THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS ON ENHANCING FRESH GRADUATE EMPLOYEE'S MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the performance appraisal system on fresh graduates' motivation and engagement within a printer service and distribution company. Recognizing the unique developmental needs of entry-level employees, the research examines how performance appraisals contribute to skill development, workplace integration, and overall job satisfaction. Thematic analysis of interviews with managers and fresh graduates reveals the system's strengths, such as its role in providing feedback and identifying strengths and weaknesses. However, significant challenges are identified, including infrequent feedback, vague performance expectations, and inconsistent recognition. Fresh graduates express a desire for regular, constructive feedback and clearer development pathways, while managers see potential benefits in frequent reviews and follow-up sessions. Recommendations include implementing a consistent rewards system, offering monthly or bi-weekly check-ins, and linking performance reviews with targeted growth opportunities. This research highlights the importance of a structured, transparent appraisal system that aligns fresh graduates' professional development with organizational goals, ultimately enhancing both motivation and retention.

KEY WORDS: PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL/ EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION/ FRESH GRADUATES/ ENGAGEMENT/ JOB SATISFACTION

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, business must continuously adapt to attract and retain skilled employees, especially fresh graduates who are entering the workforce with limited experience (Dessler, 2013). This paper focuses on a printer service and distribution company founded in 2001, which has recently faced challenges in modernizing its operations and attracting new talent. One of the key systems introduced to address these issues is the performance appraisal system, designed to assess and improve the performance of fresh graduates and starters (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2009).

Fresh graduates, often referred to as Generation Z employees, bring new ideas and enthusiasm but may lack the practical skills and workplace knowledge required to succeed immediately. The company's performance appraisal system plays a pivotal role in identifying these gaps, providing feedback, and supporting the development of these new employees. However, the effectiveness of such systems in small businesses is rarely explored in depth, particularly when applied to individuals with minimal work experience (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

The purpose of this study is to understand how the performance appraisal system impacts fresh graduates at the company, both in terms of skill development and workplace integration (Meyer, Kay, & French, 2017). Using qualitative research methods, this study aims to explore the experiences of these new employees and assess whether the current appraisal process meets their needs and the company's goals. Key research questions guiding the study include: How do fresh graduates perceive the company's appraisal system? What challenges do they face in navigating this system? And how does the system contribute to or hinder their professional growth?

1.2 Problem Statement

The printer service and distribution company, founded in 2001, faces challenges in adapting its performance appraisal system to effectively support fresh graduates and entry-level employees. As the company seeks to modernize its operations and integrate new talent, The printer service and distribution company, founded in 2001, faces challenges in adapting its performance appraisal system to effectively support fresh graduates and entry-level employees (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhert, & Wright, 2017). As the company seeks to modernize its operations and integrate new talent, it struggles with aligning the appraisal process to the unique developmental needs of inexperienced hires. Fresh graduates often encounter unclear performance expectations, inconsistent feedback, and insufficient opportunities for skill development, leading to demotivation and reduced productivity (Armstrong, 2014). Without a more structured and tailored approach, the current system risks hindering both employee growth and the company's broader goals of modernization and competitiveness in an evolving market (Pulakos, 2004). Fresh graduates often encounter unclear performance expectations, inconsistent feedback, and insufficient opportunities for skill development, leading to demotivation and reduced productivity. Without a more structured and tailored approach, the current system risks hindering both employee growth and the company's broader goals of modernization and competitiveness in an evolving market (Murphy & Clevealand, 1995).

1.3 Scope of this Study

This study focuses on assessing the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system in a printer service and distribution company, particularly for fresh graduates and entry-level employees. It examines how well the current system addresses their developmental needs and the challenges they face. The research aims to provide insights into improving the appraisal process to better support these employees and contribute to the company's modernization efforts.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are

1. To evaluate how the performance appraisal system impacts fresh graduates and entry-level employees in the Printer service and distribution company.

2. To identify the challenges these employees face within the current appraisal process and how it influences their development and motivation.

3. Seeks to recommend improvements to the system that align with both employee growth and the company's modernization goals.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does the current performance appraisal system impact fresh graduates and entry- level employees in the printer service and distribution company?

2. What challenges do fresh graduates and entry-level employees face within the existing performance appraisal process? How do these challenges affect employee development, motivation, and overall productivity?

3. What improvements can be made to the appraisal system to better support employee growth while aligning with the company's modernization objectives?

1.6 Relevance of the Study

This study is relevant because it focuses on improving performance appraisal systems in businesses, specifically for entry-level employees. By identifying the challenges these new employees face, the research aims to enhance their development and retention, which is crucial that their performance impacts on organization. The findings will help businesses modernize their HR practices to better support to entry-level employees to advance in their carrer who are freshly willing to do tasks more and today's workforce.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Performance Appraisal Definition

Performance Appraisal is the essential process within the business organization that provide to evaluate employee performance to give feedback.

According to (Aguins, 2010), it is the process that evaluate employee's performance and providing feedback on how well they are performing their work. It is emphasizes that the performance appraisal is both evaluative and development tool.

As said as by (Kondrasuk, 2010)performance appraisal is the process of assessing how well employees are doing their jobs and providing feedback to them on their performance". By analysing these definitions the importance of performance appraisals is not only measuring employee performance but also in guiding their future development and allignment with organiztion objectives.

