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The Impact of Performance Appraisal on Employee Motivation and Satisfaction

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Abstract: This work examined how the performance appraisal system affects employee motivation and job satisfaction at Helmand University, which is a public higher education institution in Afghanistan. The main objective of the study was to measure the level of motivation and satisfaction and clarify how the performance appraisal affects motivation and satisfaction. The data of the study were developed based on a survey and collected through a distributed questionnaire. A total of 96 respondents were obtained from administrative employees at Helmand University. The study adopted the regression approach (using SPSS version 27.0) to examine these relationships. The results provided that the employees were highly motivated and highly satisfied, and the results revealed moderately positive relationships between performance appraisal and motivation ($R = 0.454$, $\beta = 0.346$, Sig. = 0.000) and job satisfaction ($R = 0.566$, $\beta = 0.652$, Sig. = 0.000). The study recommends that public higher education institutions and similar organisations adopt performance appraisals tailored to their specific needs, thereby enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and potentially, performance. This approach can contribute to a brighter future for developing and war-torn countries.

Keywords: performance appraisal, motivation, satisfaction, human resource management, employee engagement, organisational behaviour.

Introduction

Any organisation critically depends on human resource management, appraisal, and motivation for the performance of its workforce (Khan, 2013; Najafi et al., 2010). As one of the main components of human resource management, performance appraisal systems strategically evaluate not only individual contributions but also institutional direction among many other capabilities within the workforce (Kampkötter et al., 2016; Ismail et al., 2022). Effective appraisal practices lead to effective appraisal systems that enhance employee responsibility as well as stimulate worker performance while creating an environment for professional growth (Fletcher, 2001; Kuvaas, 2006).

Modern organisations increasingly emphasise performance appraisals. More contemporary organisations see performance appraisal more as a coaching, appreciative, and developmental tool rather than merely an evaluative instrument (Buckham, 2019; Latham et al., 2005). This system of performance appraisal, appropriately conducted, would lead to improved employee commitment and stimulation of intrinsic motivation, leading to job satisfaction (Levy & Williams, 2004; Shaukat Malik & Aslam, 2013). Conversely, poor recognition and vague expectations in performance coupled with biased appraisal lead to demotivation and reduced productivity, not to mention higher turnover (Amir et al., 2018; Denisi & Murphy, 2017).

Strategic literature highlights the strategic value of PAS in eliciting employee motivation and satisfaction. A comparative study of Pakistan's telecom industry (Malik & Aslam, 2013) proved that information appraisal systems positively influence employee morale and motivation. Similarly, in her study of the Indian service sector, Daoanis (2012) posited that employee satisfaction was significantly

higher when appraisals communicated explicit criteria, constructive feedback, and recognition of achievements.

Brown and Heywood (2005) give a wider view. They look at the formalisation of PAS across firms in Australia. They say that organisations using PAS for Developmental and Reward purposes, especially those with redesigned jobs and greater worker discretion, produced more consistent performance outcomes.

According to Mo's (2023) study on the Chinese context, fair and development-oriented performance appraisals are identified as critical outcomes for producing employee loyalty and satisfaction. The study found that perceptions of appraisal outcomes as fair to the organisation and aligned with career development lead to increased organisational commitment and retention. Mustafa-Sadiku (2025) saw employee motivation and satisfaction as inseparable, both being driven by recognition, rewards, and communication emanating from PAS.

Kabwe et al. (2024) found that in the public sector performance management system in Zambia, feedback quality and appraisal standard clarity greatly motivate government employees. They expressed that there is currently an effective PAS, in contrast to criticism about its outdated systems and the barriers to commitment it creates for employees. Similarly, although intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are available under the Tanzanian civil service policy for the consistent application of PAS, they are a limiting factor in motivation (Ally & Mtimike, 2025).

