# The Perils of Performance Appraisal: A Case Study of Higher Education Faculty in Pakistan (KP)

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**Abstract:** Performance appraisals systems are applied with an aim to improve the performance of existing employees and a number of other benefits to the employees and organizations. The underlying goal of this study was to develop a better understanding of current evaluation practices and to assess the degree to which these institutions/universities have adopted formal performance appraisal practices. A multiple case study—comprising six cases—was designed. 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with management personnel, using purposive sampling. The analysis has revealed the main sources used in performance appraisal of academic staff and some challenges associated with this process. Implications of the findings, to both academics and practitioners are provided.

**Keywords:** Performance appraisal, errors, higher education faculty, organizational justice.

## Inroduction

Human resource management can become more effective by having a valid and accurate appraisal system used for rating employees' performances (Armstrong, 2015; Armstrong & Baron, 2005). A valid and reliable performance appraisal system provides managers with useful insightsinto employees' performances (Al-Jedaia&Mehrez, 2020). A properly designed performance appraisal system can significantly improve teaching abilities of the teachers, enhance their career development, motivation, and productivity (Khan et al., 2020). Unfortunately, limited organizations are properly utilizing the performance appraisal system for the benefit of the employees and organization (Murphy, 2020).

Despite its significance for employees and organizations, the performance appraisal process in the higher education sector does not contribute to employee understanding of

organizations'expectationsof performance standards and it seems to have more of social utility. The literature shows that performance appraisal and performance management systems have little impact on the performance or effectiveness of employees (DeNisi& Smith, 2014; Pulakos et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2018). The managers have struggled hard to fix the problems with performance appraisal and performance management systems in organizations (DeNisi& Murphy, 2017), but very little success has been achieved in this regard (Murphy, 2020). Performance appraisal is a system that can serve and align individual needs with organizational goals to foster positive relationships between the management and employees (Armstrong, 2003). The main objective of any performance appraisal system is to properly equip employees to do their work in a way to contribute to the organizational bottom-line of the organization (DeNisi& Smith, 2014).However, the performance appraisal system is considered ineffectivewhen it comes to improvement of employees' performance and achievement of organizational goals (Pulakos et al., 2015)and supervisors and employees dread performance appraisals (Adler et al., 2016).The current study has tried to seek answers to two questions: 1)Whatmethodsare used for appraising the performance of higher education faculty? and 2) What are the challenges faced by this system?

## Procedural Justice Theory and Performance Appraisal

Leventhal (1980) introduced the concept ofprocedural justice to the formal organizational settings, which was focused on six criteria for a procedure to be considered as fair. These include: procedures to be applied consistently in procedures, should be bias free, collection of accurate information for important decision making, inbuilt-mechanism to correct flawed decisions, conformity to ethics and morality, and inclusion of the stakeholders.

The area of performance measurement has been the prime focus of academic research and practitioners (Murphy, 2020; Othman, 2014). The authors consider it as a way to manage and control organizations. Employee performance is a core concept within organizational psychology, and researchers have clarified and extended the concept of performance (Bal&Dóci, 2018;Koopmans et al., 2014).Moreover, the measurement of outputs has switched to the measurement of outcomes, particularly in the public sector (Van Thiel &Leeuw, 2002; de Vries, 2010). Empirical research suggests that effective performance appraisals can lead to a number of important work outcomes, such as enhanced employee quality and productivity, satisfaction, commitment, etc., (Murphy, 2020; Kuvaas, 2008; Omusebe et al., 2013). Employee performance is now considered as a strategic link to organizational effectiveness (Awan et al., 2020; De Nisi & Pritchard, 2006).

Performance appraisal is an integral part of the performance management system and is the foundation for shaping employees' perception about organizational fairness. Employees' perception of the performance appraisal process must be viewed as fair (Kuvaas, 2006). Performance appraisal refers to the process by which an observer, often a supervisor or a peer, rates the performance of an employee (Murphy, 2020; Murphy et al., 2018). A satisfactorily functional appraisal system potentially diffuses the employees' concerns about justice and increases their performance motivation (Mulvaney et al., 2012). Fair performance management systems should not only reward good performance but also encourage and motivate substandard performers (Karuhanga& Werner, 2013). If employees are skeptical about the appraisal system, they will be reluctant to use performance feedback to improve their performance. Moreover, negative perception of organizational justice is later translated into behavioral shortcomings (Frey et al., 2013).

To understand how organizational practices influence performance, it is important to be aware of the employees' perception and reaction to those practices (Jiang et al., 2012; Boxall, 2013).