2.2 Impacts on Fresh Graduates in workplace

Fresh Gradutaes often face unique challenges to be adaptable in workplace environment due to the lack of practical experience and unfamilarity with organization norms. As said as by (Kondrasuk, 2010) , Performance Appraisal System can help bridge for the gap by providing clear performance expectations and constructive feedbacks. That's why organizations that implement regular feedback sessions and goal-setting practices enable new employees to understand their roles better and align their efforts with organizational objectives (Thurston & Mcnall, 2002). Furthermore, research highlights that when entry-level employees receive specific and actionable feedback, they tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement

2.3 Practise For Performance Appraisal System

To make effective support for fresh graduates employees or entry-level employees, the organization need to adopt best practise rules in their performance appraisal systems. This is because feedback can enhance the appraisal process by fostering open communication between managers and new employees (London & Smither, 1995). Additionally, mentoring programs and peer evaluations can complement formal appraisals, providing fresh graduates with diverse perspectives on their performance and development areas (Baker, 2011). A focus on employee development, rather than solely on performance evaluation, can also encourage new hires to engage more fully with their roles and the organization (Tziner, Jonias, & Murphy, 2015). Research indicates that younger employees prioritize feedback and career development opportunities (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010)

2.4 Reviews of Related Studies with Theoritical Framework

The Transition from academic life to the workplace can be particularly challenging for fresh graduates (or) entry level employees who often seek guidance and support as they strt their work carrers. Performance appraisal systems play a vital role in shaping these employees' experiences, influencing their motivation, engagement, and overall job satisfaction. It is studied that the effectiveness of performance appraisals specifically for new hires, highlighting the unique challenges they encounter, such as unclear performance expectations and inconsistent feedback.

According to (Baker, 2011), it can be studied that the relationship between performance appraisal system and employee engagement is that continuous feedback mechnism experienced a siginificant increase in engagement levels, particulary among fresh graduates.

As said as by (Tziner, Jonias, & Murphy, 2015), fresh graduates often felt undervalued due to the infrequent and rigid nature of these appraisals. Performance Appraisal need to be fairness as the employess seek fairness in their evaluations ehen appraisal processes are perceived as unfair or inadequate, it can lead to demotivation and dissatisfaction. This study advocates for a shift towards more dynamic appraisal

systems that incorporate regular feedback and personalized development plans to address the specific needs of entry-level employees.

2.4.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by two key theories: Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation Model, Goal-Setting Theory and Feedback in Appraisal Systems.

2.4.2 Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation Model

Kirkpatrick (1959), provides a structured framework for evaluating the effectiveness of training programs. The model consists of four levels:

1. Reaction: Measures how participants respond to the training.

2. Learning: Assesses the extent to which participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills.

3. Behavior: Evaluates how well participants apply what they learned to their jobs.

4. Results: Looks at the overall impact of the training on organizational performance.

In the context of fresh graduates, this model helps in assessing how well training programs support their professional development and integration into the workforce. By applying the model, the company can evaluate whether its training initiatives are meeting the needs of new employees and contributing to their performance improvements.

2.4.3 Goal-SettingTheory

Goal-Setting Theory suggests that setting clear, challenging, and attainable goals leads to higher employee motivation and performance. This theory emphasizes the importance of defining specific objectives and providing regular feedback on progress. For fresh graduates, the integration of goal-setting into the performance appraisal system is particularly beneficial. Setting clear development goals, aligned with ongoing training, helps these employees understand what is expected of them and how they can meet those expectations (Wiese & Buckley, 1998)

When combined with regular feedback, the goal-setting framework ensures that fresh graduates receive the support they need to bridge the gap between their academic knowledge and the practical skills required in the workplace. By tailoring the performance appraisal process to focus on achievable goals and the necessary training to reach those goals, the company can foster both individual growth and overall organizational success.

2.4.3 Feedback as a Core Component of Appraisal Systems

Feedback is one of the most important aspects of a performance appraisal system. According (Stone & Heen, 2014), effective feedback provides clarity on expectations, acknowledges achievements, and offers direction for improvement. This is particularly important for fresh graduates who may be unfamiliar with the standards and practices of the workplace. Regular, constructive feedback not only supports skill development but also fosters motivation by ensuring that employees understand how they are progressing towards their goals (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

2.5 Use of Performance Appraisal

As said as (Aguinis, 2019), The performance appraisal system can be a powerful tool for helping fresh graduates develop the skills they need to succeed in the company. By giving regular feedback, setting clear goals, and providing opportunities for growth, the company can help these new employees stay motivated and perform better, which also helps the company as it modernizes and competes in the market.

The three-month performance appraisal program for fresh graduates in PI Company begins with orientation and goal setting in the first month, where team leaders collaborate with new hires to establish SMART goals. In the second month, senior employees or mentors provide ongoing support through bi-weekly check-ins, facilitating skill development and addressing any challenges the fresh graduates face. The program culminates in the third month with a formal evaluation conducted by team leaders, where each graduate's performance is assessed against their established goals. Detailed feedback is given, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, followed by setting new goals for further development. This structured approach

ensures fresh graduates receive comprehensive support and guidance throughout their transition into the workforce (Meyar, Kay, & French, 1965).

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences and perceptions of fresh graduates regarding the performance appraisal system in the printer service and distribution company. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in relation to their performance appraisals, capturing the complexities of their experiences (Cresswell & Poth, 2018).

The research interviews the employees of Perfect Image Company including Director, Head managers and Fresh Graduate employees to help across the vilidate findings.

