity. In this method of evaluation, customer feedback and staff performance are closely intertwined. Since clients, who are outsiders, rather than managers, who are insiders, may make accurate assessments of employees' performance, this type of evaluation may be impartial and reliable.

2.11 360 degrees Performance Appraisal

The most comprehensive review is a 360-degree feedback method, often known as "multi-rater feedback," where the employee receives input on their performance from everyone they encounter with at work. Personnel at the medium and senior levels typically use this tool. The organisation is able to get adequate data from all stakeholders because of the complexity of their occupations (Watkins and Leigh, 2019). This is not an exhaustive review of the performance appraisal techniques that supervisors who are in charge of employee appraisal in the workplace can utilise. The researcher chose the aforementioned techniques because they are often used in workplace performance evaluation processes.

2.12 The extent of contribution of performance appraisal to employee performance in the workplace

Lawrence (2018) contends that most companies use performance evaluation to gauge and measure the productivity of its personnel. Every organisation that makes use of such tools has two main objectives. Firstly, a performance appraisal conclusion is used to determine employee incentives. In addition, information obtained from performance appraisal is used as feedback to determine the staff's training needs and opportunities for career progress. Junlin and Guoqing (2018) add that performance evaluations seek to accurately assess employee performance, promote morale, increase output, and ultimately make strategic planning easier so that managerial decisions may be made. According to Jaiswal (2020) when performance evaluations are handled constructively, everyone in the organisation, especially the supervisor and subordinate, can benefit. It therefore becomes obvious that the enhancement of performance through positive reviews must be the major motivation for all areas of performance management (Gillen, 2018). Performance evaluation systems basically serve the aim of comparing an employee's actual performance to the standards set by the firm. This is essential because it motivates staff to work productively by providing them with chances for performance reviews, development, recognition, and progress (Watkins and Leigh, 2019). This enhances both organisational performance and employee competencies.

In another study by Thomas and Bretz (2020) work quality improvement, administration of merit salaries, counselling employees about job expectations, and decision-making about promotions were the top four reasons for companies to use performance appraisal systems. These reasons were ranked in order of importance. The approval of hiring practices, assistance in other managerial actions, and decision-making about layoffs and terminations, on the other hand, seemed to be the least crucial factors (Thomas and Bretz, 2020). Thus, performance ratings play a crucial role in quality improvement, compensation management and decision making and therefore it is ideal for organizations to embrace performance appraisal.

Denisi & Griffin (2018) claim that some employees may find performance evaluations intimidating or threatening because they think they are being subjected to harm or punishment. However, Thomas and Bretz's (2020) established that performance evaluations are conducted with the intention of helping employees. Grubb (2007) asserts that thoughtful design and preparation could make performance assessments rewarding and advantageous for both staff members and managers / supervisors. When performance evaluations are linked with recognition and rewards, there are probably benefits for employees' motivation, productivity, and retention. Mathis and Jackson (2020), also discovered that performance evaluations may serve as the basis for various HR processes, such as performance compensation, training and career development, promotion, and other actions and concur with Thomas and Bretz's findings above.

2.13 Employee attitudes towards performance appraisals and their effect on employee appraisal outcomes

Employee participation in the design and execution of performance appraisal systems is one of the factors impacting how the employees feel and act toward the introduction of performance appraisal systems and, eventually, how the process works out. Employee perceptions of the fairness or unfairness of performance assessments strongly influence their attitudes and responses to them (Smither, 2018). The more accustomed an

employee is to the procedures from the beginning, the less likely it is that they will view the system as unjust. When employees feel that their evaluation is fair, they are more likely to accept it with satisfaction and be motivated to improve their performance. The converse is also true (Smither, 2018). Roberts (2019) asserts that when employees feel that the appraisal process is unfair, they become angry, resentful, and bitter towards it and reject the appraiser's ratings as a result. A fair performance management system can enhance how staff members respond to reviews, which can increase their motivation and output (Grote, 2019). It is indeed interesting to see how managers react when they see performance evaluations as an administrative chore. This invariably leads to providing these procedures less time and focus, which in turn results in conflicts amongst subordinates and has a negative effect on organisational performance (Gillen, 2018). People detest performance rating systems for a variety of reasons, including ownership, unfavourable feedback, detrimental repercussions, and a lack of sufficient incentives (Grote, 2019).

