

**STAFF PERCEPTION OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS : A CASE OF NKUMBA UNIVERSITY**

DORIS AKAMPURIRA

EKS20M15/203

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

September, 2025




**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

DECLARATION

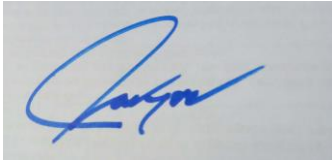
I, **Doris Akampurira**, hereby declare that this dissertation is my work and it has not been submitted before to any other institution of higher learning for fulfillment of any academic award

Signature of Author: 

Registration Number: **EKS20M15/203**

APPROVAL

This is to certify that, this dissertation entitled “**Staff perception of performance appraisal in higher education institutions: A Case of Nkumba University**” has been done under my supervision and now it is ready for submission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Owor', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Joseph Jakisa Owor, PhD

September 15, 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my greatest strength throughout this journey. To my parents, for their endless love, support and belief in me, and to my friends, for their patience and understanding.

A special dedication goes to my supervisor, Dr. Joseph Owor, whose guidance, expertise, and support have been invaluable in shaping this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my appreciation to my family for the unconditional support they gave me and some academic insights to prompt progress of my dissertation writing.

I am also grateful for the patience and guidance I receive from my supervisor, Dr Joseph Jakisa Owor, whose relentless efforts led to the final completion of this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
APPROVAL.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.1.1 Historical background.....	1
1.1.2 Conceptual background	3
1.1.3 Theoretical background	3
1.1.4 Contextual background.....	5
1.2 Problem statement.....	6
1.3 Purpose of the study.....	7
1.4 Objectives of the study.....	7

1.5 Research questions.....	8
1.6 Justification of the study	8
1.7 Significance of the study.....	8
1.8 Scope of the study.....	9
1.8.1 Geographical scope.....	9
1.8.2 Content scope.....	9
1.8.3 Time scope	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.0 Introduction.....	11
2.1 Theoretical review	11
2.1.1 The Expectancy Theory	11
2.1.2 The Self Determination Theory	12
2.2 Review of related literature.....	13
2.2.1 Effectiveness of performance appraisal process	13
2.2.2 Transparency of the performance appraisal process	17
2.2.3 Efficiency of the performance appraisal process	20
CHAPTER THREE	24
METHODOLOGY	24
3.0 Introduction.....	24

3.1 Research design	24
3.2 Study population	24
3.3 Sample size and sampling technique	25
3.4 Data sources	25
3.4.1 Primary data	25
3.5 Data collection methods.....	26
3.5.1 Interviews.....	26
3.5.2 Documentary review	26
3. 6 Data Processing and Analysis	27
3.7 Validity and reliability.....	28
3. 7.1 Validity of the instruments	28
3.7.2 Reliability of the instruments.....	28
3.8 Data collection procedure	29
3.10 Ethical considerations	29
3.11 Limitations of the study	29
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	30
4.0 Introduction.....	30
4.1 Respondent characteristics.....	30
4.1.1 Gender of respondents	31
4.1.2 Age of respondents.....	32

4.1.3 Period of service in Nkumba University.....	32
4.1.4 Level of education.....	32
4.2 The effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU	33
4.2.1 Range of receiving feedback from supervisor	33
4.2.2 Clarity of the feedback received during appraisals.....	34
4.2.3 Actionability of feedback provided during performance appraisal.....	35
4.2.4 Example of feedback received that helped improve performance.....	36
4.2.5 Feedback aligns with personal career goals.....	37
4.2.6 Aspects of feedback process most beneficial for development	38
4.2.7 Feeling on how feedback received addresses specific job responsibilities.....	39
4.2.8 Areas where employee feel the feedback process can be improved to better support performance	40
4.3 The transparency of the performance appraisal process in NU	41
4.3.1 Clarity in clearly communicating performance appraisal criteria.....	42
4.3.2 Understanding how performance is evaluated.....	43
4.3.3 Transparency in the process of setting performance goals and expectations.....	44
4.3.4 Instances where appraisal process was not transparent	45
4.3.5 Communication of outcomes of the performance appraisal to employees	46
4.3.6 Opportunities to discuss and understand the rationale behind appraisal results.....	47

4.3.7 Confidence in the fairness of the appraisal process	48
4.3.8 Measures that can be implemented to enhance the transparency of the appraisal process	49
4.4 The efficiency of the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance in NU.....	50
4.4.1 Regularity of performance appraisal process occurrence in Nkumba University	51
4.4.2 Timeliness in providing feedback after appraisal process	52
4.4.3 How appraisal process helps identify areas for continuous improvement.....	53
4.4.4 Resources or support Nkumba University provides to help employees act on the feedback received.....	54
4.4.5 Contribution of appraisal process to employee ongoing professional development	55
4.4.6 Specific instances where the appraisal process led to significant improvements in performance	57
4.4.7 Effectiveness of appraisal process in setting and achieving new performance goals	58
4.4.8 Changes to make the appraisal process more effective in promoting continuous improvement	59
CHAPTER FIVE	61
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	61
5.0 Introduction.....	61
5.1 Summary of findings.....	61
5.2 Conclusion	62

5.3 Recommendations.....	63
5.3.1 To Human resource (HR) department.....	63
5.3.2 Academic affairs department	64
5.3.3 Finance department.....	64
5.3.4 IT and E-Learning Department	64
5.3.5 Quality assurance department.....	65
5.3.6 Student affairs department	65
5.4 Areas for further research.....	66
REFERENCES	67
APPENDIX I: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	74
APPENDIX II: DOCUMENTARY REVIEW CHECKLIST	78

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NR	: Non-Relevance
NU	: Nkumba University
PASAS	: Performance Appraisal System for Academic Staff
SDT	: Self-Determination Theory
TQM	: Total Quality Management
UNCHE	: Uganda National Council for Higher Education

ABSTRACT

The researcher explored the staff perception of performance appraisal in higher education institutions in Uganda with specific interest in Nkumba University (as a case). Specifically, this study evaluated the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees, it assessed the transparency of the performance appraisal process and examined the efficiency of the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance.

The study used a qualitative research approach and case study design throughout the research process. Using purposive sampling technique to select participants (university management, administrative staff, human resource personnel, and lecturers) were selected. The data collection methods and instruments including key informant interview and document review checklist. Data collected from the fieldwork was analyzed thematically informed by coding process. This was supported by editing and content analysis to support the common themes that emerged from the coding process.

The findings revealed that feedback is often infrequent, unclear, and lacks relevance to individual career goals, leading to staff feeling disconnected from university objectives and hindered in their professional development. It was also revealed that while some staff members reported clear communication of appraisal criteria, transparent goal-setting, and opportunities to discuss appraisal outcomes, others expressed concerns about a lack of transparency, unclear evaluation criteria, and inconsistent feedback. It was showed that NU provides various resources, including training and mentorship, to help staff act on feedback yet challenges arise when feedback lacks specificity or fails to align with career aspirations, underscoring the need for well-structured appraisal practices.

Based on the key findings, the study suggested that the human resource department should develop and implement uniform performance evaluation criteria across all departments to ensure consistency and fairness in the appraisal process. It was further suggested that the academic affairs department should link performance evaluations in teaching with targeted professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, or mentorship programs, to address specific areas of improvement. The study further suggested that the quality assurance department should ensure that staff appraisals are aligned with university-wide quality assurance standards, emphasizing their role in maintaining and enhancing academic and operational quality.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study and conceptual framework.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Historical background

Performance appraisal in higher education institutions has evolved significantly over time, reflecting changing paradigms in education, management, and accountability (Aslam, 2021). Globally, the concept of performance appraisal in academia dates back to the early 20th century, primarily focusing on faculty evaluation for promotion and tenure purposes. However, it wasn't until the latter half of the 20th century that systematic approaches to performance appraisal gained traction, influenced by management theories like Total Quality Management (TQM) and Balanced Scorecard. For instance, in the United States, the adoption of performance-based funding models in higher education from the 1980s onwards prompted universities to develop more rigorous appraisal systems to demonstrate accountability and effectiveness (Dougherty & Natow, 2015).

In Africa, the historical background of performance appraisal in higher education institutions is characterized by a blend of colonial legacies and indigenous educational systems (Axelrod, 2019). Colonial powers introduced rudimentary forms of faculty evaluation primarily to maintain control over academic institutions and ensure compliance with colonial agendas. Post-independence, many African nations inherited these structures but faced challenges in adapting them to local

contexts. For example, in Nigeria, the performance appraisal system in universities evolved from a focus on colonial-era loyalty to post-independence emphasis on productivity and academic excellence (Akanwa, 2017). However, the lack of standardized evaluation criteria and bureaucratic inefficiencies hindered its effectiveness.

In East Africa, the trajectory of performance appraisal in higher education institutions has been influenced by a mix of colonial heritage, regional cooperation initiatives, and socio-economic factors (Bakkabulindi, 2021). Countries like Kenya and Tanzania have grappled with challenges such as limited funding, political interference, and brain drain, which have impacted the development and implementation of appraisal systems. In Tanzania, for instance, the Performance Appraisal System for Academic Staff (PASAS) introduced in the 1990s aimed to enhance accountability and productivity but faced criticism for its top-down approach and lack of faculty involvement (Mkumbo, 2009). Similarly, in Tanzania, efforts to establish a comprehensive appraisal system have been hindered by resource constraints and resistance from academic unions (Mugagga & Ssempebwa, 2016).

In Uganda, the historical background of performance appraisal in higher education reflects broader challenges facing the country's education system (Bracken & Timmreck, 2022). Following independence, Uganda inherited a hierarchical and centralized education system from colonial rule, which persisted through various political regimes. Performance appraisal in Ugandan universities has historically been characterized by a lack of transparency, nepotism, and political interference, undermining its credibility and effectiveness (Kasozi, 2023). However, recent initiatives such as the establishment of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) and reforms in university governance aim to address these challenges by promoting autonomy, accountability, and academic excellence (NU, 2020).

1.1.2 Conceptual background

Performance appraisal is a systematic process used by organizations to assess and evaluate the job performance of employees, typically with the goal of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Robbins & Coulter, 2019). Performance appraisal is a developmental tool that involves a structured and periodic review of an employee's work performance and accomplishments, aiming to provide constructive feedback, set goals, and enhance individual and organizational effectiveness (Armstrong, 2020). Performance appraisal is a key component of human resource management that encompasses the systematic assessment of employee performance and potential. It involves the use of various tools and methods to gauge an employee's contributions, with the aim of making decisions related to promotions, compensation, and development (Dessler, 2020).

While performance appraisal serves as a developmental tool facilitating feedback, goal-setting, and skill enhancement (Armstrong, 2020), its effectiveness is contingent upon how it is perceived by staff members. Employees' perceptions of performance appraisal significantly influence its outcomes and organizational effectiveness. If staff perceive the process as fair, transparent, and supportive of their growth, they are more likely to engage positively with it, leading to improved job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Dessler, 2020). Conversely, negative perceptions, such as viewing appraisals as subjective, biased, or unrelated to career advancement, can undermine trust in the process, leading to disengagement, resentment, and decreased productivity among employees.

1.1.3 Theoretical background

The study was guided by the Expectancy Theory which was developed by Victor Vroom (1964); the theory assumes that individuals are motivated to act in a certain way when they believe that

their actions will lead to a desired outcome, and that they are capable of performing those actions effectively (Vroom, 1964). The theory suggests that individuals make a conscious decision about how much effort to put into a task based on their belief that their effort will lead to successful performance. In the context of Performance appraisal, employees need to believe that their efforts in improving their performance will be recognized and rewarded.

This theory assumes that appraisers should set clear and challenging performance expectations for employees. When employees believe that meeting these expectations will lead to desirable outcomes (salary increments or career advancement), they are more motivated to strive for higher performance levels. To enhance employees' belief in their ability (expectancy), organizations should provide training and resources to help employees acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform well in their roles. Training programs and ongoing development opportunities can bolster employees' confidence in their capabilities.

The Expectancy Theory was fit to inform the study as it provides a relevant framework for informing performance appraisal due to its emphasis on the relationship between effort, performance, and outcomes, which align closely with the objectives of performance appraisal processes (Vroom, 1964). By incorporating elements of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, performance appraisal systems can effectively enhance motivation, engagement, and performance among employees by ensuring that they perceive a clear link between their efforts, performance evaluations, and desired outcomes (Jex & Britt, 2008). Thus, the Expectancy Theory offers valuable insights for designing and implementing performance appraisal processes that are perceived as fair, transparent, and motivational by employees.

1.1.4 Contextual background

Nkumba University (NU) has employed performance appraisal as a tool for enhancing accountability, fostering professional development, and promoting a culture of excellence among its staff (NU, 2020). However, despite these intentions, the effectiveness of performance appraisal processes at NU has been featured by various challenges. Firstly, the lack of standardized evaluation criteria and inconsistent application of appraisal methods across departments has led to perceptions of unfairness and bias among staff members (Bakunda & Nsamba, 2015). Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited resources have hindered the timely and implementation of performance appraisal systems, increasing staff dissatisfaction and disengagement (Kasozi, 2023).