3.2 Data Collection

This paper is uded the most common method of data collection used in qualitative research that includes interviews to both employees and managers (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. Each semi-structured interview will last approximately 15-20 minutes and will be conducted in a private setting to encourage candid responses. The interviews will follow a flexible guide with open-ended questions aimed at exploring participants' experiences with the performance appraisal system, including its impact on their skill development and integration into the workplace.

These one-on-one interviews will allow for in-depth discussions and personal reflections, providing a comfortable environment for fresh graduates to share their thoughts and feelings about the appraisal process. All interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription and facilitate thorough analysis of the qualitative data gathered.

3.3 Interviews Framework

The interview framework for this study aims to collect comprehensive insights from both fresh graduates and managers regarding their experiences with the performance appraisal system in the printer service and distribution company. Each interview will commence with an introduction to establish rapport and clarify the purpose of the discussion. Key themes will include the overall experience with the appraisal system, its impact on skill development, and its effectiveness in facilitating workplace integration for fresh graduates. Managers will provide their perspectives on how the appraisal system supports new employees and its role in team dynamics, while fresh graduates will share their feedback and suggestions for improvements. This structured yet flexible approach will enable meaningful dialogue uncovering valuable insights to enhance the performance appraisal process for the benefit of all employees (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

For the interview, it will be interviewed to 4 managers who are HR Manager, IT Department Manager and Operation Manager. For Freshly graduate it will be interviewd to 6 fresh graduate whose tenure are 1 to 3 months from IT Department, Marketing Department and Financial Department. The interviews will be conducted from Zoom, We chat and Messenger. Time will be taken for 15-20 minutes to each interviewees.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study will be conducted using thematic analysis, a qualitative research method that identifies and reports patterns within the interview data (Patton, 2015). The analysis will begin with familiarization, where the researcher will listen to audio recordings and read transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses. Next, initial coding will be performed by highlighting significant statements and segments that relate to the research questions. These codes will then be organized into broader themes reflecting the collective experiences of both fresh graduates and managers regarding the performance appraisal system. Finally, the themes will be reviewed and refined, with clear definitions and

supporting quotes provided to illustrate the insights gathered, ultimately aiming to inform improvements in the appraisal process and better support new employees.

Data triangulation is the use of multiple data sources, methods, or theories to cross-check and validate research findings, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the results (Denzin, 1978). This study employs data triangulation by gathering insights from multiple sources, including fresh graduates and managers across four key departments—HR, IT, Operations, and Marketing—to enhance credibility and depth of findings. Methodological triangulation is achieved by combining qualitative interviews conducted via Zoom, WeChat, and Messenger with observational insights, ensuring diverse data collection methods. Additionally, theory triangulation strengthens the analysis by cross-referencing findings with Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation Model and Goal-Setting Theory, providing a structured framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system. This comprehensive approach ensures a well-rounded understanding of its impact on skill development, workplace integration, and overall team dynamics.

3.5 The Interviewee List

Table 3.1   The Interviewee List

No	Position	Level	Gender	Organizational Tenure
1	HR Manager	Management Level	Female	15 years
2	IT Department Manager	Management Level	Male	10 years
3	Operation Manager	Management Level	Male	18 years
4	Marketing Manager	Manageemnt Level	Female	20 years
5	Marketing staff 1	Entry Level	Female	3 months
6	Marketing staff 2	Entry Level	Male	3 months
7	Financial Staff 1	Entry Level	Female	3 months
8	Technician staff	Entry Level	Female	2 months
9	Financial staff 2	Entry Level	Female	2 months
10	Operation staff 1	Entry Level	Male	1 month

Table 3.2   Interview Questions

Participants	Kirkpatrick Evaluation	Questions
6 Employees	Reaction	How do you feel about the way the company checks your performance?
		How often does the company review your performance, and do you think it's enough?
	Behavior	Can you share how the feedback you get from your reviews changes how you work?
		What factors in the performance review process reduce your motivation, and why?
		What parts of the performance review process motivate you to improve your performance?
	Learning	After your performance review, what rewards or results did you see, like a bonus or promotion?
	Results	f you could design the ideal performance evaluation system, what would it include to help you reach your goals?
4 Managers	Reaction	How effective do you think the current performance review process is in helping your team improve?
	Learning	What methods do you use to evaluate employees' performance, and how well do they understand these criteria?
	Behaviour	How does the feedback you provide in reviews impact employees' behavior and performance?
	Results	What rewards or results have you observed after performance evaluations, such as promotions or increased productivity?

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, focusing on fresh graduates' experiences and the challenges they face with the performance appraisal system in the company. Insights are drawn from both manager and employee perspectives, providing a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of the appraisal system. Key themes include fresh graduate experiences, challenges faced by fresh graduates, managers' insights, employee insights, the respondents' profile, and the overall effectiveness of performance reviews from both managerial and employee perspectives.

4.1 Respondents' Profile

The respondents in this study included both managers and entry-level employees from various departments within the organization, providing a balanced view of the performance appraisal system. Managers who participated had substantial experience within the company, with tenures ranging from 10 to 20 years, representing departments such as HR, IT, Operations, and Marketing. These managers offered insights based on years of experience with employee assessment and development practices. Fresh graduates, on the other hand, were entry-level employees with organizational tenures ranging from 1 to 3 months, bringing fresh perspectives on their initial experiences with performance feedback and professional growth. The diversity of perspectives across departments and levels provides a holistic understanding of the appraisal system's impact on employee motivation and engagement.