After the implementation of a performance management system, Taylor, and Pierce (2019) performed research on the attitudes of employees and noted changes in performance. According to their findings, both their cooperation with their supervisors and organisational commitment both significantly increased over time. While low or medium performers who obtained somewhat higher ratings than they anticipated felt the process was a waste of time and had no impact on their positive performance, dissatisfactions occurred when the assessment was lower than expected, mainly for high performers (Taylor & Pierce, 2019).

2.14 Effects of employee attitudes towards performance appraisal on work performance

Previous research concluded that the timing of the implementation of a performance appraisal system is critical because it has a significant impact on employees' attitudes, regardless of whether they are managers or shop floor employees, (Boruett et al 2021). This is true regardless of the importance and justification for doing so. The ideal time to establish a performance management system in a corporation is when organisational leaders are prepared to fully integrate it into the management responsibilities of the organisation. Everyone in the organisation must be dedicated to providing all the support and information necessary because a badly administered evaluation system can do more harm than good (Watkins and Leigh, 2019). Employee attitudes towards performance appraisal may affect employee performance, this is in line with Boruett et al. (2021) who established that performance appraisals are not effective as employees perceive them as a bureaucratic process which is not relevant to the needs of the organizations. Furthermore, Boruet et al. (2021) discovered that Performance Appraisals are not relevant in as far as improving organisational performance and accountability is concerned and therefore employees do not attach any value to them. Consequently, this may affect results and incentives attached to them which in the end may affect employee performance. In a study by Shinwari and Rahimi (2018) they established that 360-degree appraisal negatively affect employees' attitude towards work mostly because of negative aspects of punishment attached to 360 degrees performance appraisal as it is perceived to be more dependable due to its all-encompassing approach. As a result, the study by Shinwari and Rahimi (2018) concluded that when appraisals are done fairly employees tend to be motivated and this may positively reflect in their work output, conversely when it's not done properly employees become bitter and, in the end, affects performance. It is therefore, important for organizations to undertake fair and effective performance appraisals as this may enhance employee performance.

2.15 Challenges in the performance evaluation process

Despite performance management being one of the oldest employee management strategies, but it also has some of the most well-known challenges (Beer, 2018). Several academics have suggested the possible reasons why performance reviews may be difficult. Some of the challenges include how the system is designed and run. According to Beer (2018), many problems with performance evaluations are as a result of the system itself, the objectives it seeks to accomplish, the administrative structure in which it is entrenched, and the forms and procedures that make up the system. The performance system can be held accountable if the criteria for evaluation are insufficient, the method utilised is time-consuming, or the system is more formal than substantive. If the evaluation is only based on factors that prioritise activity over output (results) or personality traits above performance, it might not be well-received (Junlin and Guoqing, 2017; Beer, 2018; Ivancevich, 2017; Cynthia, 2018). In Longenecker's (2019) study on 120 seasoned managers drawn from five different large US organizations, most respondents (83 percent) argued that managerial performance appraisal is bound to fail due to (among the many reasons cited) unclear performance criteria or an ineffective rating instrument used.

Businesses need a systematic framework, according to Fletcher (2020), to ensure "fair" and "consistent" performance review.

2.16 Ratters' problems in Performance Evaluation

Even with a well-designed system, issues could arise if the raters; (supervisors) are uncooperative and undertrained (Ivancevich, 2017). This typically happens as a result of improper training or a lack of participation in the program's development. A multitude of problems with standards of evaluation, the halo effect, leniency or harshness, central tendency error, "recency of events" error, contrast effects, personal prejudice (stereotyping), and more can be brought on by inadequate ratter training (Aswathappa, 2020). Performance reviews, according to Cascio (2017), include four main issues: prejudices, political manoeuvring, perception management, and unwarranted reputation. Age, colour, gender, physical attributes, the attitudes and core beliefs of the raters, and individual preferences can all be causes of prejudice, whether deliberate or unintentional. On the other hand, there is evidence of motivations behind for managers giving low performance ratings on purposefully to the subordinates: (a) to shock someone back onto a higher performance track; (b) to teach a defiant subordinate a lesson; (c) to let someone know they should contemplate leaving the company; (d) and to build a well-documented record of poor performance to accelerate terminations (Longenecker & Fink 2019).