NU has implemented several interventions to address the challenges affecting its performance appraisal process. For instance, the university has invested in training programs to educate managers and staff on the principles of effective performance management and appraisal (NU, 2020). Moreover, efforts have been made to enhance the transparency and objectivity of appraisal procedures through the development of clear performance standards and evaluation criteria (Bakunda & Nsamba, 2015). Additionally, technological advancements have been leveraged to streamline the appraisal process and improve data collection and analysis, thereby enhancing the accuracy and reliability of performance assessments (NU, 2020).

Despite these interventions, the challenges persist, and the effectiveness of performance appraisal at NU remains questionable. One key reason for the failure of these interventions is the lack of top-level commitment and leadership support for performance management initiatives (Bakunda & Nsamba, 2015). Without strong leadership buy-in and organizational culture that values and prioritizes performance appraisal, efforts to improve the process are likely to falter. Additionally, resistance from staff members who perceive appraisal as punitive or irrelevant to their career

advancement further undermines the success of interventions aimed at enhancing performance management (Kasozi, 2023).

The disconnect between the goals of performance appraisal and staff perceptions is evident in the widening gap between organizational objectives and employee engagement. Staff members who perceive appraisal processes as unfair, subjective, or disconnected from their day-to-day responsibilities are less likely to engage proactively with performance management initiatives, leading to decreased motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction (Bakunda & Nsamba, 2015). Furthermore, negative perceptions of appraisal can erode trust in leadership and organizational commitment, contributing to higher turnover rates and talent retention challenges (Kasozi, 2023). Thus, the failure to address the underlying issues on performance appraisal at NU not only undermines individual performance but also threatens the university's long-term success and sustainability.

1.2 Problem statement

All organizations survive on well-established human resource management practices to ensure employee performance and higher educational institutions in Ugandan public universities are no exception. Despite these moves performance of academic staff in these institutions has not improved to the expected standards. Reports of poor lecturer performance in terms of ineffective teaching, low records of publications and inability to attract and win projects continue to prevail in most public universities in Uganda (Rwothumio, Okaka, Kambaza, & Kyomukama, 2021).

Effective performance appraisal provides clear feedback, set achievable goals, and facilitate employee development while aligning individual efforts with organizational objectives (Robbins & Coulter, 2019). In a bid to embrace this, NU has implemented performance management system

which included regular performance review, goal-setting mechanisms and professional development opportunities to align performance with the institutions objectives (NU, 2020).

For instance, in 2021, a survey revealed that only 40% of staff members reported being satisfied with the transparency and fairness of the performance appraisal process (NU, 2021). Subsequently, in 2022, this figure decreased to 35%, indicating a worsening perception among employees regarding the effectiveness and equity of performance appraisal practices (NU, 2022). Furthermore, by 2023, the dissatisfaction among staff members had escalated, with only 30% expressing satisfaction with performance appraisal procedures, highlighting a continuing downward trend in perception (NU, 2023).

If not addressed, the declining staff perception towards performance appraisal at Nkumba University may lead to decreased motivation, increased turnover, and diminished organizational effectiveness.

1.3 Purpose of the study

To investigate the staff perception of performance appraisal in higher education institutions in Uganda with specific interest in Nkumba University.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU.
2. To assess the transparency of the performance appraisal process in NU.
3. To examine the efficiency of the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance.

1.5 Research questions

1. What is the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU?
2. How transparent is the performance appraisal process in NU?
3. How effective is the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance in NU?

1.6 Justification of the study

The contextual background highlights that NU, like many other academic institutions, faces significant challenges related to employee performance, such as the need to balance teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. These issues are not unique to NU and have been widely reported in higher education globally. Therefore, investigating the effectiveness of staff appraisal in addressing these challenges can contribute valuable insights that extend beyond the specific context of NU. The challenges faced by higher tertiary institutions and the potential benefits of effective staff appraisal are likely to resonate with other universities and educational institutions in Uganda and beyond. Research in this area can offer transferable strategies and best practices that can be adapted to various university settings, thereby contributing to the broader field of higher education management and administration.

1.7 Significance of the study

University Administrators: The study may assist university administrators in refining and optimizing staff appraisal systems, leading to improved employee performance, increased faculty and staff retention, and enhanced institutional reputation.

Faculty and Staff: Employees may benefit from more effective staff appraisal processes that support their professional growth, reduce work-related stress, and increase job satisfaction.

Students: Students may enjoy better educational experiences, access to quality teaching, and opportunities for research and engagement due to improved faculty and staff performance.

Government and Regulatory Bodies: The study's findings may help policymakers and regulators in higher education make data-driven decisions to improve the overall quality of tertiary institutions in Uganda.

Employers and Industry: Employers may receive graduates who are better prepared, more motivated, and possess the necessary skills to excel in the workplace, contributing to the overall development of the labor market in Uganda.

1.8 Scope of the study

The scope of the study was as shown below:

1.8.1 Geographical scope

The study was carried out at Nkumba University is located in the Central Region of Uganda, in the town of Nkumba, approximately 37 kilometers east of Kampala, the capital city. The university was situated on a 120-acre campus, nestled on a hill overlooking Lake Victoria, the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. Geographically, Nkumba University is positioned at an elevation of 1,200 meters above sea level, with coordinates 0.4333° S latitude and 32.7167° E longitude.

1.8.2 Content scope

The study examined staff perceptions of the performance appraisal process specifically focusing on evaluating the effectiveness, transparency, efficiency of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University (NU).

1.8.3 Time scope

The study focused on three operational years that is 2021-2023 because this was the period in which the tertiary institution had increasing issues related to employee performance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter included the introduction, literature survey and literature review.

2.1 Theoretical review

This section presents the review of relevant theories about staff appraisal. The theoretical review demonstrated a clear understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the study.

2.1.1 The Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory, developed by Victor Vroom in the 1960s, is a motivational theory that posits that an individual's motivation to exert effort in a particular task is influenced by three key factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Vroom, 1964). Expectancy refers to the belief that an individual holds about their ability to successfully complete a task and achieve desired outcomes. Instrumentality is the perception that performance will lead to specific rewards or outcomes. Valence represents the value or attractiveness an individual places on those rewards. According to this theory, individuals are most motivated when they believe that their efforts will lead to successful performance, that successful performance will be rewarded, and that the rewards are desirable. Expectancy theory has been widely applied in organizational settings to understand and improve employee motivation and performance (Porter & Lawler, 2019).

According to expectancy theory, individuals are motivated to put in effort when they believe that their efforts will lead to successful performance and that successful performance will result in desirable outcomes (Vroom, 1964). In the case of faculty appraisal, if professors perceive that their teaching efforts (effort) will result in improved performance evaluations (performance) and that

positive evaluations will lead to rewards such as salary increments or career advancement (outcomes), they are more likely to be motivated to excel in their teaching roles. Likewise, when students provide evaluations of faculty, their motivation to give constructive feedback is influenced by their belief that their input will lead to improvements in teaching quality (effort leading to performance improvement) and enhance the overall learning experience (desirable outcome). Thus, understanding and aligning these perceptions with appraisal and feedback processes can enhance faculty motivation and student engagement while promoting continuous improvement in educational settings.

2.1.2 The Self Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan in the 1980s, is a psychological framework that explores the innate human motivation to fulfill basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory posits that individuals are most motivated when they have a sense of autonomy, which allows them to make choices and control their actions; when they perceive themselves as competent in a given task or domain; and when they experience a sense of relatedness and connection with others. SDT distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, where individuals engage in activities for the inherent satisfaction they bring, and extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards or avoidance of punishment. The theory highlights that fostering intrinsic motivation through the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs leads to more sustainable and fulfilling outcomes in various life domains, including education, work, and personal relationships.

The assumptions of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) shed light on employee performance and its impact on the effectiveness, efficiency, and completion rates of students. SDT posits that individuals are most motivated when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence,

and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In the workplace context, this means that when employees feel a sense of autonomy in their roles, have opportunities to develop competence through skill-building and learning, and experience relatedness through positive social interactions with colleagues and students, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to perform at their best.

The intrinsic motivation can translate into higher levels of effectiveness in their roles, as they are more engaged and committed to their work. Furthermore, employees who are motivated by internal factors are often more efficient in their tasks, as they are driven by personal satisfaction and not solely by external rewards. In the context of educational institutions, when educators feel intrinsically motivated to teach and support their students, it can enhance their effectiveness in delivering educational content and improving student outcomes, including higher completion rates.

Expectancy Theory was selected because it provided a structured way to understand how individuals assess whether their effort will lead to performance, whether that performance will be recognized, and whether the outcome is worth pursuing. At the same time, Self-Determination Theory was brought in to help deepen the understanding of internal motivation in terms of fulfillment, engagement, and long-term growth. That's why both theories were needed because they complemented each other and offered a more complete lens for interpreting the data.

2.2 Review of related literature

2.2.1 Effectiveness of performance appraisal process

Performance appraisal is a critical component of organizational management, aiming to provide employees with feedback on their performance and facilitate their professional development. The effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in offering clear and actionable feedback to

employees has been a subject of considerable scholarly inquiry. Research suggests that when executed correctly, performance appraisals can indeed serve as valuable tools for enhancing employee performance and productivity (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Moreover, effective performance feedback has been linked to increased job satisfaction and motivation among employees (Kluger & DeNisi, 2020). However, the ability of performance appraisals to deliver clear and actionable feedback hinges on various factors, including the design of the appraisal system, the skills of managers delivering feedback, and the organizational culture surrounding performance management (Brown & Benson, 2018).

Central to the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process is the clarity and specificity of the feedback provided to employees. Feedback that is vague or ambiguous may fail to resonate with employees or guide them toward meaningful improvement (London, 2020). Consequently, scholars emphasize the importance of incorporating specific, behavior-based feedback into performance appraisals to facilitate employee understanding and action (Ilgen & Davis, 2021). Additionally, feedback should be timely to be most effective, allowing employees to make immediate adjustments and improvements (Kluger & DeNisi, 2020). The timing of feedback delivery is crucial in shaping its impact on employee performance and behavior, as delayed feedback may lose relevance or fail to address ongoing issues (DeNisi & Kluger, 2021).

However, despite the potential benefits of performance appraisals, organizations often encounter challenges in implementing effective feedback mechanisms. Research suggests that biases and subjectivity in the appraisal process can undermine the fairness and accuracy of feedback provided to employees (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2021). Biases, such as halo and leniency effects, can distort managers' evaluations of employee performance, leading to inaccurate feedback (Ilgen et al., 2022). Furthermore, managers may avoid delivering critical feedback to avoid confrontation or

maintain positive relationships with employees, which can hinder the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process (London, 2020).

To mitigate these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of performance feedback, organizations are increasingly adopting innovative approaches to performance management. One such approach involves incorporating multi-rater feedback systems, also known as 360-degree feedback, wherein feedback is collected from various sources, including supervisors, peers, and subordinates (Bracken et al., 2019). This comprehensive feedback enables employees to gain a more holistic understanding of their performance and identify areas for improvement (Atkins & Wood, 2020). Additionally, technology-driven solutions, such as performance management software, offer organizations the ability to streamline the feedback process, provide real-time feedback, and track employee progress more efficiently (Cardy & Dobbins, 2020).

Moreover, fostering a culture of continuous feedback and coaching within organizations can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process. Instead of viewing performance appraisals as isolated events, organizations should encourage ongoing dialogue between managers and employees to address performance issues as they arise (Smither & London, 2019). Coaching interventions aimed at developing employees' skills and competencies can complement formal performance appraisals by providing personalized feedback and support (Grant, 2020). By integrating coaching and feedback into everyday interactions, organizations can create a supportive environment conducive to employee growth and development (London & Smither, 2020).

Despite the potential benefits of performance appraisals, challenges persist in ensuring the fairness and effectiveness of the feedback process. Research indicates that biases, such as recency bias and contrast effects, can influence managers' evaluations of employee performance, leading to

inconsistencies in feedback provision (Levy & Williams, 2017). Moreover, cultural differences and individual perceptions of feedback can impact the reception and interpretation of performance feedback (Dweck, 2017). For instance, employees from collectivist cultures may prioritize group harmony over individual recognition, affecting their response to feedback emphasizing personal achievements (Earley & Mosakowski, 2017). Thus, organizations must consider cultural nuances and tailor their feedback approaches to accommodate diverse employee perspectives and preferences.

In addition to addressing biases and cultural factors, the design and implementation of performance appraisal systems play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of feedback delivery. Research suggests that incorporating employee participation and involvement in the appraisal process can enhance the perceived fairness and acceptance of feedback outcomes (Fletcher, 2019). When employees have a voice in setting performance goals and evaluating their own performance, they are more likely to view feedback as relevant and actionable (Bretz & Milkovich, 2023). Furthermore, aligning performance appraisal criteria with organizational goals and values can reinforce the connection between feedback and desired outcomes, fostering employee engagement and commitment (Cascio, 2020).