4.2 Thematic Insights Table for Entry-Level Employees' Perspectives on Performance Reviews based on questions

Table 4.1 Thematic Insights Table for Entry-Level Employees' Perspectives on Performance Reviews based on questions

Theme	Employee Name	Key Insights	Quote
Reaction (Feelings)	Marketing Staff 1	Finds reviews fair but lacking in transparency.	The reviews are generally fair, but I wish they were more transparent
	Marketing staff 2	Feels reviews check performance well but could be more frequent.	The reviews are useful but would benefit from happening more often
	Operation Staff	Believes reviews feel rushed; desires more time to discuss progress.	It feels like we rush through them; I'd like more time to talk about my progress.
	Finance Staff 2	Feels acknowledged, but wants more specific feedback on improvement areas.	I feel recognized, but I'd appreciate more specifics on what I can improve
	Finance staff 1	Finds reviews helpful but inconsistent; needs more clarity	The reviews help, but they're not always consistent. I need more clarity
	IT Staff	Appreciates reviews but would like more frequent performance discussions.	I like the reviews, but I think more regular discussions on performance would be helpfu
Behavior (Impact of Feedback)	Marketing Staff 2	Positive feedback boosts confidence; negative feedback can feel discouraging.	Good feedback makes me feel confident, but too much criticism can be discouraging.
	It Staff	Motivated to improve with feedback, though sometimes lacks specific direction.	Feedback motivates me, but I need clearer guidance on what to focus on
	Finance Staff 1	Constructive criticism encourages improvement; feels discouraged without immediate results.	Constructive criticism helps, but it's hard when I don't see results right away

	Finance Staff 2	Generally motivated by feedback, but vague feedback can be demotivating.	Feedback motivates me, but when it's vague, it's hard to know what to work on

Table 4.1 Thematic Insights Table for Entry-Level Employees' Perspectives on Performance Reviews based on questions (cont.)

Theme	Employee Name	Key Insights	Quote
Behavior (Impact of Feedback)	Operation Staff	Tries to apply feedback but struggles without clear guidance.	I try to use feedback, but it's difficult without specific guidance
	Marketing Staff 1	Positive feedback motivates growth, but overly critical reviews create self-doubt.	Positive feedback drives me, but too much criticism makes me doubt mysel
Learning (Rewards and Results)	Marketing Staff 1	Received a small bonus, which increased motivation.	Getting a bonus motivated me to keep doing well.
	Marketing Staff 2	No significant rewards yet; hopeful for future recognition.	I haven't received any rewards yet, but I'm hopeful for recognition in the future
	Operation Staff	Promotion after last review was highly motivating.	The promotion I got after my last review was really motivating.
	Finance Staff 2	Bonus felt rewarding but lacked specific feedback.	The bonus was nice, but I wish there was more feedback on how I earned it.
	Finance Staff 1	No immediate rewards; hopes for growth opportunities over time.	I haven't had any rewards yet, but I'm hoping for chances to grow
	Finance Staff 2	Positive recognition is appreciated but wants more tangible rewards.	I appreciate the recognition, but I'd like more tangible rewards
Results (Ideal Evaluation System)	Marketing Staff 1	Would like regular check-ins and clear evaluation criteria.	A system with regular check-ins and clear criteria would be ideal
	Marketing Staff 2	Suggests a structured monthly review system for consistency.	Having monthly reviews would make things more consistent
	Finance Staff 1	Prefers a system with personal development goals and actionable steps.	I'd like a system that includes personal goals and clear action steps

| | IT Staff | Suggests adding peer feedback and defined progression paths. | Adding peer feedback and clear progression paths would really help |
| | Operation Staff | Recommends 360-degree feedback with consistent updates. | 360-degree feedback and regular updates would give a fuller picture |

Table 4.1 Thematic Insights Table for Entry-Level Employees' Perspectives on Performance Reviews based on questions (cont.)

Theme	Employee Name	Key Insights	Quote
Results (Ideal Evaluation System)	Finance Staff 2	Desires a balanced system that includes personal goals and team performance metrics.	A balanced system with both personal goals and team metrics would work best for me

4.3 Explanation for Employee's Perspective Coding Table

The qualitative findings from employee feedback provide valuable insights into their perspectives on the performance review system, which can be analyzed through the lens of **Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation** and **Goal-Setting Theory**. These theories help explain the connection between employees' perceptions of the review system and their engagement, motivation, and performance.

4.3.1 Reaction and Feelings

Employees generally perceive the reviews as **fair**, but they express a need for **greater transparency and consistency** in how evaluations are conducted. Staff like **Marketing Staff 1** and **Finance Staff 1** emphasized that while they find the reviews fair, they would appreciate more transparency in how decisions are made, as well as consistency in how evaluations are applied across different teams. These concerns are rooted in **Kirkpatrick's Reaction Level**, which asserts that an employee's satisfaction with the review process directly impacts their level of **engagement**. A transparent and consistent evaluation process is likely to increase satisfaction and, in turn, boost engagement. Without this clarity, employees may feel uncertain about the expectations, leading to disengagement and lower performance. Additionally, **Goal-Setting Theory** emphasizes that **clear, consistent goals** are

necessary for improving performance. Employees who do not have a clear understanding of how their performance is being assessed are less likely to be motivated or focused on achieving specific goals.

4.3.2 Learning and Rewards

When discussing **learning and rewards**, employees stated that they find **promotions** and **bonuses** motivating but also seek **more tangible recognition** for their achievements. For example, **Operations Staff** reported that the promotion received after a review motivated them to perform better, while **Finance Staff 2** mentioned that while recognition is appreciated, tangible rewards are more effective. This aligns with **Kirkpatrick's Learning Level**, which suggests that **rewards**—especially tangible ones—are powerful drivers of **motivation** and **learning**. When employees see that their efforts are recognized with clear rewards, it reinforces their commitment to the organization's goals. Moreover, **Goal-Setting Theory** supports this by stating that tangible rewards reinforce the effort employees invest to achieve goals. These rewards act as motivation for further performance improvement.