2.17 Employee problems in Performance Evaluation

Some problems with performance reviews are also the fault of the employees. The desire of employees, for example, to ingratiate themselves in the workplace and leave unneeded impressions, is one of the largest problems. According to Freiser and Heimen (2019), organizations occasionally exist where subordinates are credited for advancing management strategies that are wholly incorrect and in pursuit of completely meaningless goals, silencing criticism of either the goal or the method with cries of "commitment" and "loyalty."

3 Methods

The researchers used the qualitative approach which recognizes that meaning emerges through interaction and is not standardised from person to person as in quantitative research, and thus allowing the researcher to study issues in detail, without predetermined categorized analysis (Gill and Johnson, 2018). The approach allowed data collection through interacting with employees at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited. The researchers after seeking permission, interacted with the respondents at their workstations through conducting interviews as a way of soliciting for more accurate data without creating fear to respondents for reprisals for releasing information.

3.1 Research Design

The researchers used the Case study design. A research design is a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, data gathering techniques used and the data analysis done (Pajares, 2017). A case study research design gives the researchers an opportunity to gain deep insights into a phenomenon or a problem which allows for broad understanding of intricate situations such as employee attitudes. As a result, the researchers chose this design to explore employee attitudes towards performance appraisals at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited.

3.2 Research Philosophy

In this study the researchers adopted the realism philosophical position which relates to scientific enquiry. The main import of realism is that what the senses show us as reality is the truth and objects have an existence independent of the human mind (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). The assumption underpins the collection of data and the understanding of those data. The meaning becomes clearer when two forms of realism are contrasted, namely 'direct realism' which says that what you see is what you get: what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately and the second kind of realism is 'critical realism'. Critical realists argue that what we experience are sensations, the images of the things in the real world, not the things directly. Critical realists also point out how often our senses deceive us. Critical realists argue that as researchers we will only be able to understand what is going on in the in the social world if we understand the social structures that have given rise to the phenomena that we are trying to understand. In other words, what we see

is only part of the bigger picture. Baskar (2019) argues that we can identify what we do not see through the practical and theoretical processes of the social sciences. The researchers underpinned the research on the nexus of employee attitudes towards performance appraisal and its subsequent influence on employee performance on the realist philosophical viewpoint. The idea was that employee attitudes towards performance appraisal and subsequent performance as observable manifestations of reactions on the part of employees can only be understood based on both critical and direct realism.

3.3 Population and Sample

Table 1: Target population and sample

ECOMED MANUFACTURING (PVT) LIMITED STAFF ESTABLISHMENT	POPULATION	SAMPLE
TOP MANAGEMENT	5	5
MIDDLE MANAGEMENT SUPERVISORS	10	10
SHOP-FLOOR WORKERS	10	10
	75	30
TOTAL	100	55

Source: Ecomed Manufacturing (Private) Limited (2023)

In order to come up with the sample, the convenience sampling technique was used. The convenience sampling technique was used in order to select the cases that were easier to obtain within all the categories of the population as suggested by Borlad (2019). The participants were interviewed at random within the organisation as the researcher moved around and requested possible participants to respond to the interview questions. The sample selection process was continued until the point of saturation was reached at 55 participants. This method was suitable for a case study research and enabled selection of the cases which were likely to be informative, as supported by the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) by Ganti (2021) who argued that a sample of 31 participants or more is adequate for the results of a study to be dependable.