The role of managerial competence and training in delivering effective performance feedback cannot be overstated. Studies indicate that managers' feedback skills and competencies significantly influence the quality and impact of performance feedback (Lipponen et al., 2018). Training programs aimed at enhancing managers' feedback delivery skills, such as active listening, providing constructive criticism, and setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals, can improve the effectiveness of performance appraisals (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021). Additionally, fostering a supportive managerial climate that encourages open

communication and trust can facilitate more candid and constructive feedback exchanges between managers and employees (Scullen et al., 2021). Thus, investing in managerial training and development is essential for optimizing the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process.

2.2.2 Transparency of the performance appraisal process

Transparency in the performance appraisal process is vital for ensuring that employees understand the criteria used to evaluate their performance and the rationale behind appraisal decisions. When employees perceive appraisal procedures as transparent, they are more likely to accept and trust the evaluation outcomes, even if they are unfavorable (Culbertson et al., 2023). Transparent performance appraisal systems provide clear guidelines on performance expectations, evaluation criteria, and feedback mechanisms, enabling employees to make informed decisions and take proactive steps to improve their performance (Fletcher, 2019). Moreover, transparency fosters a sense of procedural justice, wherein employees believe that the evaluation process is fair and unbiased, regardless of the outcome (Folger & Konovsky, 1989).

However, achieving transparency in performance appraisal can be challenging due to various contextual and organizational factors. Research indicates that organizational culture, leadership style, and power dynamics within the organization can influence the perceived fairness of the appraisal process (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2019). For instance, in hierarchical organizations where power differentials are pronounced, employees may perceive performance appraisal as inherently unfair, with managers using their authority to manipulate evaluation outcomes (Greenberg, 2021). Similarly, organizational norms and values regarding meritocracy, equity, and accountability shape employee perceptions of transparency in performance appraisal (Latham & Wexley, 2020).

In addition to organizational factors, individual differences and perceptions play a crucial role in shaping employee reactions to performance appraisal fairness and transparency. Studies have found that demographic variables such as gender, age, and tenure can influence employees' perceptions of fairness in performance appraisal (Gilliland, 2020). For example, research suggests that female employees may perceive performance appraisal as less fair than their male counterparts due to gender biases in evaluation criteria and decision-making processes (Eagly & Carli, 2017). Moreover, employees with longer tenure or higher organizational status may be more critical of the appraisal process, expecting greater transparency and accountability from management (Jackson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the role of communication and feedback in promoting transparency in performance appraisal cannot be understated. Open and honest communication between managers and employees throughout the appraisal process fosters trust, reduces uncertainty, and enhances the perceived fairness of appraisal outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2019). Providing employees with regular feedback on their performance, setting clear expectations, and soliciting their input in the evaluation process can contribute to a more transparent and participatory appraisal experience (Brett et al., 2020). Additionally, feedback mechanisms should be designed to facilitate two-way communication, allowing employees to express their concerns, provide self-assessments, and seek clarification on performance expectations (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021).

Moreover, the role of organizational justice perceptions in shaping employee reactions to the performance appraisal process cannot be overlooked. Organizational justice theory posits that individuals assess the fairness of their treatment based on distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Colquitt et al., 2019). Distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes, such as rewards and recognition, resulting from the performance appraisal process (Folger & Cropanzano,

2018). Procedural justice pertains to the fairness of the procedures used to determine these outcomes, including the transparency of evaluation criteria and decision-making processes (Brett & Atwater, 2020). Interactional justice focuses on the interpersonal treatment employees receive during the appraisal process, such as respectful communication and consideration of their perspectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 2023).

Furthermore, the impact of performance feedback characteristics on fairness perceptions deserves attention in the literature. Feedback characteristics such as specificity, timeliness, and consistency can influence the perceived fairness of the appraisal process (DeNisi & Kluger, 2021). Specific feedback that is clear, detailed, and actionable is more likely to be perceived as fair and helpful by employees, enabling them to understand performance expectations and identify areas for improvement (London, 2020). Timely feedback, provided promptly after performance events, enhances its relevance and effectiveness, contributing to perceptions of transparency in the appraisal process (Kluger & DeNisi, 2020).

Finally, the importance of employee involvement and participation in the performance appraisal process cannot be overstated in enhancing fairness and transparency. Research suggests that involving employees in goal setting, performance planning, and self-assessment activities increases their perceptions of procedural justice and acceptance of appraisal outcomes (Fletcher, 2019). When employees have a voice in the evaluation process, they are more likely to perceive the appraisal process as fair and legitimate, even if the outcomes are unfavorable (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021). Moreover, employee involvement fosters a sense of ownership and accountability for performance outcomes, leading to greater motivation and commitment to organizational goals (Brett et al., 2020).

2.2.3 Efficiency of the performance appraisal process

The efficiency of the performance appraisal process are crucial factors in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance. Efficiency refers to the ability of the appraisal system to achieve its objectives in a timely and resource-effective manner, ensuring that performance feedback is delivered promptly and accurately (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Timeliness, on the other hand, pertains to the speed and frequency with which performance feedback is provided to employees, enabling them to make immediate adjustments and improvements (Kluger & DeNisi, 2020).

Efficient performance appraisal processes streamline administrative tasks, reduce bureaucratic delays, and optimize the use of resources, allowing organizations to focus on providing meaningful feedback and support to employees (Cascio, 2020). By automating routine tasks, such as data collection and report generation, organizations can accelerate the appraisal process and allocate more time and resources to coaching, development, and performance discussions (Cardy & Dobbins, 2020). Moreover, efficient performance appraisal systems leverage technology and software solutions to enhance data accuracy, accessibility, and analysis, enabling managers to make informed decisions and recommendations for improvement (Stone et al., 2018).

Efficient performance feedback is critical for enabling employees to address performance issues promptly, set new goals, and track their progress over time (DeNisi & Kluger, 2021). Research suggests that delayed feedback diminishes its effectiveness and relevance, as employees may have already moved on to new tasks or projects by the time feedback is provided (Ilgen & Davis, 2021). Timely feedback, delivered shortly after performance events or milestones, reinforces desired behaviors, corrects deviations, and encourages continuous learning and improvement (Smither & London, 2019). Moreover, frequent feedback loops, such as ongoing coaching sessions and check-

ins, enable managers to monitor performance trends, identify emerging issues, and provide timely support and guidance to employees (Grant, 2020).

Furthermore, the integration of performance appraisal with goal setting and development planning processes is essential for promoting continuous improvement in employee performance (Fletcher, 2019). Effective goal setting ensures that employees have clear, specific, and challenging objectives aligned with organizational priorities, enabling them to focus their efforts and resources on high-priority tasks (Locke & Latham, 2020). Performance appraisal provides a platform for reviewing progress toward these goals, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and adjusting objectives as needed (Ilgen et al., 2022). By linking performance appraisal with development planning, organizations can create personalized development plans tailored to each employee's needs, aspirations, and career goals (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021).

Moreover, the role of feedback quality and relevance in driving continuous improvement in employee performance cannot be overstated (London, 2020). High-quality feedback is specific, constructive, and actionable, providing employees with clear guidance on how to improve their performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 2020). Research suggests that feedback that is perceived as relevant and meaningful by employees is more likely to be accepted and acted upon, leading to tangible performance improvements (Ilgen & Davis, 2021). Therefore, organizations should invest in training managers to deliver effective feedback, focusing on active listening, empathy, and coaching skills (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021).

Furthermore, fostering a culture of continuous feedback and performance dialogue within organizations is essential for sustaining improvement in employee performance (London & Smither, 2020). Instead of viewing performance appraisal as a once-a-year event, organizations should encourage ongoing discussions between managers and employees about performance

expectations, goals, and development opportunities (Brown & Benson, 2018). Regular feedback exchanges enable employees to receive timely support and guidance, address performance issues proactively, and capitalize on strengths (Scullen et al., 2021). Moreover, organizations should promote a growth mindset, wherein mistakes and failures are viewed as opportunities for learning and development, rather than as signs of incompetence (Dweck, 2017).

Moreover, the role of leadership and managerial support in driving efficiency in the performance appraisal process cannot be overstated. Research suggests that managers play a pivotal role in setting performance expectations, providing feedback, and facilitating employee development (Latham & Wexley, 2020). Effective leadership promotes a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement, encouraging managers and employees to actively engage in the performance appraisal process (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021). When managers prioritize performance management and provide ongoing support and guidance to employees, the appraisal process becomes more efficient, timely, and impactful (Cascio, 2020).

Furthermore, the alignment of performance appraisal with organizational goals and strategic priorities is essential for enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness (Culbertson et al., 2023). Research suggests that performance appraisal systems that are closely integrated with organizational objectives are more likely to be perceived as relevant, meaningful, and useful by employees (Folger & Cropanzano, 2018). When employees understand how their individual performance contributes to broader organizational goals, they are more motivated to excel and actively seek feedback and development opportunities (Cardy & Dobbins, 2020). Moreover, aligning performance appraisal with strategic priorities enables organizations to identify and prioritize performance metrics that drive business success, ensuring that the appraisal process remains focused, efficient, and results-oriented (London & Smither, 2020).

Finally, the role of employee engagement and ownership in driving continuous improvement through the performance appraisal process cannot be overlooked. Research suggests that engaged employees are more committed, motivated, and proactive in seeking feedback, setting goals, and improving their performance (Grant, 2020). By involving employees in the goal-setting process, encouraging self-assessment, and soliciting their input on performance expectations, organizations can empower employees to take ownership of their development and actively contribute to the improvement of organizational performance (Boswell & Boudreau, 2021). Moreover, fostering a culture of recognition and appreciation for employees' efforts and achievements reinforces desired behaviors and motivates employees to sustain their performance excellence (Stone et al., 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section describes the research design, study area, data population, and sample size, sampling methods, data collection methods, sources and methods, research instruments, validity and reliability, method and procedure, data collection, data processing, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations and anticipated limitations to the study.

3.1 Research design

A case study design involved in-depth examination and analysis of a specific subject, typically within its real-life context, to understand its complexities and dynamics (Hayden, 2022). The study used a case study design applying a qualitative research approach for data collection and analysis. A case study research design was used because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of staff appraisal systems in NU, providing rich insights and contextually relevant findings. The study collected data from various stakeholders within the area and employed qualitative techniques to examine the different perspectives as per the study variables.

3.2 Study population

The study population for this qualitative research primarily consisted of university management, administrative staff, human resource personnel, and lecturers at Nkumba University (NU). The selection of university management, administrative staff, human resource personnel, and lecturers as primary respondents in this qualitative study was justified by their critical involvement and perspectives in the performance appraisal process within higher education institutions. Each

stakeholder group brought unique insights and experiences that are essential for understanding of performance appraisal systems in the university.

3.3 Sample size and sampling technique

The sample size for this study was determined through the principle of saturation, wherein data collection continued until no new information or themes emerged from the qualitative analysis, indicating that a sufficient depth of understanding has been reached. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who were knowledgeable and experienced in staff appraisal systems in NU, allowing for rich and insightful data collection. This involved identifying and selecting individuals who held various positions and roles within the organization, such as human resource managers, supervisors, and employees who had undergone appraisals. The selection also considered diversity in demographics, including age, education level, and socio-economic background, to ensure a broad range of perspectives. Additionally, participants were chosen based on their expertise and experience in specific aspects of staff appraisal, such as goal-setting, performance measurement, and feedback processes. This targeted approach enabled the collection of detailed and a range data from those who were most familiar with the staff appraisal systems in NU, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3.4 Data sources

3.4.1 Primary data

Primary data is an original data source, that is, one in which the data is collected first-hand by the researcher for a specific research purpose or project (Neil, 2010). The study used face to face interviews in order to save time and the data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires.

3.5 Data collection methods

3.5.1 Interviews

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide which was conducted with university management, administrative staff, human resource and lecturers to provide information about staff perception of performance appraisal in NU. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet, private setting, where participants were asked open-ended questions from the interview guide, allowing them to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions about staff performance appraisal in NU. The researcher used a conversational style, probing and clarifying questions to ensure understanding, and taking detailed written notes and audio recordings to capture the data. The face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to build rapport, establish trust, and observe nonverbal cues, providing a richer understanding of the participants' responses. This method was used to gain in-depth insights into the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of university management, administrative staff, human resources, and lecturers, allowing the researcher to explore complex issues, identify patterns and themes, and gain a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3.5.2 Documentary review

A documentary review is a crucial component of this study, as it provided an objective and unbiased examination of Nkumba University's performance appraisal system, policies, and practices. The study analysed relevant documents, such as staff appraisal forms, performance evaluation reports, promotion and termination documents, and training and development records, from 2021 to 2023, to identify trends, patterns, and gaps in the appraisal process, and assess its effectiveness in promoting staff growth, improving performance, and achieving institutional goals. This period was selected to capture the university's responses to the pandemic and any changes made to the appraisal system. Documentary review was justified as it provides a reliable and valid

source of information, reduces biases, and enables the researcher to triangulate findings with interview data, increasing the study's rigor and credibility. By examining documents from various departments and units, including human resources, academic affairs, and faculty files, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the appraisal system's impact on staff development and performance.