Performance appraisal is the cornerstone of human resource practices, which has a potency of having links with employee performance (Ajibola et al., 2019;Kehoe & Wright, 2013).Managers therefore must consider performance appraisal as an integral part of their job (Kaydos, 2020).

Organizational justice perception has a strong effect on the employee's workplace attitude and behavior (Bakhshi, et al.,2009). The literature shows that the fairness perception of employees about their organizational processes has a significant impact on their job behavior (Ali & Anwar, 2021). The authors believe that organizational justice perception is necessary in determining the performance efficiency and the personnel satisfaction in organizations and vice versa. Scott et al. (2006) are of the view that the performance appraisal processes used by organizations are mostly inadequate and the most effective evaluation methods are rarely used. Organizational justice theory has thus a deep connection with the performance appraisal system because it is concerned with the perceived fairness of the procedures used to make decisions with respect to employee rewards, such as distribution of outcomes (George & Jones, 2000).

## Performance Appraisal of the Faculty

The education system requires a performance management system that isorganized, properly administered, and actually evaluates and enhances teacher's performance (Xu et al., 2018;Rasheed et al., 2010). Teacher quality is the most significant factor for students' academic achievement (Xu et al., 2018; Harris & McCaffrey, 2010). The measures for effective teaching that are liked to students' achievement (input measures)are consideredweak (Caughlan& Jiang, 2014), and are now being replaced by more strong measures (output measures), which include teacher's performance in the classroom and student learning achievements (Caughlan& Jiang, 2014).

Teacher performance assessments are gaining popularity in the process of teacher education and certification (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).Performance appraisal leads to identification of gaps in employee performance, as well as recognizing their good work. Important management decisions regarding employees' promotions, demotions, transfers, and salary increases,etc. are based on the results of employees'evaluation (Rasheed et al., 2010). A variety of performance appraisal techniques are being used in different organizations according to their needs. However, some of the commonly used techniques have been 360-degrees feedback, MBO's, and Annual Confidential Report (ACR's);particularly for the public sector organizations. Irrespective of which evaluation technique and approach is used for employee appraisal, if the results of appraisal are not used for constructive purposes it loses its real essence.

## The Problem of Performance Measurement in the Educators

Performance measurement has a complex definition (Kaydos, 2020). Performance measurement refers to quantifying work actions (Murphy, 2020) to assess success or achievement of an act that is aimed at organizational productivity (Ishak&Sahak, 2010). The authors stress that organizations must establish their core competencies, which are aligned with their strategic goals (Aguinis, 2009).

In multitasking individuals,the management has to resort to proxy measures because the outcomes are not easily observableand have noise (Takahashi et al., 2021; Gomez-Mejia, 1992). A job of the faculty captures a variety of professional, technical, managerial and supervisory activities (Kraimer et al., 2019).The faculty's performance thus comprises two dimensions: quantity and quality. Independent measures exist for objective tasks, but not for the subjective ones (Murphy, 2020; Ishak&Sahak, 2010). The focus of measuring the faculty's performance has become a serious concern of the management due

to increased accountability of these professionals (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Performance appraisal is an essential part of performance measurement that includes regular performance feedback to the employees (Rasheed et al., 2010), and enables the principal to determine alignment of the employees' performance with the organizational objectives (Armstrong, 2015; Irs& Turk, 2012).

Kaydos (2020)considers performance appraisal as an opportunity for the employees to gain knowledge about their performance on the job. In the absence of feedback, the employee will have no idea of the past performance and therefore no chance of improving future performances. Performance appraisal is also a process of communication between the management and the employees, where the former conveys their values and expectations to the latter (Bowen &Ostroff, 2004).

The academics uses classroom teaching, students' test scores and students' feedback as the prime evaluation methods (Usmaniet al., 2012). The authors consider feedback from the students as an inexpensive method yet highly reliable.No matter which source for information collection is used there will still be some loopholes in it (Murphy, 2020). The choice of information source(s) depends mostly upon cost-benefit analysis by the employer (Prendergast, 2002).

## Method and Data

Semi-structured interviews were designed to collect qualitative data from the academic managers, using purposive sampling. A total of 19 interviews were conducted with managers of HEIs, during a period of three months, which include: four vice chancellors, three deans, and six directors of different disciplines. There were two reasons for collecting information from the academic management personnel: 1) almost all academic managers and supervisors are also part of the faculty, and 2) the people are more knowledgeable about the appraisal system in their respective university/institute. The list of interviewees has been provided in table 1 in the Appendix.