3.4 Data collection procedure

Having obtained permission from the management at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited, the researchers utilised the interviews to solicit for information that was not available on primary data sources and was believed to be available among some employees and managers within the company. The structured interview questions were pre-planned and enabled the participants to respond in a particular way as suggested by (Borland, 2019). The researchers used the structured interview questions and this involved the researchers interviewing the participants at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited, who were presumed to have certain experiences that enhanced in-depth understanding of the problem under investigation.

Pilot Study

The researchers conducted respondent validation which included inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created, adequately reflected the phenomena being investigated. The researchers selected at least two representatives from each department in the company for this purpose. The necessary adjustments were made to the data collection tool in line with the comments of the participants of the validation exercise.

Data analysis

The researchers used thematic analysis to analyse data. SPSS v29 was used to provide a graphical footprint for the qualitative data. Qualitative research produces mainly unstructured text-based data. These textual data produced were in the form of interview transcripts. Qualitative research focused on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and feelings characteristic of the phenomenon under investigation. The process of analysing qualitative data predominantly involved coding or categorising the data. It involved making sense of huge amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns from themes, and finally drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence. Therefore, the researchers had to create the themes, codes, identified the patterns and drew meaning from the data.

Issues of trustworthiness

In order to uphold the issues of credibility and trustworthiness the researchers ensured meticulous record keeping ensuring a clear decision trail (Rose & Johnson, 2020). They established a comparison of themes, seeking out similarities and differences across accounts to ensure different perspectives were represented. Furthermore, the study included rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The researchers conducted respondent validation which included inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created, adequately reflected the phenomena being investigated (Amin et al, 2020).

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations cut across the whole research process; design, data collection, data analysis, report writing and dissemination of research findings. Participants for this study were humans and in that light the researchers took various necessary steps to uphold ethical principles concerning the treatment of participants before, during and after research (Drolet et al, 2023). The researchers sought for permission to conduct the research from Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited. In order to kick start the study, the researchers sought individual permission to participate in the study, furthermore, researchers also ensured rights and welfare of human subjects were protected through respecting the views of respondents and ensuring their psychological safety, protection of identities and interests of those involved through not requesting for identity information of participants and guaranteeing of the confidentiality of the information supplied through non-disclosure to any other person (Rana et al, 2023) . Participants completed consent forms to take part in the study and they were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

4 Results

4.1 Response Rate

The interviews were conducted among 55 employees in total comprising of top and middle management, supervisors and shop floor employees at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited. The study's overall response rate was 100% as all identified participants participated in the study.

4.2 Demographic Information

The following table present the socio demographic data for the participants of the study.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Data

<i>Respondent Gender (n=55)</i>		
	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT (%)
Males	25	45.5
Females	30	54.5
<i>Respondent Age Group (n=55)</i>		
	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT (%)
Below 25 years	5	9.1
26-35 years	10	18.2
36-45 years	10	18.2
46-55 years	15	27.3
56-65 years	10	18.2
Above 65 years	5	9.1
<i>Respondent Duration of Employment (n=55)</i>		
	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT (%)
0-5 years	4	7.3
6-10 years	15	27.3
11-15 years	17	30.9
16-20 years	10	18.2
21 years and above	9	16.4
<i>Respondents Job level (n=55)</i>		
	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT (%)
Managerial (top and middle)	5	9.1
Supervisor	15	27.3
Shop floor	35	63.6

Source: Field Research Data (2023)

4.3 Interview Findings

Theme 1: The availability of employee performance appraisal methods

The participants who were interviewed displayed that they have knowledge of the appraisal systems used at Ecomed. A total of 40 participants accounting for 72 % of the respondents were well versed with the appraisal process from end to end. A total of 10 participants who constituted 18.2% of the participants were not well versed with all the performance appraisals available in the company, they however managed to identify at least one. A total of 5 participants accounting for 9.1% of the participants did not have an idea at all about performance appraisal.

The following selected excerpts from interviews were reproduced to support the findings of the interviews;

Interviewee #9 stated that, "there was a workshop done 5 years ago by an external consultancy company and we all received reading materials and resources on Performance appraisals that are currently used here".

"At Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited we use 3 types of performance appraisal methods; for management staff, supervisory staff and the shop floor workers." Interviewee #1.