3. 6 Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews was processed and analyzed using a thematic review approach, where transcripts were read and re-read to identify emerging themes and patterns. The data was analyzed inductively, without predetermined codes or categories, allowing the themes to emerge naturally from the data. The researcher conducted a detailed and iterative review of the transcripts, highlighting and noting key phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that capture the participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions related to performance appraisal. The identified themes and patterns were organized and summarized into thematic reports, incorporating direct quotations and observational notes to illustrate the findings.

Data collected from the documentary review was processed and analyzed using a deductive approach, where documents were reviewed and analyzed against specific themes and categories related to performance appraisal policies, procedures, and practices. The documents were read and re-read to identify relevant information, and notes were taken on key points, such as policies, procedures, and outcomes. The data was analyzed by categorizing and synthesizing the information into themes and patterns, highlighting trends, gaps, and areas of consistency and inconsistency. The analysis focused on identifying how the university's performance appraisal system was operationalized, and how it impacted staff development and performance, providing a comprehensive understanding of the system's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

3.7 Validity and reliability

3.7.1 Validity of the instruments

The validity of the semi-structured interview guide was established through a rigorous face and content validity process, involving expert judgment. The drafted instruments were submitted to a panel of experts, comprising supervisors professionals in human resources and performance appraisal, for a critical assessment. Each expert evaluated each item, indicating relevance (R) or non-relevance (NR), and provided feedback on language and clarity, suggesting revisions where necessary. The experts' feedback was collated, and a decision was reached through discussion and debate. The instruments were then revised accordingly, ensuring that each item measured what it intended to measure, and it was clear, concise, and comprehensive. Finally, the revised instruments were reviewed by the expert panel to confirm face and content validity, ensuring that they are reliable and effective tools for data collection.

3.7.2 Reliability of the instruments

In assessing the dependability of the research interview guide, focus group discussions and observations, strategies such as member checking was employed. Member checking based on focus group discussion and interview guide entrustments which involved returning findings or interpretations to participants for validation and ensuring the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data collected. Confirmability, on the other hand, were addressed by employing techniques such as triangulation and prolonged engagement. Triangulation was done through the use of multiple data sources, methods or researchers in a way that enhanced the credibility and objectivity of the study findings by contrasting different perspectives. Prolonged engagement with the data and participants over an extended period allowed for deeper insights and understanding, contributing to the confirmability of the study findings.

3.8 Data collection procedure

To gather the necessary data from Nkumba University (NU), the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the institution. This letter formally requested permission to conduct the research within the university premises. Then, the researcher proceeded to collect data pertaining to staff perceptions of the performance appraisal process at NU.

3.10 Ethical considerations

To ensure that the data collected is ethical, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants. This was accomplished by providing participants with informed consent forms detailing their rights, the purpose of the study, and the confidentiality measures in place to protect their privacy. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained for participants. Their names were not used in the report, and the information they provided was used for academic purposes.

Respect for participants was demonstrated by clearly informing them of their right to terminate the session at any point if they felt uncomfortable or unwilling to continue, without any consequences or pressure.

3.11 Limitations of the study

Qualitative studies typically have smaller sample sizes, which can limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts. To overcome this limitation, the researcher intends to use a diverse and information-rich sample which was purposively selected to maximize depth and breadth of data.

Qualitative data is susceptible to errors and biases during collection and analysis. To overcome this limitation, multiple data sources and methods (triangulation) were used to increase data validity and reliability. Rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, such as transcription verification and coding consistency checks were implemented to ensure accuracy and consistency.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.0 Introduction

The study presents findings from three categories of respondents in line with the research questions. The four categories of the sources of data were university management, administrative staff, human resource personnel and lecturers who responded to the three research questions. The three research questions are; i) What is the effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU? ii) How transparent is the performance appraisal process in NU? iii) How efficient is the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance in NU? The findings are presented below.

4.1 Respondent characteristics

In this qualitative data, additional details about the respondents' roles and the benefits of their participation are provided. The study involved 58 individuals who were determined using the principle of saturation hence data collection continued until no new information emerged from the respondents. The respondents were grouped into university management, administrative staff, human resource personnel, and lecturers, ensuring representation across different levels and functions involved in or overseeing performance appraisal processes. This sample was essential as it included perspectives from individuals responsible in shaping and experiencing performance evaluation practices within the university.

University management, comprising senior administrators and department heads, provided strategic insights into policy formulation and implementation processes. Their involvement was

critical for understanding how performance appraisal policies are designed, communicated, and integrated into broader institutional objectives. Administrative staff, responsible for the day-to-day operational aspects of the university, offered perspectives on the practical implications and effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in supporting efficient administrative functions and organizational effectiveness.

Human resource personnel, central to managing employee performance and development, contributed insights into the procedural aspects, challenges, and best practices in conducting fair and effective performance assessments across diverse job roles within Nkumba University. Their expertise was instrumental in understanding how appraisal frameworks are administered, perceived, and adjusted to align with organizational goals and employee development needs. Additionally, lecturers, representing the academic faculty, provided valuable perspectives on how performance appraisal influences teaching quality, research productivity, and professional growth opportunities within the academic context.

Collectively, the inclusion of these diverse participant groups ensured a comprehensive exploration of staff perceptions towards performance appraisal at Nkumba University. Their varied roles and experiences enriched the study's findings by providing nuanced insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement within the university's performance appraisal practices.

4.1.1 Gender of respondents

Among these respondents, the gender distribution showed a majority being male and a minority being female. Specifically, 40 respondents (69%) identified as male, while 18 respondents (31%) identified as female. This gender distribution suggests a predominance of male perspectives in the

study's findings. These results indicate varying experiences related to performance appraisal processes based on gender within the university setting.

4.1.2 Age of respondents

The age of respondents ranged across four categories. Out of the 58 respondents, 24 (41%) were between 20-30 years, and 20 (34%) were between 31-40 years, making these the most represented age groups. Additionally, 10 respondents (17%) were aged 41-50 years, and 4 respondents (7%) were above 50 years. This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents are relatively young, with 75% under 40 years of age. This suggests that younger staff members have a significant presence at Nkumba University, potentially influencing the overall perceptions and attitudes towards performance appraisal practices within the institution.

4.1.3 Period of service in Nkumba University

The study revealed that the length of service of the 58 participants varied across four categories: Specifically, 22 respondents (38%) had served for 2-5 years, and 18 respondents (31%) had been at the university for below 2 years, making these the most represented groups. Additionally, 12 respondents (21%) had a service length of 6-10 years, while 6 respondents (10%) had served for more than 10 years. This distribution suggests that a significant portion of the staff is relatively new, with 69% having served for 5 years or less. The results showed that the respondents had all served the university for a recognisable and acceptable period which equipped them with relevant and reliable information about staff appraisal.

4.1.4 Level of education

The study indicated that among these, 25 respondents (43%) held bachelor's degrees and 20 respondents (34%) had master's degrees, making these the most common levels of education. Additionally, 5 respondents (9%) had diplomas, 3 respondents (5%) held certificates, and 5

respondents (9%) had other qualifications. This high representation of individuals with bachelor's and master's degrees suggests a well-educated workforce, which is likely to influence their perceptions and expectations of performance appraisal processes. Their advanced educational backgrounds make them more critical and informed about the effectiveness and fairness of the appraisal systems in place at Nkumba University.

4.2 The effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU

This section covered results on how effective performance appraisal process is in providing clear and actional feedback to employees.

4.2.1 Frequency of receiving feedback from supervisor

A respondent at Nkumba University responded to an interview question regarding the frequency of performance feedback received from supervisors by stating,

"Feedback is rarely given. Despite the critical role of feedback in guiding staff towards achieving their professional goals and aligning their efforts with the university's objectives, there is a significant shortfall in the frequency of feedback provided by supervisors" (Respondent A, 2nd July, 2024)

They elaborated that despite their critical role in maintaining and enhancing academic standards, they seldom receive constructive feedback or performance evaluations from their supervisors. This lack of regular feedback leaves them feeling disconnected from the university's broader goals and unsure of how their efforts align with institutional expectations. The absence of ongoing performance discussions also limits opportunities for professional development and growth, contributing to a sense of stagnation. A respondent emphasized that more consistent and meaningful feedback would not only boost their morale but also improve their job performance by providing clear guidance and recognition for their contributions.

This opinion aligns with findings from previous studies on the importance of regular performance feedback in the workplace. For instance, research by Buckingham and Goodall (2019) highlights that frequent feedback is essential for employee engagement and performance improvement. The study found that employees who receive regular, constructive feedback from their supervisors are more likely to feel valued and aligned with their organization's goals. This ongoing communication fosters a supportive work environment where employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and professional growth. Additionally, regular feedback helps bridge the gap between individual contributions and organizational objectives, ensuring that staff members are working towards common goals and feel a sense of purpose in their roles (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019)

Supporting these findings, a key respondent at Nkumba University stated,

"We rarely give regular performance feedback to our staff. This makes it hard for them to know if they are meeting our goals and standards." This response highlights the same issues of infrequent feedback leading to disconnection from university objectives and hindering staff development, echoing the concerns raised by the quality assurance staff member. Regular, meaningful feedback is essential for aligning individual efforts with institutional expectations and fostering professional growth". (Respondent A, 2nd July, 2024)

4.2.2 Clarity of the feedback received during appraisals

Scholarly studies indicate that clarity of feedback received during appraisals in universities is often lacking, which can significantly impact staff performance and development. According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2020), clear and specific feedback is crucial for effective learning and improvement, yet many academic institutions fall short in providing this. Research by Carless (2020) suggests that unclear feedback can lead to confusion and uncertainty among staff, reducing the effectiveness of performance appraisals. Furthermore, Price et al. (2010) found that when

feedback is not clearly articulated, staff may misinterpret the intended messages, leading to misaligned efforts and decreased motivation. A respondent at Nkumba University remarked,

"Feedback during appraisals is often unclear and vague. This makes it hard for staff to understand what they need to improve and how to align their work with university goals." This sentiment echoes scholarly findings that emphasize the importance of clear and specific feedback for effective performance appraisal processes. Unclear feedback not only hinders staff development but also contributes to confusion and reduced motivation". (Respondent C, 11th July, 2024)

This indicates the necessity for universities to ensure that their feedback during appraisals is clear, specific, and actionable to support continuous improvement and professional development.

4.2.3 Actionability of feedback provided during performance appraisal

An interviewee at Nkumba University expressed,

"The feedback I received during my performance appraisal was actionable and clear. It helped me identify specific areas where I could improve my teaching methods and course materials. For instance, based on the feedback, I incorporated more interactive elements into my lectures, which has increased student engagement and learning outcomes. Having actionable feedback not only guided my professional development but also boosted my confidence in meeting the university's educational standards effectively." (Key respondent E, 11th July, 2024)

Scholarly studies corroborate the importance of actionable feedback in universities, emphasizing its role in enhancing employee performance and development. Research by Hattie and Timperley (2007) underscores that effective feedback should be specific, timely, and actionable to facilitate learning and improvement. They argue that actionable feedback helps individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to make necessary adjustments to their practices. Similarly, in their study on feedback in higher education, Sadler (2010) emphasizes that clear feedback allows educators to identify areas for improvement and implement changes that positively impact student learning outcomes. This aligns with the lecturer's experience at Nkumba

University, where actionable feedback guided adjustments in teaching methods, resulting in improved engagement and educational outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 2010).

Furthermore, Carless and Boud (2018) highlight the transformative potential of actionable feedback in fostering reflective practice among academic staff. Their research suggests that when feedback is perceived as actionable and supportive, it encourages continuous learning and professional growth. This positive cycle of feedback and improvement not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to the overall quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. The lecturer's positive response to actionable feedback at Nkumba University exemplifies how universities can leverage effective feedback mechanisms to empower staff and drive educational excellence (Carless & Boud, 2018). These studies collectively underscore the pivotal role of clear, actionable feedback in promoting professional development and enhancing educational outcomes within university settings.

4.2.4 Example of feedback received that helped improve performance

Scholarly studies provide numerous examples of how specific and actionable feedback has contributed to improved performance in educational settings. For instance, research by Kluger and DeNisi (2016) demonstrates that feedback focusing on specific tasks and behaviors leads to significant improvements in performance outcomes. Their meta-analysis across various industries, including education, highlights that detailed feedback helps individuals identify areas for improvement and adjust their strategies accordingly. Similarly, in the context of higher education, Hounsell (2017) discusses how feedback that is timely and directed towards specific learning goals enhances student understanding and engagement. This approach not only clarifies expectations but also supports continuous improvement by providing clear pathways for development (Kluger & DeNisi, 2016; Hounsell, 2017).

A respondent mentioned,

"Feedback highlighting specific teaching techniques and student engagement strategies has notably enhanced our faculty's instructional effectiveness. For instance, suggestions on incorporating more interactive activities into lectures resulted in increased student participation and improved learning outcomes." (Respondent A, 4th July, 2024)

Similarly, another respondent noted,

"Feedback emphasizing leadership skills and student support initiatives has been instrumental in refining our administrative processes. Clear recommendations on fostering a supportive campus environment led to enhanced student satisfaction and a more cohesive community." (Respondent B, 3rd July, 2024)

This perspective resonates with Hounsell's (2017) insights on the benefits of timely and specific feedback in higher education, emphasizing its role in clarifying expectations.