Classical theories of motivation evidence the influence of PAS on job satisfaction. In the case of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are brought about by motivators (such as achievement and recognition) and hygiene factors (such as supervision and salary), respectively (U, 2025; Dr Gagandeep Kaur, Uttam Sahay, 2021). In addition, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and McClelland's Theory of Needs shall inspire appraisal systems to fulfil higher-order psychological needs recognition and self-actualisation—and thereby improve employee performance (Barbieri et al., 2021).

Despite the global thrust on PAS, it remains piecemeal and underused in developing countries, especially within public institutions. That obviously leads to a system suffering from low investment and with no training for evaluators; hence, employees are not motivated to involve themselves in such systems. As such, appraisals for academic or administrative staff do not formally exist in Afghanistan (Perkasa et al., 2023). For instance, Helmand University has little structured appraisal activity for non-teaching staff; this might be responsible for their low motivation and job satisfaction, as well as service delivery.

To fill these structural lacunae this study examine the effect of performance appraisal on worker motivation and job satisfaction with their job at Helmand University looking at present practices how employees perceive them and the motivational results of appraisal comments this study hopes to offer useful insights such as creating clear ways to give feedback and involving everyone in appraisal policies for building systems that are driven by development and fair.

As demonstrated in various contexts, effective performance appraisal systems have a broader impact, influencing not only individual behaviour but also the overall efficiency of an organisation. They also promote employee development, loyalty, and long-term stability of the institution (Levy & Williams, 2004; Mustafa-Sadiku, 2025; Mo, 2023). Therefore, this study places itself within an increasing amount of both practical and intellectual efforts which argue that complete, fair, and strategically aligned appraisal systems motivate employees and enhance their satisfaction.

Research Problem

In post-conflict societies, educational institutions play a crucial role in rebuilding human capital, restoring stability, and fostering social cohesion. However, these institutions often struggle with challenges such as limited resources, low staff morale, and weakened administrative structures. In such fragile contexts, performance appraisal systems—when effective—can act as powerful tools to enhance employee motivation, increase job satisfaction, and ensure accountability. Yet, in many post-conflict educational settings, performance appraisal mechanisms remain underdeveloped, inconsistently applied, or poorly aligned with employees' needs and institutional goals.

The urgency lies in the fact that post-conflict societies rely heavily on education to drive recovery and sustainable peace. If educators and administrative staff are demotivated or dissatisfied due to ineffective performance management, the entire system risks stagnation. Timely analysis of performance appraisal effectiveness can help strengthen institutional resilience during this critical reconstruction phase.

Understanding how performance appraisal influences motivation and job satisfaction can improve staff retention, productivity, and morale in post-conflict educational institutions. Ultimately, this benefits society by fostering stronger education systems that are capable of supporting recovery, reconciliation, and long-term development.

This research contributes to organisational behaviour and human resource management literature by examining performance appraisal effectiveness in an underexplored context—post-conflict educational institutions. It extends existing theories of motivation and job satisfaction by applying them to fragile institutional environments, thus enriching the scientific discourse.

Although performance appraisal, motivation, and job satisfaction are widely studied in stable contexts, limited attention has been given to their dynamics in post-conflict educational institutions. This gap highlights the need for a deeper empirical investigation into adapting HRM practices for fragile and recovery-focused environments.

The study is expected to reveal how the quality, fairness, and transparency of performance appraisals influence employees' psychological and professional engagement in post-conflict settings. It will also shed light on context-specific factors—such as institutional instability, resource limitations, and socio-emotional challenges—that shape the effectiveness of appraisal systems.

Research Focus

This study focuses on examining the role of performance appraisal effectiveness in shaping employee motivation and job satisfaction within post-conflict educational institutions. In many post-conflict contexts, educational institutions face unique challenges, such as resource scarcity, rebuilding institutional trust, and addressing the psychological and professional needs of employees. Performance appraisal systems, if well-designed and effectively implemented, can serve as a critical tool for enhancing staff morale, recognising contributions, and fostering a culture of accountability and growth.