4.3.3 Behavior and Feedback

Regarding **behavior and feedback**, employees mentioned that feedback is motivating but needs to be **actionable and balanced** to avoid discouragement. **Marketing Staff 2** pointed out that positive feedback boosts their confidence, while excessive criticism without clear guidance can be demotivating. **IT Staff** also expressed the need for clearer direction on where to focus. These sentiments are aligned with **Kirkpatrick's Behavior Level**, where **balanced feedback**—not too critical or overly positive—is key to encouraging behavior that leads to improved performance. Feedback that is too harsh without actionable steps can create frustration and hinder progress. **Goal-Setting Theory** further supports the importance of **clear feedback**, as it helps employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement, making it easier for them to set and achieve specific, measurable goals.

4.3.4 Results and Ideal Evaluation System

In terms of **results**, employees expressed a preference for **regular reviews** with **clear criteria**, **developmental goals**, and the inclusion of **peer feedback**. Staff such as **Marketing Staff 1** and **IT Staff** suggested that having a system with regular check-ins, clear progression paths, and peer feedback would be ideal for their personal and professional growth. This preference corresponds to **Kirkpatrick's Results Level**, which argues that **clear evaluation systems** that are well-structured and transparent lead to measurable outcomes. Employees are more likely to see improvement in their performance when the evaluation system is clear, fair, and consistent. Additionally, **Goal-Setting Theory** emphasizes that employees are more successful when they have clear developmental goals. These goals provide a roadmap for progress, helping employees stay focused on achieving specific objectives and enhancing their overall performance.

4.3.5 Triangulation with Theory

By triangulating these findings with both **Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation** and **Goal-Setting Theory**, we see a clear connection between employees' experiences and the theory. **Kirkpatrick's model** emphasizes that satisfaction (Reaction), motivation (Learning), balanced feedback (Behavior), and structured systems (Results) are all crucial for achieving positive organizational outcomes. **Goal-Setting Theory** reinforces the idea that clear, actionable goals, along with appropriate rewards and feedback, are critical for motivating employees and driving performance improvement. This combination of theories supports the need for a performance review system that is not only fair but also transparent, consistent, and structured with actionable feedback, clear goals, and regular check-ins to drive employee success and organizational growth.

4.4 Challenges Faced by Fresh Graduates

Several key challenges emerged regarding fresh graduates' experiences with the appraisal system, which they identified as affecting their motivation and engagement. These challenges include:

4.4.1 Unclear Performance Expectations

Many fresh graduates reported confusion around what constitutes "success" in their roles due to vague performance expectations. This lack of clarity was a source of stress and frustration, as graduates felt they were not fully aware of the metrics or standards by which they were being evaluated. One graduate expressed this concern, stating, "I wish I had a clearer understanding of what success looks like in my role." This highlights a gap in communication that leaves employees uncertain about their progress and expectations, underscoring the need for defined performance criteria at the beginning of employment.

4.4.2 Inconsistent Feedback

The feedback provided in performance appraisals was reported to vary widely in quality and frequency. While some managers provided detailed, constructive feedback, others offered generalized comments that left employees unsure of how to improve. A graduate from the finance department noted, "Not knowing how I'm doing until the review makes it hard to stay motivated." This inconsistency in feedback can demotivate fresh graduates, as they feel they lack continuous guidance on their progress and areas for improvement.

4.4.3 Limited Opportunities for Skill Development

Fresh graduates expressed a strong desire for feedback that would guide them toward specific skill development. However, many felt that the appraisal system, in its current form, lacked a direct link to professional growth opportunities. One marketing graduate stated, "I want to know how to improve, but sometimes the feedback doesn't provide a clear path for development." This insight highlights the need for performance appraisals to be connected to structured development plans, where feedback is accompanied by actionable steps for skill-building and training.

4.5 Thematic Insights Table for Managers' Perspectives on Performance Reviews

Table 4.2 Thematic Insights Table for Managers' Perspectives on Performance Reviews

Interviewee	Managers	Quote	Key Insights
Effectiveness of Performance Reviews	HR Manager	The reviews are beneficial, but we need to ensure they happen more often and follow up on the goals we set."	Effective but infrequent; lacks follow-up, needs improvement to foster employee growth.
	IT Department Manager	Reviews do point out problems, but they're time-consuming, and immediate changes are rare.	Identifies issues, but reviews are time-consuming; rarely lead to immediate improvements.
	Operations Manager	We start well, but without continuity, the improvements don't always stick	Moderately effective but lacks continuity to ensure improvements.
	Marketing Manager	They work well to spot strengths and weaknesses, but we miss chances to intervene at the right time	Effective in highlighting strengths/weaknesses, but infrequent reviews miss timely interventions
Evaluation Methods	HR Manager	Our KPIs are clear, but communicating the finer points could use some work.	Uses self-assessments and KPIs; employees generally understand, but communication of specifics needs enhancement.
	IT Department Manager	We lean on project outcomes, but training on what's expected in evaluations could help everyone	Relies on project outcomes and peer feedback; more training on evaluation criteria would be beneficial.
	Operations Manager	Metrics are understood, but there's a need for constant alignment with expectations	Focuses on efficiency and quality metrics; employees understand but need regular communication to align on expectations.