4.2.5 Feedback aligns with personal career goals

Research by London (2020) discusses how feedback that is vague or contradictory can lead to confusion and frustration among employees, particularly when it does not support their individual career aspirations. This lack of alignment can hinder motivation and job satisfaction, as employees may feel undervalued or uncertain about their professional development path. Additionally, studies by Ashford and Cummings (2021) emphasize that feedback perceived as irrelevant or disconnected from personal goals may discourage employees from actively engaging in performance improvement efforts. Such mismatches between feedback and personal career aspirations can undermine morale and productivity, highlighting the importance of ensuring that feedback is not only clear and actionable but also supportive of individual growth and achievement (Ashford & Cummings, 2021).

A respondent shared that,

"When feedback aligns with my personal career goals, I feel more motivated and engaged in my work. For example, receiving specific guidance on enhancing my research skills has been instrumental in pursuing my academic ambitions. However, when feedback lacks relevance to my career aspirations or seems contradictory, it can be demotivating and leave me unsure about how to progress." (Respondent F, 3rd July, 2024)

This means that feedback that is unclear or disconnected from personal goals can diminish job satisfaction and hinder professional development. Effective feedback not only clarifies expectations but also empowers educators to actively pursue their career goals within the context of higher education, ultimately contributing to enhanced job satisfaction and productivity (London, 2020).

4.2.6 Aspects of feedback process most beneficial for development

Another respondent noted,

"The most beneficial aspect of the feedback process for development is its specificity and relevance to individual roles. When feedback is tailored to address specific skills and performance areas, it helps employees understand exactly what they need to improve and how to achieve their career goals within the university context. (Respondent G, 12th July, 2024)

This shows the importance of personalized feedback in fostering professional growth and enhancing job performance.

A respondent affirmed,

"The feedback process is most beneficial when it includes constructive guidance on skill enhancement and professional development tailored to individual roles and responsibilities. Clear, specific feedback enables our staff to see their progress and areas for improvement, fostering a culture of continuous learning and achievement. By aligning feedback with personal career aspirations and institutional goals, we ensure that each team member is empowered to contribute effectively to our educational mission." (Respondent H, 9th July, 2024)

This perspective from management emphasizes the critical role of targeted feedback in promoting staff development and organizational effectiveness.

4.2.7 Feeling on how feedback received addresses specific job responsibilities

Scholarly studies offer contrasting perspectives on how feedback addresses specific job responsibilities, both from negative and positive angles. On the negative side, research by London (2020) discusses instances where feedback fails to adequately address specific job responsibilities, leading to confusion and frustration among employees. When feedback lacks specificity, employees may struggle to understand how their actions align with organizational goals, hindering their ability to perform effectively. This ambiguity can erode job satisfaction and motivation, as individuals may feel disconnected from their roles and uncertain about their contributions to the organization's success.

Conversely, studies by Ashford and Cummings (2021) emphasize that clear and targeted feedback can significantly enhance employees' understanding of their job responsibilities. When feedback is aligned with specific job tasks and performance expectations, it provides employees with actionable insights into how they can improve and excel in their roles. This clarity fosters a sense of purpose and accountability, empowering employees to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives. Effective feedback also cultivates a supportive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated to perform at their best, reinforcing the importance of tailored feedback processes in driving individual and organizational success (London, 2020; Ashford & Cummings, 2021).

4.2.8 Areas where employee feel the feedback process can be improved to better support performance

Employees often identify several areas where the feedback process can be enhanced to better support performance. Research by Kluger and DeNisi (2016) suggests that one critical improvement area lies in the timeliness of feedback delivery. Delays in providing feedback can diminish its effectiveness, as employees may not be able to promptly address areas needing improvement or capitalize on successes. Additionally, studies by Ashford and Cummings (2021) highlight the importance of ensuring that feedback is perceived as fair and transparent. Employees value feedback processes that are equitable and free from bias, as perceived injustices can undermine morale and trust in the feedback system.

It was remarked,

"Timely feedback is crucial for our growth. When we receive feedback promptly, it allows us to make immediate adjustments and improvements. However, delays can make it challenging to address issues effectively, as the context may have already changed." (Respondent J, 9th July, 2024)

This means that timely feedback enables educators to enhance their teaching methods and student engagement more effectively.

Another respondent added,

"Feedback needs to be fair and transparent. When feedback is clear and unbiased, it builds trust and motivates us to improve. If we feel the feedback process is not equitable, it can lead to frustration and decreased morale." (Respondent K, 10th July, 2024)

This means that perceived fairness in feedback processes ensures transparency and equity in feedback which can help maintain employee motivation and trust in the system, fostering a more positive and productive work environment.

Moreover, Carless and Douglas (2013) argue for enhancing the clarity and specificity of feedback to make it actionable. Clear and specific feedback enables employees to understand precisely what behaviors or actions need adjustment, facilitating targeted improvements in performance. These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of effective feedback systems, emphasizing the need for universities to continuously refine their approaches to ensure they support employee performance and development optimally (Carless & Douglas, 2013).

4.3 The transparency of the performance appraisal process in NU

This section explores the qualitative findings on the transparency of the performance appraisal process in NU. The analysis aims to understand staff perceptions and experiences regarding the clarity, fairness, and openness of the appraisal procedures at Nkumba University.

Transparency in the performance appraisal process is crucial for maintaining trust and motivation among employees. According to Smither and London (2009), transparency in appraisals ensures that employees clearly understand the criteria, processes, and outcomes associated with their evaluations. This clarity helps in reducing biases and perceptions of unfairness, which are common issues in appraisal systems. Murphy and Cleveland (2018) emphasize that transparent appraisal processes lead to greater employee acceptance and satisfaction, as they feel more confident that their efforts and achievements are accurately recognized and rewarded. Furthermore, research by Aguinis (2013) indicates that when performance appraisals are transparent, employees are more likely to engage in goal-setting and performance improvement initiatives, knowing that the evaluation process is fair and objective.

During the study, it was observed that the transparency of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University varied significantly across different departments. Some staff members

expressed confidence in the fairness and clarity of the appraisal system, noting that they received comprehensive feedback and understood the evaluation criteria. However, others reported a lack of transparency, feeling that the process was opaque and occasionally biased. These mixed perceptions suggest a need for standardizing and improving the appraisal procedures to ensure consistency and fairness across the university.

4.3.1 Clarity in clearly communicating performance appraisal criteria

Clarity in clearly communicating performance appraisal criteria is essential for ensuring that employees understand how their performance is evaluated and what is expected of them. A respondent was of the view that,

"It's important that we clearly explain the criteria used in appraisals to avoid confusion and ensure fairness. When staff know exactly what they are being assessed on, it helps them focus on the right areas and improves their performance." (Respondent L, 15th July, 2024)

This means that transparent communication in the appraisal process ensures employees understand and accept of performance evaluations.

Another respondent emphasised the importance of clarity in the performance appraisal process, stating,

"Clear communication of appraisal criteria is crucial. When we provide detailed explanations of what is expected, it eliminates confusion and helps staff align their efforts with the university's goals. This transparency ensures fairness and motivates employees to improve their performance." (Respondent M, 15th July, 2024)

Contrastingly, another respondent expressed concerns about the lack of clarity in the appraisal process, saying,

"The criteria for performance appraisals are not clearly communicated. Sometimes, we don't know what aspects of our work are being evaluated or how our performance

is being measured. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to understand how to improve and can be very frustrating." (Respondent N, 17th July, 2024)

This feedback shows issues in the current appraisal process, pointing to the need for better communication and transparency to ensure that all staff members have a clear understanding of the evaluation criteria and can work towards meeting them effectively.

4.3.2 Understanding how performance is evaluated

Scholarly studies emphasize that when employees are well-informed about the evaluation criteria, they are more likely to align their efforts with organizational goals and engage in performance-enhancing behaviors. According to Armstrong and Baron (2019), clear communication of performance standards and criteria is crucial for fostering a transparent and fair appraisal system. This clarity helps reduce ambiguity and potential biases, allowing employees to understand precisely what is required of them. Additionally, research by Murphy and Cleveland (2018) suggests that well-defined evaluation processes enhance employee trust and satisfaction with the appraisal system, as they perceive the assessments to be more equitable and objective. Overall, clear and consistent communication about how performance is evaluated is essential for motivating employees and improving organizational effectiveness.

A respondent supported this view, stating,

"I understand how my performance is evaluated because the criteria are clearly communicated to us. We know what is expected in terms of teaching, research, and community service. This clarity helps me focus on the right areas and align my efforts with the university's goals." (Respondent C, 2nd July, 2024)

This means that the importance of clear and well-defined evaluation processes in fostering transparency, reduces biases and enhances employee motivation and performance.

Scholarly studies emphasize that when employees are well-informed about the evaluation criteria, they are more likely to align their efforts with organizational goals and engage in performance-

enhancing behaviors. According to Armstrong and Baron (2019), clear communication of performance standards and criteria is crucial for fostering a transparent and fair appraisal system. This clarity helps reduce ambiguity and potential biases, allowing employees to understand precisely what is required of them. Additionally, research by Murphy and Cleveland (2018) suggests that well-defined evaluation processes enhance employee trust and satisfaction with the appraisal system.

4.3.3 Transparency in the process of setting performance goals and expectations

Transparency in setting performance goals and expectations is critical for employee engagement and achievement. A respondent noted positively,

"The process of setting performance goals here is very transparent. We are involved in discussions and clearly understand what is expected of us. This openness helps us align our personal goals with the university's objectives and enhances our motivation." (Respondent D, 18th July, 2024)

This perspective underscores the importance of involving employees in goal-setting and ensuring clear communication, which fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to achieving the set targets.

However, not all staff share this positive experience. One respondent at Nkumba University expressed a different view, saying,

"The process of setting performance goals is not very transparent. We often receive vague targets without much discussion or clarity. This makes it hard to know what is expected and how to meet those expectations." (Respondent E, 18th July, 2024)

This response indicates the challenges and frustrations that can arise when transparency and clear communication are lacking in the goal-setting process, leading to confusion and decreased motivation among staff.

4.3.4 Instances where appraisal process was not transparent

Research by Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) identifies several factors that contribute to non-transparent appraisal processes, such as ambiguous evaluation criteria, inconsistent feedback, and inadequate communication from supervisors. When employees perceive the appraisal process as opaque or unfair, it can lead to decreased trust in leadership and reduced job satisfaction (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). Additionally, studies by Landy and Farr (2021) highlight that unclear performance standards and biased assessments can undermine the effectiveness of performance appraisals, diminishing their intended role in enhancing employee motivation and performance. These insights underscore the importance of maintaining transparency in the appraisal process to promote fairness, trust, and organizational effectiveness (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).

A respondent at Nkumba University highlighted an instance of non-transparency in the appraisal process, stating,

"During last year's appraisal (2022), the criteria for evaluating our performance were not clearly communicated. Some of us received feedback that seemed inconsistent with our actual achievements, which left us feeling uncertain about the fairness of the process." (Respondent C, 2nd July, 2024)

Such experiences can diminish trust in leadership and impact job satisfaction, emphasizing the need for clear and consistent communication to ensure fairness and effectiveness in performance evaluations.

Research by Aguinis (2013) emphasizes that transparency in performance appraisals is crucial for ensuring employees understand the rationale behind evaluations and perceive them as fair and unbiased. When appraisal criteria are unclear or inconsistently applied, employees may feel uncertain about how their performance is assessed, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement

(Aguinis, 2013). Furthermore, studies by Murphy and Cleveland (2018) suggest that transparent appraisal processes enhance employee trust in management and the fairness of decision-making, contributing to higher job satisfaction and commitment. Conversely, when transparency is lacking, employees may perceive evaluations as arbitrary or influenced by personal biases, eroding trust and morale within the organization.

A respondent echoed the importance of transparency in performance appraisals, stating,

"When the criteria for evaluation are unclear, it's frustrating because we don't know how our work is being judged. This lack of clarity can make us feel demotivated and unsure about whether our efforts are recognized fairly." (Respondent G, 12th July, 2024)

4.3.5 Communication of outcomes of the performance appraisal to employees

Research by DeNisi and Pritchard (2020) highlights that when employees perceive the communication of appraisal outcomes as inadequate or unclear, it can lead to feelings of uncertainty and dissatisfaction. This lack of transparency can contribute to misunderstandings about performance expectations and evaluation criteria, potentially resulting in reduced motivation and commitment among employees (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2020). Additionally, studies by Latham and Wexley (2017) suggest that ineffective communication of appraisal results may hinder employees' ability to identify areas for improvement and align their goals with organizational objectives.