The research seeks to analyse how the quality and fairness of performance appraisals influence employees' levels of motivation, their sense of recognition, and their overall job satisfaction. Specifically, it aims to explore the link between appraisal quality and motivation, while also assessing the extent to which appraisal processes contribute to or hinder job satisfaction. By focusing on post-conflict educational institutions, the study will provide insights into how performance management practices can be tailored to fragile contexts, ultimately contributing to institutional stability, improved employee engagement, and sustainable organisational performance.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question:

- How does performance appraisal effectiveness influence employee motivation and job satisfaction in post-conflict educational institutions?

Sub-questions:

- RQ1: What is the relationship between performance appraisal quality and employee motivation?
- RQ2: How does performance appraisal impact job satisfaction levels?

Literature review / Theoretical Overview

The PA is still considered a major function in HRM as it deals with measuring and improving the performance, motivation, and satisfaction of employees. This leads to development-oriented and fair PAs that directly contribute to work engagement and positive workplace behaviour (Rana et al., 2022). Procedural, distributive, and interactional justice reported in PA (Kalogiannidis et al., 2025) can enhance employee performance and job satisfaction.

PA systems are contemporarily established on justice-based frameworks. Vasset et al. (2011) linked the satisfaction of employees' appraisal-related psychological needs with decreased burnout and increased motivation. They argue that fair appraisal satisfies employees' psychological needs, decreasing their burnout and enhancing their motivation. This is supported by Susanto et al. (2023), who state that transparency and clarity in appraisal practices result in commitment and satisfaction (Micacchi et al., 2024) – perceived justice in appraisals is a leading predictor of engagement in the public sector.

Technology and objective metrics play a significant role in appraisal mechanisms. Widjaja et al. (2024) use ROC prioritisation to ensure that the appraisal is fair based on criteria that have been defined, such as productivity and quality of work, hence reducing bias and increasing acceptance. In another related development, Speer et al. (2024) show how Artificial Intelligence and natural language processing tools are remaking textual feedback into standardised evaluations with less bias.

Behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS) and competency-based appraisal are two other approaches that have been advanced to make performance appraisal systems more objective and reliable (Yuni et al., 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2024). Work-life balance, when combined with motivational strategies and appraisal systems, improves the engagement of employees. So far, this has been integrated into the appraisal systems, as discovered by Ramadan Wardiansyah et al. (2024).

Stor (2023) and Theng (2023) argue that appreciative systems, rather than punitive ones, help foster trust and drive performance. They further add that when appraisal systems prove to be developmental, they generate more trust and commitment from employees toward their organisation's goals. This is in line with Rana et al. (2022), who argued that monetary or intrinsic reinforcement increases overall satisfaction; hence, it improves psychological well-being.

A few more cross-national studies highlight cultural and contextual importance. For instance, Spinelli et al. (2023) discussed how cultural norms in Ethiopia shape the perception of fairness in PA, while Sotiropoulos (2004) identified differences in bureaucracy within Southern Europe. Wenzel et al. (2019) indicated that performance-based pay systems work only when employees perceive them to be fair and have opportunities for participation.

Appraisal effectiveness presents another challenge in academic settings. Rwothumio et al. (2021) noted a moderate correlation between performance appraisal and academic output in universities within Uganda, pointing to the fact that current systems still need contextual adjustment. Pujiarti et al. (2021) argue that standardising PA criteria in educational institutions is the only way to eliminate subjectivity.

Digital appraisal and decision support systems have now fully delivered quality assessments. Lünich et al. (2024) also discuss fairness and transparency in academic evaluation through AI-based educational systems.

Additionally, environments with abundant feedback, where supervisors engage in discussions and offer advice, tend to make employees more confident in the fairness of the appraisal. Su et al. (2017) discuss the role of supervisor attribution in shaping how feedback is received and its impact on employee behaviour. Gelderen & Bik (2016) say that feeling emotional commitment to the organisation helps mediate appraisal success.