The types of methods in use were further elaborated by interviewee #5 who alluded that *"The Rating Scales Method is used for the shop floor workers. This technique is used frequently throughout the company to evaluate employee's performance according to their performance, dedication, honesty, attitude, regularity, accountability, and sincerity and it grades employees on a scale of 1 to 10 for each category."*

Interviewee #3 indicated that, "I only have less than one year of service here, I am not sure about performance appraisals at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Ltd".

Interviewee # 10 added, "I think I only know about the 360-degree appraisal method"

Interviewee #12 added that "the senior management in the company are appraised by the CEO who is an Executive Board member. The CEO creates a confidential report after evaluating a manager's knowledge and work quality, character and conduct, capacity to supervise and manage, integrity, and honesty. This report remains confidential and won't be distributed to anyone except the concerned manager and the Board."

Interviewee # 10 concluded by saying, "for supervisory staff the organisation uses a checklist which is a list of objectives or assertions that characterise the worker and his actions. The checklist comes with a set of phrases the rater can use to describe how well the employees are performing their supervisory duties."

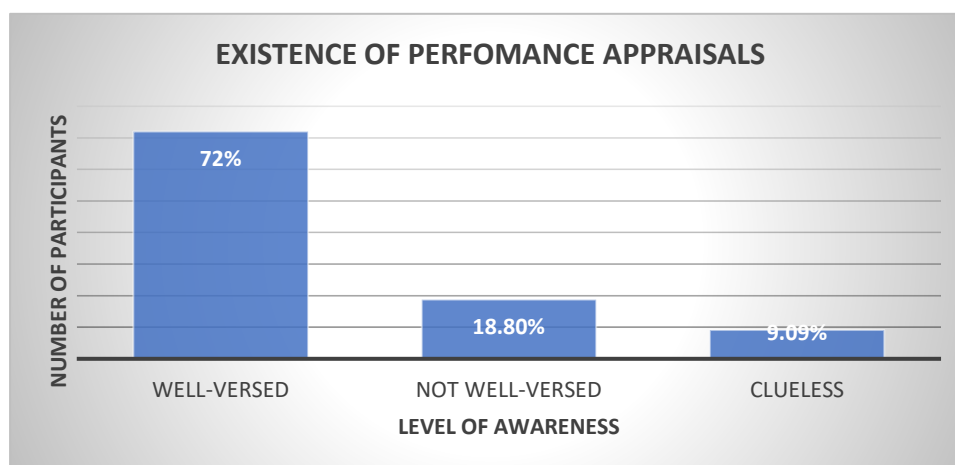


Figure 1: Existence of Performance Appraisals

Theme 2: Employee attitudes towards performance appraisal and their effect on employee productivity

A total of 44 out of 55 participants which constitutes 80% of interviewed employees articulated that employee's negative attitudes towards performance appraisals were negatively affecting the performance of employees leading to poor productivity. The following excerpts were reproduced from the interviewee responses to support the findings;

Interviewee # 11 expressed that, "employees have shown resentment for the performance appraisal methods, particularly the 360-degree feedback as they felt it is subject to abuse by co-workers as they seek to fix their colleagues and this has led to poor morale. Productivity has gone down of late".

Interviewee # 9 added, "This has caused employees to resist teamwork in the organisation thereby lowering productivity." And Interviewee # 20 also added that "The employee attitudes have led to the erosion of trust among co-workers and divisions."

A total of 7 interviewees out of the 55 (12.7%) however did not agree that employee attitudes affect the performance appraisal process with Interviewee # 6 voicing out that "The process is governed by measurable goals so it's either you achieve your goals or not, hence attitudes have no effect on the process. I remember, the end of financial year report indicated a growth trajectory. Productivity rose by approximately 50%."

The remaining 4 who constituted 7.3% neither agreed nor disagreed as interviewee # 3 expressed that he had been with the company for a year only and his opinion about employee attitudes in the company might not be valid.