A respondent emphasized the importance of clear communication regarding performance appraisal outcomes, stating,

"When we receive feedback from our appraisals that is vague or delayed, it's frustrating because we don't fully understand where we stand and how to improve. This lack of clarity can lead to uncertainty about our performance and affect our motivation to excel." (Respondent H, 9th July, 2024)

A respondent indicated the significance of transparent communication in performance appraisals, stating,

"It's crucial that we communicate appraisal outcomes clearly and promptly to our staff. When employees understand where they stand based on their performance, it helps them set realistic goals and improve in areas that need attention. This clarity fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement." (Respondent J, 9th July, 2024)

This means that when appraisal results are communicated clearly, employees are more likely to engage proactively in their development and contribute effectively to organizational goals, thereby promoting overall organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

4.3.6 Opportunities to discuss and understand the rationale behind appraisal results

Below are the interview responses shedding light on whether employees are given opportunities to discuss and understand the rationale behind appraisal results.

"As a lecturer, the opportunity to discuss appraisal results is highly valued. They emphasize that these discussions not only provide constructive feedback but also offer clarity on professional development goals, demonstrating the university's commitment to supporting academic staff." (Respondent K, 10th July, 2024)

"These meetings often feel rushed and lack detailed explanations, which hinders their ability to fully understand their performance evaluations and areas for improvement." (Respondent K, 10th July, 2024)

"these sessions are essential for gaining clarity on their contributions and performance evaluations, fostering a sense of recognition and motivation within the department." (Respondent L, 15th July, 2024)

The interview responses from Nkumba University staff align with scholarly literature emphasizing the importance of feedback and communication in performance management. Research by DeNisi and Pritchard (2020) underscores that transparent communication of appraisal outcomes enhances employee understanding and satisfaction, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Conversely, when feedback discussions are rushed or unclear, as noted by the administrative staff member, it can lead to dissatisfaction and confusion (Aguinis, 2013).

Moreover, studies by Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) highlight that structured feedback sessions, similar to those valued by the support staff member, are crucial for aligning employee goals with organizational objectives, thereby enhancing motivation and job performance. These findings underscore the critical role of effective communication and feedback mechanisms in optimizing the appraisal process to support both individual development and organizational success (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2020; Aguinis, 2013; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).

4.3.7 Confidence in the fairness of the appraisal process

Research by Colquitt et al. (2001) highlights that perceptions of fairness in performance appraisals are strongly linked to employee attitudes and behaviors. When employees perceive appraisals as unfair, it can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and trust in organizational processes (Colquitt et al., 2001). Factors such as inconsistent application of criteria, bias in evaluations, and lack of transparency can contribute to perceptions of unfairness (Aguinis, 2013). These issues undermine the effectiveness of performance management systems by eroding employee confidence and commitment, highlighting the need for organizations to ensure fairness in their appraisal processes to maintain positive employee perceptions and organizational outcomes (Aguinis, 2013).

"I find that the appraisal criteria can be ambiguous at times, which makes it challenging to gauge my performance accurately. This inconsistency affects my motivation because I'm unsure of how my efforts are being evaluated. Clearer guidelines would help in understanding expectations better and aligning my goals with departmental objectives." (Respondent M, 15th July, 2024)

"While I appreciate receiving feedback through performance appraisals, there are moments when personal biases seem to influence the evaluation process. This can create perceptions of unfairness among staff members. Enhancing transparency in how decisions are made and ensuring consistency in applying evaluation criteria would greatly improve trust in the appraisal system. It's important for everyone to feel that their contributions are fairly recognized and evaluated based on objective measures." (Respondent H, 9th July, 2024)

These responses illustrate both positive aspects, such as the acknowledgment of feedback, and concerns regarding fairness due to unclear criteria and potential biases in the appraisal process at Nkumba University.

4.3.8 Measures that can be implemented to enhance the transparency of the appraisal process

Enhancing the transparency of the appraisal process can be achieved through several measures supported by scholarly research. Firstly, ensuring clear and well-defined evaluation criteria is crucial, as ambiguity can lead to perceptions of unfairness (Colquitt et al., 2001). Providing training for managers and evaluators on objective assessment techniques can mitigate biases in evaluations (Aguinis, 2013). Implementing regular calibration sessions where multiple evaluators discuss and align their ratings can also enhance consistency and fairness (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Moreover, involving employees in the development of appraisal criteria and processes can increase their understanding and acceptance of the evaluation outcomes (Latham & Wexley, 2017).

This is further supported by an interview response that stated;

"At Nkumba University, we've found that having clear and well-defined evaluation criteria is crucial for ensuring fairness in appraisals. When expectations are explicitly laid out, it helps employees understand what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated. This clarity not only reduces confusion and misunderstandings but also builds trust among staff members. They feel reassured that their efforts are being assessed based on objective standards, which enhances their motivation and commitment to achieving organizational goals." (Respondent I, 9th July, 2024)

In addition, a respondent made a submission that

"As part of our efforts to enhance transparency, we prioritize training for managers and evaluators on objective assessment techniques. This training is essential in mitigating biases that could affect appraisal outcomes. By equipping our team with the skills to conduct fair evaluations, we ensure consistency across departments and minimize the risk of subjective judgments. Additionally, we conduct regular calibration sessions where multiple evaluators come together to discuss and align their ratings. This collaborative approach not only promotes fairness but also allows us to refine our evaluation processes over time, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in assessing performance at Nkumba University." (Respondent P, 19th July, 2024)

These responses indicate the importance of clear criteria, ongoing training, and collaborative calibration sessions as key strategies to foster transparency and fairness in the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University.

4.4 The efficiency of the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance in NU

This section explores the qualitative findings on the efficiency of performance appraisal process in ensuring continuous improvement of employees. The section aims to identify key factors that contribute to its effectiveness.

Research by Cardy and Dobbins (1994) highlights that effective performance appraisals not only assess past performance but also serve as a developmental tool by providing feedback and setting future goals. This feedback loop is essential for employees at Nkumba University to understand their strengths and areas needing improvement, thereby enhancing their professional growth and productivity (Cardy & Dobbins, 1994). Moreover, according to Lawler and McDermott (2017), performance appraisals that are aligned with organizational goals and values can motivate employees to perform better and contribute positively to overall organizational performance. This

alignment ensures that appraisals at Nkumba University not only focus on individual achievements but also on how they contribute to the university's mission and objectives (Lawler & McDermott, 2017).

In addition to scholarly insights, observations support the role of performance appraisals in facilitating continuous improvement. The researcher noted that regular performance evaluations encourage ongoing dialogue between supervisors and employees, fostering a culture of continuous feedback and improvement. This iterative process allows employees to receive timely guidance on their work and provides opportunities for skill development and career advancement within the university context. By leveraging performance appraisals as a tool for both assessment and development, Nkumba University can cultivate a supportive environment where employees are motivated to enhance their skills and contribute effectively to the institution's success.

4.4.1 Regularity of performance appraisal process occurrence in Nkumba University

Research by Biswas and Varma (2020) underscores that irregular or sporadic appraisals can lead to uncertainty among employees regarding feedback and career progression, ultimately diminishing their job satisfaction and commitment. This inconsistency may also contribute to perceptions of unfairness and bias in evaluation outcomes (Biswas & Varma, 2020). Moreover, according to Murphy and Cleveland (2018), infrequent appraisals fail to provide timely feedback necessary for employees to make necessary improvements and align their goals with organizational objectives, thereby limiting the potential for continuous performance enhancement (Murphy & Cleveland, 2018). Consequently, organizations like Nkumba University must prioritize the establishment of a consistent and well-defined schedule for performance appraisals to maintain employee engagement, foster development, and ensure fairness in evaluations.

Interview responses support the document review that;

"We've observed that irregular performance appraisals create uncertainty among our staff regarding feedback and career progression. Employees often express frustration when appraisals are delayed or conducted inconsistently, as it leaves them unsure about where they stand and how their efforts are being evaluated. This uncertainty can lead to decreased job satisfaction and motivation, as employees feel their contributions may not be recognized or appropriately rewarded." (Respondent Q, 25th July, 2024)

"From my perspective, irregular appraisals make it challenging to gauge my progress and plan for professional development. When appraisals are infrequent, it limits the opportunities for constructive feedback and guidance on improving teaching methodologies and academic contributions. This lack of timely feedback hampers my ability to align my goals with the university's objectives and limits my potential for continuous improvement in teaching and research." (Respondent Q, 19th July, 2024)

This shows how inconsistent feedback and evaluation timelines undermine employee morale, hinder professional growth, and ultimately impact organizational effectiveness negatively.

4.4.2 Timeliness in providing feedback after appraisal process

Below are the interview responses from key respondents at Nkumba University highlight the importance of timeliness in providing feedback after the appraisal process:

"Timely feedback after appraisals is crucial because it helps employees understand where they stand and what improvements are needed. When feedback is prompt, it allows us to address issues proactively and provide necessary support for professional development. However, delays in receiving feedback can be frustrating and demotivating, as it leaves employees uncertain about their performance and future career prospects within the university." (Respondent R, 19th July, 2024)

A respondent:

"I've noticed that when feedback is provided promptly after the appraisal process, it enables us to maintain clear communication with staff and ensure accountability for performance goals. This timely feedback not only boosts employee morale by recognizing achievements promptly but also helps in identifying areas for

improvement. On the other hand, delays in feedback can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities for skill enhancement, which may hinder our efforts to uphold quality standards and academic excellence at Nkumba University." (Respondent R, 19th July, 2024)

This means that ensuring prompt feedback after performance appraisals is essential for fostering a supportive work environment, enhancing employee engagement, and driving continuous improvement within the university setting.

4.4.3 How appraisal process helps identify areas for continuous improvement

Interview responses from an administrative staff and two lecturers at Nkumba University underscore the role of the appraisal process in identifying areas for continuous improvement, focusing on the timeliness of feedback:

A respondent was of the view that;

"The appraisal process at Nkumba University plays a crucial role in identifying areas where staff can improve. Timely feedback allows us to pinpoint strengths and areas needing development, which helps in setting clear goals for professional growth. For instance, when feedback is prompt, it enables us to address performance gaps promptly and offer support or training where necessary. However, delays in feedback can hinder this process, as it prolongs the time it takes to implement necessary changes and may lead to missed opportunities for skill enhancement." (Respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

"From my experience, timely feedback after appraisals is invaluable for my professional development as a lecturer. Positive feedback helps reinforce effective teaching practices, while constructive criticism guides me on areas where I can improve. This timely input enables me to make adjustments to my teaching methods or course content promptly, ensuring that I can meet the needs of my students better. On the flip side, delays in receiving feedback can be discouraging, as it prolongs uncertainty about my performance and delays improvements that could benefit my teaching effectiveness." (Respondent O, 20th July, 2024)

Lecturer 2:

"Appraisal feedback, when provided promptly, serves as a roadmap for continuous improvement in my academic work. It highlights areas where I excel and areas that need attention, such as research productivity or student engagement. This feedback loop is essential for my professional growth and helps me stay aligned with departmental and university goals. However, when feedback is delayed, it impacts my ability to make timely adjustments to my work and can affect my motivation to innovate and contribute positively to the university's academic mission." (Respondent 0, 19th July, 2024)

The role of timely feedback in the appraisal process, as highlighted by interview responses from administrative staff and lecturers at Nkumba University, is supported by scholarly literature. Research by Kluger and DeNisi (2016) emphasizes that timely and specific feedback enhances employee motivation and performance improvement by providing clear direction for skill development and goal attainment. Additionally, according to Latham and Locke (2022), feedback that is provided promptly after performance assessments is crucial for goal setting and task adjustment, facilitating continuous improvement in job performance. Conversely, delays in feedback can lead to uncertainty and hinder employees' ability to make necessary adjustments in their work behaviors and strategies (Latham & Locke, 2022).

4.4.4 Resources or support Nkumba University provides to help employees act on the feedback received

Various respondents were of the view that;

"At Nkumba University, we offer various resources to support employees in acting on the feedback they receive from appraisals. For instance, we provide access to professional development workshops and training sessions tailored to improve specific skills identified in the appraisal process. Additionally, our HR department assists in creating individual development plans that outline steps for employees to address areas needing improvement. These plans include access to online learning platforms, mentoring opportunities with senior faculty, and financial support for attending conferences or further education relevant to their roles." (Respondent 0, 19th July, 2024)

"As part of our quality assurance efforts, we ensure that the feedback provided in appraisals is actionable by aligning it with ongoing improvement initiatives. For example, we conduct regular departmental reviews where faculty members can discuss their appraisal feedback and collaborate on implementing best practices in teaching and research. Moreover, we facilitate peer mentoring programs where experienced educators mentor junior faculty based on identified development needs. This structured support system enables faculty to translate feedback into concrete actions that enhance their teaching effectiveness and scholarly output." (Respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

"As a lecturer, I appreciate the university's commitment to supporting us in implementing feedback from appraisals effectively. For instance, I've utilized the teaching resources available through the Faculty Development Center, which offers workshops on pedagogical techniques and technology integration. These resources help me apply feedback on my teaching methods promptly, improving student engagement and learning outcomes. Furthermore, the university encourages collaborative research projects among faculty members, which aligns with feedback on research productivity from appraisals. This support not only enhances my professional growth but also strengthens the university's academic reputation." (Respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

This means that the university has proactive approaches in providing tailored resources and support systems that enable employees to act on feedback received from performance appraisals effectively.