However, some studies warn against relying too much on performance-based evaluation. It was found that appraisals, when closely linked to monetary rewards, increase stress and dissatisfaction, most particularly in low-trust environments (Guerci et al., 2022). In such contexts, narrative feedback and coaching would be more effective (Giamos et al., 2023; Goller & Späth, 2024)

Goller and Späth (2024) and Dangol (2020) opine that appraisal effectiveness depends not only on the design of the system but also on how its results are interpreted and used for employee development. As organisational demands evolve, PA systems must integrate both human and digital dimensions, ensuring adaptability, fairness, and alignment of purpose.

Research Methodology

The study will employ a quantitative and cross-sectional design, with a deductive approach applied. Data will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions based on a Likert scale. The census sampling method will be employed because the total target population comprises 102 administrative staff members, and all available data is supported by Taherdoost (2018).

The data study will be analysed in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26, which is supported by Rahman & Mukhtadir (2021). The analysis will include descriptive statistics to determine the mean, mode, median & standard deviation, as well as regression analysis & correlation to examine the relationship between variables, reliability, missing values, and outliers. Normality will be checked.

Results

Demographic Information of Respondents

As shown in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, a total of 102 questionnaires were distributed to the administrative staff, faculty deans, department heads, and committee officials at Helmand University; 96 were returned completed. This represents a response rate of 94.1%. Out of the six unreturned or unusable questionnaires, one was invalid due to incomplete and inconsistent responses; two (33.3%) were uncompleted and left blank; and three were not returned at all. The respondents' age, educational qualifications, and job grades (best) are presented in the following section.

All 96 respondents were male. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 51 (53.1%) between 20 and 30 years, 36 (37.5%) between 31 & 40 years, 8 (8.3%) between 41 and 50, and just one (1.0%) between 51 & 60 years of age. Educational qualifications of the respondents were: Bachelor's degree-56 (60.4%), Master's degree-27 (28.1%), High school (12th grade)-9 (9.4%), and Doctoral degree-2 (2.1%). Job classification (best) of the respondents was: 3 or 4 -58 (60.4%), 5 or 6 -26 (27.1%), 1 or 2 -10 (10.1%), and 7 or 8 -3 (3.1%).

Table 4.1

Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30 years	51	53.1%
31-40 years	36	37.5%
41-50 years	8	8.3%
51-60 years	1	1.0%

Total	96	100.0%
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Source: Author's own analysis

Table 4.2

Educational Qualifications

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
12th Grade (High School)	9	9.4%
Bachelor's Degree	58	60.4%
Master's Degree	27	28.1%
Doctorate (PhD)	2	2.1%
Total	96	100.0%

Source: Author's own analysis

Table 4.3

Job Position (Grade)

Job Grade (Bast)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Grades 1-2	10	10.4%
Grades 3-4	58	60.4%
Grades 5-6	25	26.0%
Grades 7-8	3	3.1%
Total	96	100.0%

Source: Author's own analysis

Let me know if there is anything else I can help you with.s shown in Table 4.4, the majority of the respondents (79 employees) reported a high level of employee motivation. Therefore, 79 employees constitute 82.3% of the workforce that is highly motivated. In contrast, 10 employees showed a moderate level of motivation and seven employees reflected a low level of motivation. The following analysis will benchmark this perception against actual labour productivity results.

Table 4.4

Level of Motivation

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	30	31.3
	Agree	49	51.0
	Moderate	10	10.4
	Disagree	6	6.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.0
	Total	96	100.0

Source: Author's own analysis

As shown in Table 4.5, the majority of the respondents (77 employees), which totals 80.2% showed a high level of agreement with the performance appraisal system. The remaining 12 employees, which is 12.5% showed a moderate level of agreement, whereas 7 employees, 7.3% expressed low levels of agreement with the system.