Theme 3: The extent of contribution of performance appraisal to employee performance

A total of 35 out of 55 (63.6%) of the interviewees agreed that the introduction of the Performance appraisal system has led to an improvement in employee performance per sentiments highlighted below:

Interviewees # 19 "Performance appraisals have significantly improved performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited."

Interviewee # 15 concurred with the assertion by saying that, "Ever since the performance appraisals were begun, the company has seen a steady increase in production. The employees in fact are now competing for achievement of targets set."

A further 19 participants out of 55, (34.5%) stated that they have not noticed any changes in performance. For example, Interviewee #5 said "People have always known what they have to do and they have always done their jobs sufficiently even before the introduction of the Performance management system".

One manager accounting for (1.8%) did not want to comment on this question. He said, "I do not have any facts at hand about performance improvement since we introduced the system so I cannot comment" Interviewee #3.

Theme 4: The prevalence of employee attitudes which affect employee appraisal outcomes

The participants managed to identify various employee attitudes towards performance appraisals. A total of 20(36.4%) interviewees identified hatred, 5(9.1%) resentment, 10(18.2%) bitterness, 5 (9.1%) feeling of inadequacy, 10(18.2%) competitive spirit and 5(9.1%) identified none of the attitudes. The following excerpts were identified to support the findings;

Interviewee # 16, stated that "Ever-since the organisation introduced performance appraisals the employees have developed a competitive spirit, which despite being positive has given rise to anger, hatred, resentment and bitterness among employees."

Interviewee # 17, observed that, "Tensions between the appraisers and the appraisee is now prevalent." Interviewee # 18, argued, "This tension is believed to lead to prejudices and biases in the final ratings of employees."

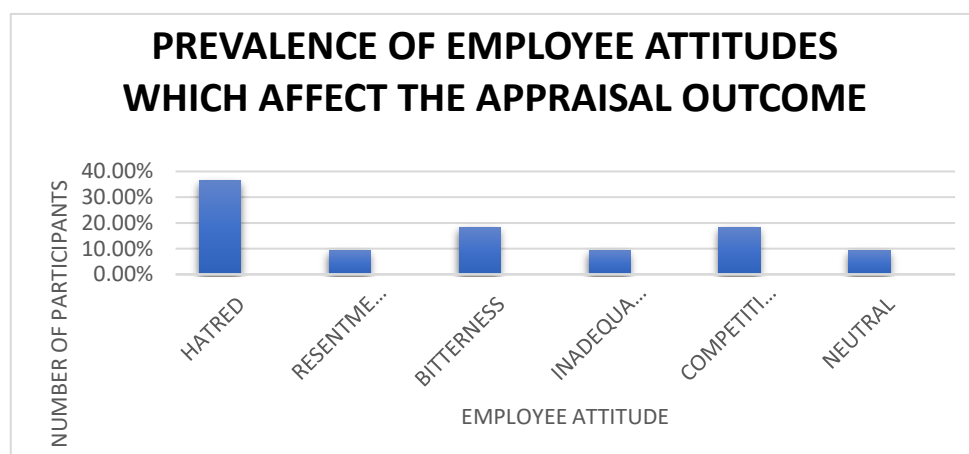


Figure 2: Prevalence of Employee Attitudes Which Affect the Appraisal Outcome

5 Discussion

Theme 1:

The findings from the participants indicated that Ecomed Manufacturing implements three types of performance appraisal methods namely the rating scales as discussed by (Gillen, 2018), checklist method (Grote, 2019) and the confidential report. The rating scales method is complemented by the 360-degree method (Watkins and Leigh, 2019). The organisation has done well in educating employees about performance appraisal as suggested by workshops conducted in the past. A total of 40 participants accounting for 72 % of the respondents were well versed with the appraisal process from end to end. A total of 10 participants who constituted 18.18% of the participants were not well versed with all the performance appraisals available in the company. The findings show that the company is implementing performance appraisal as such it assisted this study to be able to establish the impact of employee attitudes towards the performance appraisal and its subsequent impact on employee productivity.