4.4.5 Contribution of appraisal process to employee ongoing professional development

The appraisal process plays a pivotal role in fostering ongoing professional development among employees, as evidenced by scholarly research. Positive aspects include how performance feedback can serve as a catalyst for skill enhancement and career advancement. Research by London and Smither (2022) highlights that constructive feedback provided during performance appraisals helps employees identify strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to focus on areas needing improvement. This targeted approach not only supports individual growth but also aligns

employee development with organizational goals, enhancing overall job performance and satisfaction (London & Smither, 2022). Moreover, according to DeNisi and Kluger (2016), effective appraisals that include developmental feedback are instrumental in shaping employee behavior and performance by providing clear benchmarks for improvement and encouraging proactive skill development initiatives within the workplace. In an interview, a respondent was of the view that;

"The appraisal process at Nkumba University has been instrumental in my ongoing professional development. Through constructive feedback provided during appraisals, I've been able to identify specific areas where I can improve my teaching methods and enhance student engagement. For example, based on feedback from appraisals, I participated in workshops organized by the Faculty Development Center that focused on innovative teaching techniques and using technology in the classroom. These resources helped me implement new strategies to better meet the diverse learning needs of my students and improve the overall quality of my lectures. Moreover, the feedback I received has encouraged me to pursue further research in my field, aligning my professional goals with the university's mission of academic excellence." (Respondent O, 19th July, 2024)

Conversely, challenges in the appraisal process can hinder professional development when feedback lacks specificity or relevance to employees' career aspirations. Research by Gerhart and Milkovich (2020) suggests that poorly conducted appraisals, such as those focusing solely on past performance without forward-looking developmental goals, may fail to inspire ongoing improvement or adequately support career progression. This limitation underscores the importance of aligning appraisal practices with individual development needs and organizational objectives to maximize their impact on employee professional growth (Gerhart & Milkovich, 2020). Therefore, while appraisals can significantly contribute to ongoing professional development through targeted feedback and goal setting, ensuring their effectiveness requires careful consideration of feedback quality and relevance to employees' career trajectories. Another submission was made that;

"I've experienced challenges with the appraisal process when the feedback provided lacks specificity or relevance to my career aspirations. For instance, in past appraisals, I received feedback that focused mainly on classroom performance metrics without addressing my long-term research goals or professional development needs. This limitation makes it difficult for me to align my efforts with the university's strategic priorities or to pursue opportunities that could advance my academic career. Effective appraisals should provide actionable feedback that helps me grow as a scholar and educator, guiding me on how to improve my teaching methods, enhance my research output, and contribute more effectively to the university community." (Respondent O, 19th July, 2024)

This shows how poorly conducted appraisals, which do not address specific career aspirations or developmental goals, can hinder professional growth and job satisfaction among faculty members.

4.4.6 Specific instances where the appraisal process led to significant improvements in performance

The following are interview responses from various respondents;

"At Nkumba University, we've seen significant improvements in staff performance following the appraisal process, particularly in areas where targeted feedback and development plans were implemented. For instance, one of our administrative staff members received feedback on improving time management skills during their appraisal. With support from our HR department, they attended a time management workshop and implemented new strategies that resulted in more efficient task completion and better team collaboration. This example shows how appraisals can pinpoint specific areas for improvement and provide actionable steps for professional growth." (Respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

"In the realm of quality assurance, we've observed notable enhancements in teaching quality and student satisfaction as a result of the appraisal process. For example, after receiving feedback on student engagement and course delivery, a lecturer participated in a peer mentoring program facilitated by our department. Through collaborative discussions and classroom observations, they refined their teaching methods, introduced interactive learning activities, and incorporated student feedback into course redesign. This proactive approach not only improved student learning outcomes but also contributed to the lecturer's professional development and recognition within their academic discipline." (Key respondent O, 19th July, 2024)

"As a lecturer at Nkumba University, I've experienced firsthand how the appraisal process has led to significant improvements in my performance. Following feedback on enhancing research productivity, I received support from the university's research office to attend a conference where I presented my findings and networked with peers in my field. This experience not only expanded my research capabilities but also allowed me to contribute more effectively to scholarly discourse and mentor students interested in research. The appraisal process at Nkumba University serves as a catalyst for continuous improvement by identifying areas for development and providing the necessary resources and support to achieve measurable performance enhancements." (Key respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

The interview responses align with scholarly findings such as research by Kluger and DeNisi (2016) emphasizes that targeted feedback and development plans derived from appraisals can effectively enhance employee motivation and performance by addressing specific areas for improvement. Moreover, the study by London and Smither (2022) underscores the role of feedback in fostering professional growth and aligning individual efforts with organizational objectives, thereby improving overall job satisfaction and performance outcomes.

4.4.7 Effectiveness of appraisal process in setting and achieving new performance goals

The effectiveness of the appraisal process in setting and achieving new performance goals can significantly impact organizational success, as supported by scholarly studies. Positively, research by DeNisi and Kluger (2016) highlights that well-conducted appraisals not only provide employees with clear performance expectations but also establish specific goals for improvement. This process helps align individual efforts with organizational objectives, fostering motivation and commitment to achieving new benchmarks in job performance. Additionally, according to Locke and Latham (2022), goal-setting theory emphasizes that challenging yet achievable goals set during performance appraisals can enhance employee productivity and stimulate continuous improvement. By providing a structured framework for goal setting and monitoring progress,

effective appraisals contribute to enhancing overall organizational performance and employee satisfaction (DeNisi & Kluger, 2016).

Conversely, challenges in the appraisal process can arise when goals are perceived as unrealistic or disconnected from employees' day-to-day responsibilities. Research by Pritchard and Karasick (2017) suggests that poorly defined or ambiguous goals set during appraisals may lead to frustration and decreased motivation among employees, hindering goal attainment and organizational effectiveness. Moreover, if appraisals focus solely on past performance without forward-looking developmental goals, they may fail to inspire innovation or adaptability in response to changing organizational needs (Pritchard & Karasick, 2017). Therefore, while the appraisal process can effectively set and achieve new performance goals when aligned with strategic objectives and employee capabilities, it is crucial for organizations to ensure clarity, relevance, and feasibility of goals to maximize their impact on organizational success.

4.4.8 Changes to make the appraisal process more effective in promoting continuous improvement

Ensuring regular and constructive feedback sessions throughout the year, rather than relying solely on annual reviews, can facilitate ongoing dialogue between supervisors and employees (London & Smither, 2022). This approach not only allows for timely adjustments in performance goals but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and development. Secondly, integrating self-assessment and peer feedback mechanisms into the appraisal process can provide additional perspectives on performance and encourage self-reflection among employees (DeNisi & Kluger, 2016). Thirdly, according to Aguinis (2013), using objective and transparent performance metrics helps mitigate biases and ensures fairness in evaluations, thus motivating employees to actively engage in performance improvement initiatives. By incorporating these practices, organizations

can create a more dynamic appraisal process that not only identifies areas for growth but also supports employees in achieving sustained performance enhancement.

Interview responses were submitted, including;

"At Nkumba University, we've implemented regular feedback sessions throughout the year to enhance our appraisal process. This approach allows supervisors and employees to discuss performance more frequently, identify areas for improvement promptly, and adjust goals as needed. For instance, in our department, we conduct quarterly check-ins where supervisors provide feedback on ongoing projects and discuss career development goals. This has fostered a more collaborative environment and improved employee engagement in performance enhancement initiatives." (Key respondent S, 20th July, 2024)

In addition, it was stated that;

"As part of our quality assurance efforts at Nkumba University, we've integrated self-assessment and peer feedback mechanisms into the appraisal process. This change has been instrumental in providing holistic insights into performance. For example, our teaching staff participate in peer observation sessions where they receive constructive feedback on their teaching methods from colleagues. This not only promotes self-reflection but also encourages professional growth by incorporating diverse perspectives and best practices into their teaching strategies." (Key respondent O, 19th July, 2024)

This means that implementing regular feedback sessions, integrating self-assessment and peer feedback mechanisms, and using objective performance metrics can positively impact the appraisal process at Nkumba University.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The study investigates the staff perception of performance appraisal in higher education institutions in Uganda with specific interest in Nkumba University. The ecological systems theory and parenthood theory help to provide insights about the study.

5.1 Summary of findings

The effectiveness of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees shows both strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback is often infrequent, unclear, and lacks relevance to individual career goals, leading to staff feeling disconnected from university objectives and hindered in their professional development. Despite this, when feedback is specific and actionable, it has been shown to significantly improve job performance and satisfaction, particularly in areas like teaching methods and leadership. Employees value timely, fair, and transparent feedback that aligns with their roles and career aspirations, which fosters a supportive work environment. However, there is a need for Nkumba University to enhance the regularity, clarity, and fairness of feedback to better support staff performance and development.

The qualitative findings on the transparency of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University reveal mixed experiences across different departments. While some staff members reported clear communication of appraisal criteria, transparent goal-setting, and opportunities to discuss appraisal outcomes, others expressed concerns about a lack of transparency, unclear evaluation criteria, and inconsistent feedback. These issues contributed to perceptions of

unfairness and frustration among some employees, highlighting the need for improved communication, standardized procedures, and enhanced training for evaluators to ensure fairness and consistency across the university's appraisal process.

The efficiency of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University (NU) in facilitating continuous employee improvement was explored through both scholarly insights and interviews with staff. Effective appraisals are crucial for aligning individual development with organizational goals, offering timely feedback, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. However, inconsistencies in appraisal regularity and delayed feedback negatively affect employee morale and professional growth. NU provides various resources, including training and mentorship, to help staff act on feedback. Success stories include improvements in time management and teaching methods, highlighting how targeted feedback and development plans can drive performance enhancement. Challenges arise when feedback lacks specificity or fails to align with career aspirations, underscoring the need for well-structured appraisal practices.

5.2 Conclusion

The study of staff perceptions of the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University reveals the nuanced relationship between institutional objectives and individual career development. The findings indicate that while the appraisal system aims to enhance staff performance, there is often a disconnect between the process and the actual needs of employees. This disconnect suggests that performance appraisals, in their current form, may not fully achieve their intended purpose of fostering professional growth and aligning personal aspirations with organizational goals.

The variation in experiences across different departments highlights deeper underlying issues with consistency and transparency in the performance appraisal process. Staff perceptions of fairness

and clarity are crucial to the effectiveness of appraisals. The mixed experiences suggest that without a uniform approach, the appraisal system may contribute to feelings of frustration and unfairness among employees, impacting their overall job satisfaction and performance.

Ultimately, the study points to the significance of performance appraisals as more than just a formality. They are instrumental in shaping employees' professional journeys and influencing their perceptions of their roles within the university. When feedback is clear, actionable, and timely, it has the potential to drive meaningful improvements in both individual performance and institutional outcomes. However, the effectiveness of this process depends on how well it resonates with the unique needs and career aspirations of the staff.

5.3 Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations to the following stakeholders

5.3.1 To Human resource (HR) department

Develop and implement uniform performance evaluation criteria across all departments to ensure consistency and fairness in the appraisal process.

Provide ongoing training for evaluators to ensure they understand the appraisal tools and can deliver constructive, objective, and relevant feedback.

Establish a system for more regular feedback sessions throughout the year, rather than relying solely on annual reviews, to help employees stay aligned with their goals.

Create channels for employees to give feedback on the appraisal process itself, ensuring it evolves based on staff experiences and concerns.

5.3.2 Academic affairs department

Link performance evaluations in teaching with targeted professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, or mentorship programs, to address specific areas of improvement.

Introduce peer review systems within departments to complement the formal appraisal process, providing additional insights into teaching methods and classroom engagement.

Ensure that appraisals take into account academic staff's research contributions and offer support for enhancing their research skills and outputs.

Encourage open discussions between academic staff and evaluators about the appraisal outcomes, ensuring alignment between individual goals and departmental objectives.

5.3.3 Finance department

For finance staff, connect performance appraisals with opportunities for training in financial management and new technologies to enhance their effectiveness.

Establish specific and measurable performance indicators related to financial accuracy, budget management, and compliance, which should be part of the appraisal process.

Implement financial incentives or bonuses for staff who consistently meet or exceed performance targets set during the appraisal process.

Conduct performance reviews promptly to ensure that finance-related issues, such as budget adherence, are addressed in a timely manner.

5.3.4 IT and E-Learning Department

Include regular assessments of technical competencies in the appraisal process, ensuring IT staff are up-to-date with the latest developments in technology and e-learning platforms.

Encourage staff to engage in innovative projects related to IT and e-learning, and include their contributions in performance evaluations.

Link appraisal outcomes to opportunities for staff to gain professional certifications in relevant IT fields, enhancing their career growth and skills.

Ensure that performance evaluations consider the impact of IT staff on the overall efficiency and security of university operations, making these factors a key part of their assessments.

5.3.5 Quality assurance department

Ensure that staff appraisals are aligned with university-wide quality assurance standards, emphasizing their role in maintaining and enhancing academic and operational quality.