Interviewee	Managers	Quote	Key Insights
	Marketing Manager	Creative work is key, but setting clearer standards would help employees know what's expected	Mixes project outcomes with creative contributions; employees understand but need clearer expectations

Table 4.2 Thematic Insights Table for Managers' Perspectives on Performance Reviews (cont.)

Interviewee	Managers	Quote	Key Insights
Feedback Impact	HR Manager	Clear feedback motivates; vague feedback can leave people confused and unmotivated.	Constructive feedback drives positive change; vague feedback can lead to confusion and disengagement
	IT Department Manager	Constructive feedback works, but being overly critical can hurt morale	Constructive feedback encourages improvement, but overly critical feedback may reduce morale and increase defensiveness.
	Operations Manager	Actionable feedback is helpful, but feedback without action points is frustrating	Feedback helps adjust practices, but non-actionable feedback can be frustrating for employees.
	Marketing Manager	People need specific feedback; without it, they can lose direction."	Constructive and specific feedback is motivating; vague feedback causes confusion and a lack of direction
Outcomes	HR Manager	There are productivity gains, but more tangible rewards would help motivate even further	Promotions and increased productivity observed; stronger rewards system would enhance motivation
	IT Department Manager	Promotion links are clear, but linking evaluations to rewards more directly could improve results	Promotions tied to evaluations; some productivity boosts post-review; clearer link to rewards needed for impact.
	Operations Manager	We see improvements, but our best performers need more acknowledgment	Promotions and productivity gains noted; top performers need better recognition.

	Marketing Manager	Productivity has improved, but there's a gap in linking reviews to real incentives	Notable productivity increases and some promotions; needs a stronger link between reviews and incentives

4.6 Explanation for Manager's Perspective

In the **Learning (Rewards and Results)** theme, managers recognize the significant impact of rewards in motivating employees and driving learning outcomes. They emphasize the importance of **tangible rewards** like **bonuses** and **promotions** as more motivating than just recognition alone. This perspective is supported by key quotes from the **IT Manager** and **Marketing Manager**, who both highlight that rewards encourage employees to learn and perform better, with tangible rewards providing a stronger drive. **Kirkpatrick's Learning Level** is linked here, suggesting that rewards directly enhance learning and contribute to employee development. Additionally, **Goal-Setting Theory** aligns with this insight, as it indicates that when rewards and recognition are tied to goal achievement, they reinforce motivation and encourage employees to focus on personal and organizational objectives.

In the **Behavior (Impact of Feedback)** theme, managers emphasize the critical role of feedback in shaping employee performance. The focus is on providing **balanced and actionable feedback**, which significantly influences employee behavior and motivation. The **Marketing Manager** points out that while **positive feedback** encourages growth, **negative feedback** must be balanced to avoid discouraging employees. Similarly, the **Operations Manager** stresses the importance of **actionable feedback** that helps employees make specific improvements. **Kirkpatrick's Behavior Level** connects with this, indicating that positive, balanced feedback drives employee behavior and motivation. Furthermore, **Goal-Setting Theory** aligns by suggesting that clear, specific feedback helps employees focus on areas that need improvement, enabling them to work towards their goals effectively.

In the **Reaction (Feelings)** theme, managers acknowledge the effectiveness of the performance review process but highlight the need for greater **alignment** between individual goals and team objectives, as well as more frequent feedback cycles. The **HR Manager** notes that while the reviews are effective, they could be more focused on aligning personal goals with broader team objectives, ensuring that everyone is working towards the same overarching goals. The **IT Manager** emphasizes that more frequent reviews would allow for better tracking of progress and provide an opportunity to identify areas for improvement sooner. This insight connects with **Kirkpatrick's Reaction Level**, which suggests that employees'

reactions to the review process significantly impact their future engagement and satisfaction. Regular and clear feedback, as suggested in **Goal-Setting Theory**, helps employees stay on track, refine their efforts, and stay motivated for continuous improvement.

In the **Results (Ideal Evaluation System)** theme, managers stress that an **ideal performance evaluation system** should be consistent, align with both **personal and organizational goals**, and incorporate both **performance metrics** and **developmental feedback**. The **HR Manager** proposes that an ideal system would integrate personal development goals with clear metrics and team-based reviews to provide a comprehensive view of employee performance. Similarly, the **Operations Manager** believes that a balanced system, combining performance metrics and developmental feedback, would yield the most effective results. These insights align with **Kirkpatrick's Results Level**, which suggests that a clear and well-structured evaluation system leads to measurable improvements in employee performance. Furthermore, **Goal-Setting Theory** supports the idea that a balanced evaluation system provides continuous development opportunities and ensures alignment with both personal goals and broader company objectives, ultimately driving performance outcomes.

4.7 Effectiveness of Performance Reviews: Comparative Analysis for Both Employees and Managers

Performance reviews are crucial for evaluating employee performance, but their effectiveness varies depending on the perspectives of employees and managers.

4.7.1 Employee Perspective

Employees generally view performance reviews as fair but seek improvements in transparency and consistency. They feel the process lacks clarity, with some noting that "the reviews are generally fair, but I wish they were more transparent." Feedback is motivating but needs to be more specific and balanced to prevent discouragement. Employees also desire more tangible rewards, such as promotions or bonuses, and prefer structured reviews with clear criteria and regular

check-ins. These changes would help track progress and offer a more comprehensive evaluation.