Table 4.5

Level of Satisfaction

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	27	28.1
	Agree	50	52.1
	Moderate	12	12.5
	Disagree	7	7.3
	Total	96	100.0

Source: Author's own analysis

As shown in Table 4.6, the variable Performance Appraisal recorded a Skewness of 0.668 with a standard error of 0.246. Its Kurtosis was 0.072 with a standard error of 0.488. Motivation recorded a Skewness of 1.122 and Kurtosis of 1.233; Satisfaction recorded Skewness and Kurtosis values of 0.728 and 0.757, respectively, very close to the benchmarks normally set at ± 2 for both Skewness and Kurtosis (Ho & Yu, 2015).

Table 4.6

Normality Test Results

Variables	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Performance Appraisal	0.668	0.246	0.072	0.488
Motivation	1.122	0.246	1.233	0.488
Satisfaction	0.728	0.246	0.757	0.488

Source: Author's own analysis

Correlation Analysis

As shown in Table 4.7, the independent variable Performance Appraisal is positively correlated with the dependent variable Motivation ($r = 0.454$), and the correlation is stronger with Satisfaction ($r = 0.566$). Additionally, Motivation and Satisfaction have a strong positive correlation with each other ($r = 0.594$). These findings are that improvements in the performance appraisal system are associated with increases in both employee motivation and satisfaction levels.

Table 4.7*Correlation Matrix Results*

Variables	Performance Appraisal	Motivation	Satisfaction
Performance Appraisal	1.000		
Motivation	0.454	1.000	
Satisfaction	0.566	0.594	1.000

Source: Author's own analysis

Reliability Analysis

As shown in Table 4.8, the reliability results for Performance Appraisal were $\alpha = 0.753$, for Motivation were $\alpha = 0.780$, and for Satisfaction it was $\alpha = 0.835$. The overall reliability for the entire questionnaire was found to be $\alpha = 0.877$. So, the instrument used in this study can be considered highly reliable. The results are supported by (Taherdoost, 2018)

Table 4.8*Reliability Test Results*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Performance Appraisal	0.753	4
Motivation	0.780	5
Satisfaction	0.835	4
Total	0.877	13

Source: Author's own analysis

Exploratory factor analysis

As shown in Table 4.9, the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy yielded the following findings: for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 513.098$, $df = 78$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the correlations between variables were adequate to proceed with factor extraction. Additionally, the findings enhance the reliability and suitability of this data for further analyses. (Ho & Yu, 2015) stated that if KMO values exceed 0.6 and Bartlett's Test yields a significant result ($p < 0.001$), the data are suitable for factor extraction.

Table 4.9*Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Results*

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	0.875
Approx. Chi-Square	513.098
Degrees of Freedom (df)	78
Significance (Sig.)	0.000

Source: Author's own analysis

Multivariate Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 4.10, there is a moderate positive relation between the first dependent variable, motivation and the independent variable, performance appraisal ($R = 0.454$), with the R^2 value of 0.206 and an adjusted R^2 value (0.198). There is a higher positive relation between the second dependent variable, Satisfaction and the independent variable performance appraisal ($R = 0.566$), with the R^2 value of 0.320 and adjusted R^2 (0.313).

Table 4.10

Multivariate regression analysis results summary

Model Summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
DV1: Motivation	0.454	0.206	0.198	0.47184
DV2: Satisfaction	0.566	0.320	0.313	0.56822

Note: Predictor (Independent Variable): Performance Appraisal

Source: Author's own analysis

Hypothesis

H1: Performance appraisals positively affect employee motivation

As shown in Table 4.12, the results of the regression analysis show that the H1 hypothesis is accepted with the findings that the independent variable Performance Appraisal has a significant effect on the dependent variable Motivation; that standardised beta (β) = 0.454, and p-value = 0.000. Therefore, the study accepts the hypothesis H1 that performance appraisal has an effect on employee motivation at Helmand University. The results are supported by (Ho & Yu, 2015) and (Ho & Yu, 2015)

Table 4.12

Regression Coefficients for Motivation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	0.816	0.153	–	5.316	0.000
Performance Appraisal	0.346	0.070	0.454	4.939	0.000

Source: Author's own analysis

H2: Performance appraisal has a significant effect on employee satisfaction.