Incorporate data analytics into the appraisal process, focusing on measurable outcomes in quality assurance efforts, such as student satisfaction and accreditation compliance.

Encourage staff to engage in continuous improvement initiatives, and evaluate their contributions to enhancing university processes and outcomes.

Provide training on the latest quality assessment methodologies, linking successful completion of such training to appraisal outcomes.

5.3.6 Student affairs department

Develop appraisal criteria that assess the effectiveness of staff in engaging with and supporting students, particularly in areas such as counseling, extracurricular activities, and student welfare.

Incorporate student feedback into the performance appraisal process, particularly for staff who are in regular contact with students.

Offer opportunities for staff to enhance their skills in areas such as student counseling, mental health support, and career guidance, connecting these opportunities to appraisal outcomes.

Include metrics related to student retention and success in the appraisal process, evaluating staff based on their contributions to these key university objectives.

5.4 Areas for further research

1. Investigate how the performance appraisal process influences employee motivation and retention rates across various departments within the university.
2. Examine the potential of integrating digital tools and technologies into the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University.
3. Conduct a comparative study of performance appraisal practices in various universities across Uganda, identifying best practices and challenges.
4. Explore the role of gender and diversity in shaping perceptions and outcomes of performance appraisals at Nkumba University.

REFERENCES

- Akanwa, E. E. (2017). Performance appraisal systems in Nigerian universities: Historical perspectives and contemporary challenges. *International Journal of Educational Development, 54*, 20-30.
- Armstrong, M. (2020). *Armstrong's Handbook of Performance Management: An Evidence-Based Guide to Delivering High Performance (6th ed.)*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Aslam, H. D. (2021). Evolution of performance appraisal in higher education institutions. *Journal of Education and Practice, 12*(4), 10-15.
- Atkins, P. W. B., & Wood, R. E. (2020). Self- vs. others' ratings as predictors of assessment center ratings: Validation evidence for 360-degree feedback programs. *Personnel Psychology, 73*(1), 31-56.
- Axelrod, P. (2019). The colonial legacy and its impact on higher education in Africa. *History of Education Quarterly, 59*(2), 202-225.
- Bakkabulindi, F. E. K. (2021). Performance appraisal in East African higher education: Historical context and contemporary issues. *African Journal of Education and Technology, 9*(1), 35-50.
- Bakunda, G., & Nsamba, A. (2015). Challenges of performance appraisal in higher education institutions: A case of Nkumba University. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(13), 117-124.

- Belotto, M. J. (2018). Data analysis methods for qualitative research: Managing the challenges of coding, interrater reliability, and thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 18(3), 205-222.
- Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (2023). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds.), *Personnel Selection in Organizations*. Jossey-Bass.
- Boswell, W. R., & Boudreau, J. W. (2021). Separating the developmental and evaluative performance appraisal roles: A model and test. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16(3), 391-412.
- Bracken, D. W., Rose, D. S., & Church, A. H. (2019). The evolution and devolution of 360-degree feedback. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 12(2), 251-276.
- Brett, J. F., & Atwater, L. E. (2020). Feedback processes in performance appraisal: A review and future directions. *Journal of Management*, 17(2), 343-358.
- Bretz, R. D., & Milkovich, G. T. (2023). Performance appraisal in large organizations: Practice and research implications. *Journal of Management*, 18(2), 321-349.
- Brown, M., & Benson, J. (2018). Managing to overload? Work overload and performance appraisal processes. *Group & Organization Management*, 28(3), 388-413.
- Cardy, R. L., & Dobbins, G. H. (2020). Performance appraisal: Alternative perspectives. *Taylor & Francis*.
- Cardy, R. L., & Dobbins, G. H. (2020). Performance Appraisal: Alternative Perspectives. *South-Western Publishing*.

- Cascio, W. F. (2020). *Managing Human Resources: Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits. McGraw-Hill Education.*
- Cohen-Charash, Y., & Spector, P. E. (2019). The role of justice in organizations: A meta-analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 86(2), 278-321.
- Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O., & Ng, K. Y. (2019). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 425-445.
- Culbertson, S. S., Henning, J. B., & Payne, S. C. (2023). Performance appraisal fairness: A two-study investigation of antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 28(4), 487-500.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior. Springer.*
- DeNisi, A. S., & Kluger, A. N. (2021). Feedback effectiveness: Can 360-degree appraisals be improved? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 35(2), 225-236.
- DeNisi, A. S., & Murphy, K. R. (2017). Performance appraisal and performance management: 100 years of progress? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421-433.
- Dessler, G. (2020). *Human Resource Management (16th ed.). Pearson Education.*
- Dougherty, K. J., & Natow, R. S. (2015). The politics of performance funding for higher education: Origins, discontinuations, and transformations. *Johns Hopkins University Press.*
- Dweck, C. S. (2017). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Ballantine Books.*

- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2017). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(9), 62-71.
- Fletcher, C. (2019). *Appraisal: An Individual Psychological Approach*. Routledge.
- Folger, R., & Cropanzano, R. (2018). *Organizational Justice and Human Resource Management*. SAGE Publications.
- Gilliland, S. W. (2020). The perceived fairness of selection systems: An organizational justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 694-734.
- Grant, A. M. (2020). The third 'generation' of workplace coaching: Creating a culture of quality conversations. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 13(1), 37-53.
- Greenberg, J. (2021). Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management*, 16(2), 399-432.
- Hayden, J. A. (2022). *Introduction to Health Behavior Theory*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Ilgen, D. R., & Davis, C. A. (2021). Bearing bad news: Reactions to negative performance feedback. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 70(3), 999-1025.
- Ilgen, D. R., Barnes-Farrell, J. L., & McKellin, D. B. (2022). Performance appraisal process research and practice: The main effects of rater and ratee. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(3), 350-376.
- Jackson, S. E., Schuler, R. S., & Jiang, K. (2019). An aspirational framework for strategic human resource management. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 1-56.

- Jex, S. M., & Britt, T. W. (2008). *Organizational Psychology: A Scientist-Practitioner Approach* (2nd ed.). *John Wiley & Sons*.
- Kasozi, A. B. K. (2023). *The politics of higher education in Uganda: Challenges and opportunities*. *Fountain Publishers*.
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. S. (2020). Feedback interventions: Toward the understanding of a double-edged sword. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29(1), 67-72.
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. S. (2020). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.
- Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. S. (2020). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.
- Latham, G. P., & Wexley, K. N. (2020). *Increasing productivity through performance appraisal*. *Addison-Wesley Publishing Company*.
- Levy, P. E., & Williams, J. R. (2017). The social context of performance appraisal: A review and framework for the future. *Journal of Management*, 30(6), 881-905.
- Lipponen, J., Wisse, B., & Jetten, J. (2018). The different ways in which a positive leader can make employees feel valued: Leader identification and the experience of work meaningfulness. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(1), 39-56.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2020). *A Theory of Goal Setting & Task Performance*. *Prentice-Hall*.

- London, M. (2020). *Job Feedback: Giving, Seeking, and Using Feedback for Performance Improvement*. *Psychology Press*.
- Mkumbo, K. A. K. (2009). Problems and prospects of implementing performance appraisal system in Tanzania's higher education institutions. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 7(1), 57-68.
- Mugagga, A., & Ssempebwa, J. (2016). Academic staff appraisal in Ugandan universities: Challenges and prospects. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, 8(2), 15-30.
- Neil, J. (2010). *Research Methods*. *CQ Press*.
- Nkumba University (NU). (2020). *Governance reforms and performance appraisal in Ugandan higher education*. *Nkumba University Press*.
- Porter, L. W., & Lawler, E. E. (2019). *Managerial Attitudes and Performance*. *Routledge*.
- Pulakos, E. D., & O'Leary, R. S. (2021). Why is performance management broken? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 14(2), 220-240.
- Robbins, S. P., & Coulter, M. (2019). *Management (14th ed.)*. *Pearson Education*.
- Rwothumio, J., Okaka, W., Kambaza, S., & Kyomukama, E. (2021, Feb). Influence of Performance Appraisal in Determining Academic Staff Performance in Public Universities in Uganda. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 3(1), 20-32.
doi:10.37284/ijar.3.1.281
- Scullen, S. E., Bergey, P. K., & Aiman-Smith, L. (2021). Forced distribution rating systems and the improvement of workforce potential: A baseline simulation. *Personnel Psychology*, 58(1), 1-32.

Smither, J. W., & London, M. (2019). *Performance management: Putting research into practice*.
Jossey-Bass.

Stone, D. N., Deadrick, D. L., Lukaszewski, K. M., & Johnson, G. R. (2018). The influence of technology on the future of human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(2), 216-231.

APPENDIX I: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Researcher : Doris Akampurira

Institution : Uganda Christian University

Date :

Introduction:

Welcome to the Semi-Structured Interview Guide for the study on the staff perception of performance appraisal in Nkumba University. This guide has been designed to explore various perceptions that staff have about the performance appraisal system within the context of NU. Your participation and insights are invaluable in contributing to our understanding of this critical topic and informing strategies for promoting enhanced performance.

Researcher Contact Information

Doris Akampurira

Student (Uganda Christian University)

Contact: 0706353458

Email : kyagabadoris@gmail.com

I request you to be truthful as possible when responding to the questions. The interview session will only take about 30 minutes of your time and all details you provide will be handled and managed with the greatest responsibility and confidentiality.

Your valuable insights will significantly contribute to enhancing our understanding of staff appraisal systems in NU, for which we are deeply grateful.

SECTION A: Background Information

1. Gender

Response	Male	Female

2. Age (in years)

20-30	31-40	41-50	Above 50

3. Period of service in NU (in years)

Below 2 years	2 and 5	6-10	Above 10

4. Level of education

Certificate	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	If others, specify

The effectiveness of the performance appraisal process in providing clear and actionable feedback to employees in NU.

1. How often do you receive performance feedback from your supervisor?
2. Can you describe the clarity of the feedback you receive during appraisals?
3. How actionable do you find the feedback provided during your performance appraisal?
4. Can you give an example of feedback you received that helped you improve your performance?
5. How does the feedback you receive align with your personal career goals?
6. What aspects of the feedback process do you find most beneficial for your development?
7. How well do you feel the feedback you receive addresses your specific job responsibilities?
8. Are there any areas where you feel the feedback process could be improved to better support your performance?

The transparency of the performance appraisal process in NU.

1. How clearly are the performance appraisal criteria communicated to you?
2. Do you feel you have a good understanding of how your performance is evaluated?
3. How transparent is the process of setting performance goals and expectations?
4. Can you describe any instances where you felt the appraisal process was not transparent?
5. How well are the outcomes of the performance appraisal communicated to you?
6. Do you have opportunities to discuss and understand the rationale behind your appraisal results?
7. How confident are you in the fairness of the appraisal process?
8. What measures do you think could be implemented to enhance the transparency of the appraisal process?

The efficiency of the performance appraisal process in facilitating continuous improvement in employee performance in NU.

1. How regularly does the performance appraisal process occur at NU?
2. How timely is the feedback provided after the appraisal process?
3. How well does the appraisal process help you identify areas for continuous improvement?
4. What resources or support does NU provide to help you act on the feedback received?
5. How does the appraisal process contribute to your ongoing professional development?
6. Can you describe any specific instances where the appraisal process led to significant improvements in your performance?
7. How effective do you find the appraisal process in setting and achieving new performance goals?

8. What changes would you suggest to make the appraisal process more effective in promoting continuous improvement?

Staff Perception of Performance Appraisal in Nkumba University

1. How would you describe your overall experience with the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University?
2. In your opinion, how fair and unbiased is the performance appraisal process?
3. How well do you feel the performance appraisal process reflects your actual job performance?
4. What aspects of the performance appraisal process do you find most beneficial?
5. Are there any elements of the appraisal process that you find particularly challenging or problematic?
6. How satisfied are you with the level of communication and feedback you receive during the appraisal process?
7. How does the performance appraisal process at Nkumba University impact your motivation and job satisfaction?
8. What suggestions do you have for improving the performance appraisal process to better meet your needs and expectations?
9. How well do you think the performance appraisal process supports your professional development and career progression?
10. How transparent do you find the criteria and procedures used in the performance appraisal process?

APPENDIX II: DOCUMENTARY REVIEW CHECKLIST

Document Type

- Performance appraisal policies and procedures
- Staff handbooks and guidelines
- Performance appraisal forms and templates
- Promotion and tenure guidelines
- Training and development programs
- Employee contracts and agreements
- Institutional strategic plans and reports
- Minutes of staff meetings and committee reports

Review Questions

- What are the stated purposes and objectives of performance appraisal in Nkumba University?
- What are the criteria used to evaluate staff performance?
- What are the methods used to collect data for performance appraisal?
- How are performance appraisal results used in decision-making (e.g., promotion, tenure, training)?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of staff, supervisors, and HR in the performance appraisal process?

- Are there any specific guidelines or procedures for addressing underperformance or poor appraisal results?
- How does the institution support staff development and growth through performance appraisal?
- Are there any inconsistencies or contradictions in the documents reviewed?