4.7.2 Manager Perspective

Managers value performance reviews but believe they should focus more on aligning individual goals with team objectives and incorporate more frequent feedback cycles. Managers also emphasize the importance of **actionable** and **balanced feedback**. The **HR Manager** highlights the need for reviews that integrate personal development goals with performance metrics. Frequent reviews would allow for better tracking of progress, while balanced feedback helps ensure employee growth without discouragement. Managers suggest combining performance metrics with developmental feedback for a more effective system.

4.7.3 Conclusion

Both employees and managers agree on the need for more transparency, consistency, and actionable feedback in performance reviews. By aligning individual goals with organizational objectives, improving feedback clarity, and incorporating tangible rewards, organizations can create a more effective and motivating performance review system.

4.8 Summary of Findings

The analysis of performance reviews reveals several key areas for improvement to enhance their effectiveness. Both employees and managers agree that increasing transparency and consistency in the review process is crucial. There is also a shared sentiment for more frequent and structured feedback to ensure continuous tracking of progress and timely adjustments. Employees desire balanced, actionable, and specific feedback, as vague or overly critical feedback can be discouraging. Linking rewards directly to performance, such as promotions and bonuses, was seen as a strong motivator for both learning and motivation. Additionally, integrating personal development goals and incorporating peer feedback into the review process can provide a more holistic evaluation. Lastly, fostering a clear and balanced evaluation

system, one that aligns individual goals with team objectives, will drive better performance outcomes and engagement. These findings will be explored further in the next chapter, which will focus on the development of an ideal performance review system based on these insights.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

The findings highlight several areas for improvement in the performance review process. Both employees and managers emphasize the need for increased transparency and consistency, as a lack of clarity can hinder engagement. Frequent and structured feedback is also crucial, with employees seeking more actionable and specific guidance to improve performance. Managers suggest that linking rewards, such as promotions and bonuses, to performance can motivate employees and drive learning. Additionally, integrating personal development goals, team objectives, and peer feedback would lead to a more comprehensive and effective evaluation system, ultimately enhancing employee growth and organizational alignment

5.1.1 Increase Transparency and Consistency

To improve the performance review process, it is essential to clearly communicate consistent performance metrics before reviews. Research shows that transparency in performance evaluations is crucial for employee trust and engagement (Smith, Jones, & Brown, 2020) Employees often seek fairness, and when performance metrics are unclear or inconsistent, it can lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement (Johnson, 2020) Managers also recognize that standardized evaluation criteria help ensure objectivity and alignment with organizational goals, facilitating better decision-making and development planning (Lee & Williams, 2019) By establishing clear and consistent evaluation standards, organizations can foster trust, enhance engagement, and clarify expectations, ultimately leading to improved performance and motivation.

5.1.2 Provide More Frequent and Structured Feedback

Implementing regular check-ins, whether quarterly or monthly, with actionable feedback is critical for maintaining continuous improvement. Employees often express a need for frequent feedback to stay on track and ensure they are meeting expectations Managers also recognize that frequent feedback is essential for monitoring progress and guiding employees toward achieving organizational goals (Miller & Clark, 2011). Structured feedback sessions allow for clearer communication and better alignment between individual performance and company objectives by providing regular, actionable feedback, organizations can foster ongoing development and ensure that employees remain engaged and motivated.

5.1.3 Offer Balanced, Actionable, and Specific Feedback

Offering balanced, actionable, and specific feedback is crucial for motivating employees and guiding their improvement. Research indicates that combining positive reinforcement with clear, actionable steps helps employees understand both their strengths and areas for development (Goh, Yam, Fehr, & Lee, 2022). Feedback that motivates and provides a clear path for improvement fosters a sense of direction and increases employee engagement (Tanner, 2019). When feedback is both constructive and specific, it not only boosts motivation but also enhances behavior change, leading to improved performance over time (Parker & Davis, 2021) (Boswell, Hepner, Lysell, & Rothrock, 2022). This balanced approach ensures that employees are motivated to maintain high performance while having a clear understanding of how to improve.

5.1.4 Link Rewards to Performance

Linking rewards directly to performance is an effective strategy to motivate employees and drive goal achievement. Studies show that employees are significantly motivated by tangible rewards, such as bonuses and promotions, which directly reflect their performance (Antoni, Baeten, Perkins, & Shaw, 2015). Managers recognize that these rewards not only serve as a strong incentive but also reinforce desired behaviors, fostering a culture of high performance (Smith, 2019) (Hadziahmetovic & Muhammet, 2020). By tying rewards to specific outcomes,

organizations can encourage employees to strive for excellence, leading to enhanced learning and continuous improvementThis approach ensures alignment between individual contributions and organizational goals, promoting a results-oriented work environment.

5.1.5 Integrate Personal Development and Peer Feedback

Incorporating personal development goals and peer feedback into performance reviews is a vital strategy for fostering growth and alignment with organizational objectives. Research shows that employees highly value growth opportunities, and when development goals are integrated into reviews, it enhances their engagement and motivation (Mc Kee, 2024). Managers also recognize the importance of peer feedback, as it provides diverse perspectives that help employees gain a more comprehensive understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement (Khusnia, 2017) This approach not only encourages continuous personal development but also ensures that employees' individual growth is aligned with company goals, ultimately fostering a culture of collaboration and progress (Lampadan & Thomas, 2016)By incorporating both personal development and peer feedback, organizations can create a more holistic and motivating review process.