Theme 2:

The data collected shows that the employee attitudes towards performance appraisal has negative effects on employee relations as supported by Roberts (2019) who asserts that when employees feel that the appraisal process is unfair, they become angry, resentful, and bitter towards it and reject the appraiser's ratings as a result. A total of 44 out of 55 participants which constituted 80% of interviewed employees articulated that employee attitudes towards performance appraisals were negatively affecting the process. The participants pointed out that employee attitudes have led to the erosion of trust among co-workers and divisions among others.

Theme 3:

Data collected from employees depict that the introduction of a Performance appraisal has led to improved performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt). This finding is supported by Junlin and Guoqing, (2018) who contends that performance evaluations seek to accurately assess employee performance, promote morale, increase output, and ultimately make strategic planning easier so that managerial decisions may be made. A total of 35 out of 55 (63.6%) of the interviewees agreed that the introduction of the Performance appraisal system has led to an improvement in employee performance. This was a significant number to support that performance appraisals have greatly contributed to improved performance.

Theme 4:

Ever-since the organisation introduced performance appraisals the employees have developed a competitive spirit, which despite being positive has given rise to anger, hatred, resentment, and bitterness among employees. The management also observed tensions between the appraisers and the appraisee. This tension is believed to lead to prejudices and biases in the final ratings of employees. These findings are supported by Smither (2018) who contends that employee perceptions of the fairness or unfairness of performance assessments strongly influence their attitudes and responses to them. This is also supported by Roberts (2019) who asserts that when employees feel that the appraisal process is unfair, they become angry, resentful, and bitter towards it and reject the appraiser's ratings as a result. A total of 20(36.4%) interviewees identified hatred, 5(9.1%) resentment, 10(18.2%) bitterness, 5 (9.1%) feeling of inadequacy, 10(18.2%) competitive spirit and 5(9.1%) identified none of the attitudes.

6 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited uses three types of performance appraisal methods: for management staff, supervisory staff and the shop floor workers. Employee performance appraisal is vital in promoting improved employee productivity. However, the performance appraisal process is not immune to challenges. Employees showed resentment for some of the performance appraisal methods, particularly the 360-degree feedback as they felt it is subject to abuse by co-workers as they seek to fix their colleagues. This is particularly so because the 360-degree method allows anyone to submit their views concerning one's performance. This has consequences which managers should not ignore. At the company this caused employees to resist teamwork, furthermore, this led to the erosion of trust among co-workers and divisions. Performance appraisals have the potential to cause animosity between the appraisee and the appraiser. This is particularly so because the management also observed tensions between the appraisers and the appraisee. This tension is believed to lead to prejudices and biases in the final ratings of employees since

the performance appraisals are generally used for performance awards in some organizations, as such employees are agitated due to expectancy in case rewards are attached to performance appraisal. The consequences of a poorly managed appraisal system are capable of destroying the teamwork in organizations. The researchers gathered from the interviews that hatred, bitterness, resentment, anger feelings of inadequacy, competitive spirit were some of the most prevalent attitudes that affect the appraisal system in the organisation. Performance appraisals remain key in the success of organizations as supported by the view that the process has significantly improved performance at Ecomed Manufacturing (Pvt) Limited. Employees are capable of developing a competing spirit for achievement of targets set.

6.1 Recommendations

- The management, led by the Human Resource department should train and create awareness to about the entire performance management process so as to eliminate resentment towards the process.
- The Human Resource department should explore the introduction of self-rating performance appraisal methods where the employee can set targets and then monitor and rate own performance against set targets after a given period of time, similar to the Results Based Management used in the public service. This method eliminates feelings of bias and unfairness.
- The company should consider introducing rewards that are tied to performance and also improve the existing rewards so that this can motivate and improve the attitudes of employees towards the performance appraisals.
- The Human Resource department should consider employee involvement in the design and introduction of the performance appraisal methods in the company in order to tap into the employee contributions regarding their expectations.
- The Human Resource department should consider introducing team building activities for the employees so as to make employees appreciate that they need to work as a team.

6.2 Acknowledgments:

The researchers wish to thank the management from the case study company for permitting the researchers to conduct a study in the company and the participants for participating in this study.

6.3 Conflict of Interest: None.

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