As shown in Table 4.13, the results of the regression analysis show that the H2 hypothesis is accepted with the findings that the independent variable Performance Appraisal has a significant effect on the dependent variable Satisfaction; that standardised beta (β) = 0.566, and p-value = 0.000. Therefore, the study accepts the hypothesis H2 that performance appraisal affects employee

Satisfaction at Helmand University. The results are supported by (Nurrahmi et al., 2023; Veeraragavan, 2021; Peng, 2022)

Table 4.13

Regression Coefficients for Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	0.879	0.185	–	4.754	0.000
Performance Appraisal	0.652	0.084	0.566	6.658	0.000

Source: Author's own analysis

Discussion

This study analyses the impact of performance appraisal on employee motivation and satisfaction at Helmand University. The results indicate that the performance appraisal system has a significant and direct impact on employees' motivation and satisfaction. The appraisal process serves not only as a tool for organisational benefits but is also critical for employee motivation and satisfaction. When performance appraisals are conducted openly, fairly, and with effective feedback, they increase employee satisfaction, which in turn leads employees to put more effort into achieving their goals. The study also suggests that appraisal should extend beyond mere rewards and punishment, focusing instead on employees' skills, competencies, and personal growth. This leads to better job performance as well as commitment from employees. This has been supported by previous studies (Ismail et al., 2022; Dangol, 2020; Ishaque et al., 2018). They emphasised that a transparent and fair appraisal system positively influences employee satisfaction and motivation. The other studies, by Wardiansyah et al. (2024) and Kalogiannidis et al. (2025), found that job satisfaction and engagement are associated with improved job performance. Conversely, unfair or opaque appraisal processes sheltered employee motivation and subsequently work quality.

Conclusions and Implications

The study extends existing theories of motivation and job satisfaction by applying them within an educational context. It shows that fairness and credibility of appraisal systems are central to building employee trust and engagement, adding empirical support to equity and expectancy theories in a non-Western setting.

By focusing on Helmand University, this study provides context-specific evidence from an Afghan educational institution, a setting often neglected in HRM research. The use of employee-centred data collection (e.g., surveys and interviews) ensures that findings reflect both subjective experiences and institutional realities. This methodological approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice in fragile environments.

Practically, the findings highlight the importance of designing appraisal systems that are not only fair but also developmental in nature. Such systems encourage staff motivation, reduce turnover intentions, and strengthen institutional capacity. The results highlight the importance of training managers and supervisors to conduct constructive appraisals, focusing on feedback, professional growth, and career development opportunities.

Limitations, Implications of the *Suggestions for Future Research*

The study faced several limitations, including a limited population due to the staff at Helmand University (102). The standards of the performance appraisal weren't fully applied, so the findings might not be fully suitable. The questionnaire was designed with an understandable concept, but some employees may not understand or have a different interpretation of the questions. At the time of the survey, the employees were so busy that they may not have answered the questions. All the staff were male; the opinions of males and females differ.

According to the results of this study, which revealed a moderate relationship between performance appraisal and motivation, as well as a high relationship between performance appraisal and the institution, the institution should create a strategic plan to align employees' and the institution's objectives. A fair and effective performance appraisal should be applied, and for the best results, the management staff should be well-trained, so that they can increase employees' motivation and satisfaction. Effective feedback and training should be designed after each performance evaluation to improve employees, increase motivation and satisfaction, and support their professional growth.

Future authors should select a high-level population where the results are highly reliable, meaning the staff of the organisation should be more than 102 for optimal results. The organisations should be selected based on their standard performance appraisal and evaluation processes. The question should be described to the responder so they can understand it and choose the right answer according to their opinion.

The study should be applied to an organisation with female staff, and the opinions of both genders should be analysed. Future studies should investigate the same study in other organisations, considering their different structures and policies, to explore the findings and implications.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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