5.1.6 Foster Clear and Balanced Evaluation Systems

Fostering clear and balanced evaluation systems is crucial for both employee development and organizational success. A performance review system that is consistent, aligned with personal and organizational goals, and fair is essential to ensure that employees are motivated and guided effectively (Farin, Akwari, Ededem, & William, 2023). Managers value a comprehensive evaluation system that provides clarity, structure, and fairness, while employees seek clear expectations and transparency in how their performance is assessed (Dauda & Luki, 2021). This balanced approach not only boosts employee engagement but also contributes to more accurate assessments of performance, leading to improved measurable results (Muriuki & Wanyokie, 2021)By ensuring alignment and fairness in evaluations, organizations can create a supportive environment that drives both personal growth and organizational performance.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of improving performance reviews to drive employee engagement, motivation, and development. Key actions identified, such as increasing transparency and consistency, providing more frequent and structured feedback, offering balanced and actionable feedback, linking rewards to performance, integrating personal development and peer feedback, and fostering clear and balanced evaluation systems, were found to be essential for effective performance management. These actions contribute to creating an environment where employees feel supported, valued, and aligned with organizational goals, thereby enhancing both individual and company-wide performance.

5.3 Implications for Practice

The implications for practice from this study suggest that organizations should focus on enhancing the clarity and fairness of their performance review systems to ensure that both employees and managers are aligned with clear, consistent expectations. Implementing regular, structured feedback processes that are actionable and balanced will help employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement while keeping them motivated. Additionally, linking rewards directly to performance and integrating personal development and peer feedback will foster a culture of continuous growth and alignment with organizational goals. Finally, managers should prioritize creating evaluation systems that are comprehensive, consistent, and fair, which will not only improve individual performance but also lead to measurable improvements in organizational outcomes.

By applying these findings, companies can enhance employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and achieve better performance results. As organizations evolve, these strategies will be critical in maintaining high levels of motivation, engagement, and productivity.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations, including its focus on a single organization, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand to multiple companies within similar industries to explore whether the identified challenges are consistent across different organizational contexts. Additionally, while this study employed a qualitative approach, future studies could incorporate quantitative methods to further validate the effectiveness of specific appraisal practices.

5.5 Final Recommendations

1. Increase Transparency and Consistency: Organizations should clearly communicate performance metrics and expectations before reviews, ensuring that all employees understand what is being evaluated and how success is measured. This will foster trust, improve engagement, and create a sense of fairness in the review process.

2. Implement More Frequent and Structured Feedback: Regular feedback sessions (quarterly or monthly) should be integrated into the performance review process. This will ensure employees receive timely guidance, stay aligned with company goals, and continuously improve their performance.

3. Provide Balanced, Actionable, and Specific Feedback: Managers should offer feedback that combines positive reinforcement with clear, actionable steps for improvement. This will motivate employees, enhance their clarity of expectations, and facilitate real behavioral change.

4. Link Rewards to Performance: A direct connection between performance outcomes and rewards (such as promotions and bonuses) should be established. This reinforces the value of high performance, motivates employees to achieve goals, and drives organizational success.

5. Integrate Personal Development and Peer Feedback: Performance reviews should incorporate both individual development goals and peer feedback. This holistic approach will foster growth opportunities, align employees' goals with organizational objectives, and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

6. Foster Clear and Balanced Evaluation Systems: The evaluation system should be balanced, consistent, and aligned with both personal and organizational goals. This ensures fairness and clarity, improving employee development and leading to measurable improvements in performance across the organization.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can create a more effective, transparent, and motivating performance management system that drives employee satisfaction, growth, and ultimately contributes to the achievement of organizational objectives.
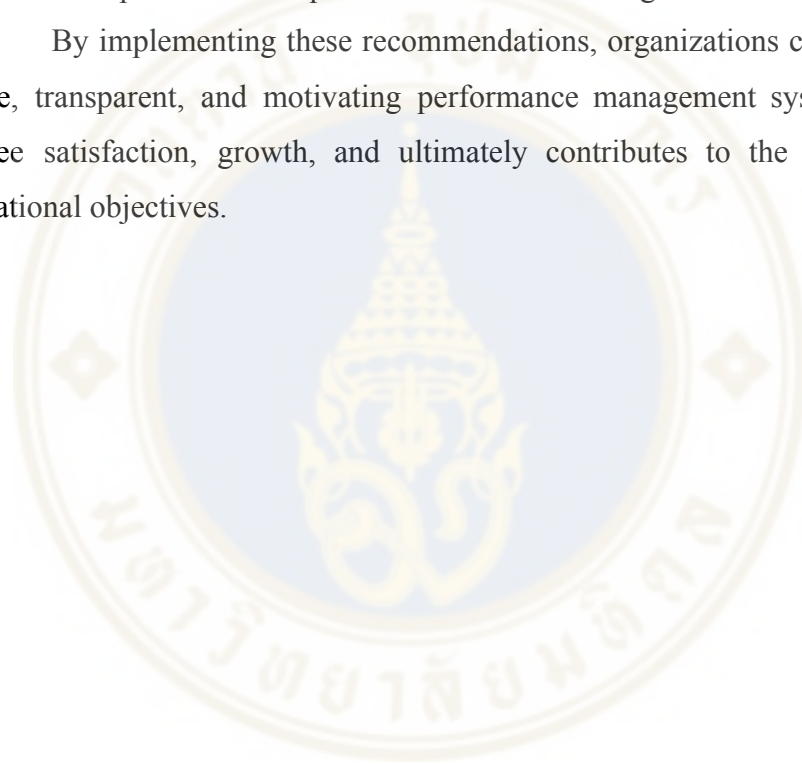
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