An interview protocol was developed that was focused on the area of performance appraisal system;however, more questions were added or previous ones modified as the interviews unfolded the information. All the interviews were conducted in English and tape recorded for later transcription. An average interview lasted for approximately 50 minutes. Initial thirteen interviews were enough to saturate data, moreover six more interviews conducted to validate the findings. According to Marshall et al., (2013), sample size adequacy is directly linked to data saturation

## Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data has yielded two main themes using three levels of codes such as descriptive, inferential, and pattern codes (Miles &Huberman, 1994). This process was supplemented by 'splitting' and 'splicing' techniques suggested by Dey (1993). Applying the 'splitting' technique, line-by-line coding was done of the interview transcriptions. Categorizationand sub-categorization were done exercising the analytical and judgmental skills of the researchers. However, care was exercised not to lose the contextual meaning of the data. The 'splicing' technique was used to consolidate data into meaning categories, by finding logical links. The end product of this analysis was in the form of sub-themes and themes of the research. The coding scheme has been provided in table 2 in the Appendix.

Cross-case analysis is the most important component for multiple case studies. Each case was first analyzed independently, followed by a comparative analysis for any evidence of contrast or similarity in the data. Pattern matching and cross-case analysis help enhance transparency and credibility of case study analysis. It was not possible to include all the discussion on all the codes generated during the data analysis, however two themes "the sources of performance appraisal of the faculty" and the "challenges in the performance appraisal system" have been included in this study.

## Sources of Performance Appraisal of the Faculty

Several important decisions taken by the management are hinged upon the performance assessment of the employees, such as employee promotion, job security, rewards, training and development, etc. In universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) information regarding the faculty's performance is collected from multiple sources that include: appraisal by the students, appraisal by the superiors, annual confidential report (ACR), and peer appraisal. However, the last source is rarely used for information collection.The logic for using multiple sources of information accurately portrays the performance of the faculty. The universities are to a larger extent dependent upon the traditional methods of appraisal and none have switched to the modern techniques of appraisal, such as the Management by Objectives (MBOs), 360 degrees appraisal, behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS), etc.

*Appraisal by the students:* Student ratings of the faculty's performance is usually the overall feelings of the pupilsthat arise from a mix of learning, communication skills, pedagogical approaches, and affective factors(Khandelwal, 2009).At the end of the semester the students are required to provide feedback of their instructors' performance with respect to classroom instruction, course completion, delivery of the course contents, knowledge regarding the subject matter, faculty's behavior with the students inside and outside the classroom, punctuality, regularity, etc. Students are required to fill out the appraisal proforma either in hard form or online. A majority of the universities have developed their learning management systems and have therefore switched to an online appraisal system. Once the students fill out the online appraisal form, the evaluations are shared with the coordinators and the management, who use this information for future course allocations and other HR related decisions. The interviewees consider appraisal by the students as the most reliable source because it involves the stakeholders who are direct recipients of the faculty's services.

"Instead of calling it appraisal, I would rather call it student monitoring. Teachers can be monitored by their pupils in a far better way; especially for their punctuality, class teaching, and exam related issues. I would rather say that students' monitoring is better than monitoring by the management; as they are in the class so they can keep a better check on the teacher's class activities and routine."(E2)

"The students are very candid about the teachers' performance and will demand any change if required. The change might be related to the teacher's teaching style or any other attribute of the instructor. Furthermore, if the students are totally dissatisfied with their instructor's knowledge base, they might even directly communicate this to the Director or Joint Director for the instructor to be replaced." (F1)

Accordingto the interviewees, students are in a better position to evaluate the performance of an instructor onacademic activities, such as class instruction, knowledge, course completion, behavior with the students, students counseling, etc.

*Appraisal by the supervisors:*According to Murphy (2020), supervisors usually have better know-how of their subordinates' performance because they are in direct contact with them. The supervisors in the HEIs are directly answerable to the upper-level management, for the faculty's classroom performances and their view-point is given considerable attention in deciding the faculty's promotion cases of thefaculty to higher positions. The appraisalby the supervisors is based on subjective evaluation of their colleagues and can thus add human touch to a mechanistic process of appraisal. According to an interviewee,

""The coordinators are in direct contact with the students and they keep the faculty informed about its performance. The supervisors understand the system better, as they have also been a product of this system. They know better how to appraise a faculty member, based on his personal experience and sound judgement."(E2)

For example, the students' assessment of their instructors is confined to classroom effectiveness but a supervisor'sappraisal includes things that might not directly seem to contribute to teaching effectiveness, yet add value to the academics, e.g., teamwork, behavior at workplace, leadership qualities, initiative, etc. Thus, the non-job attributes are best covered by subjective assessment ofthe supervisors.

*Annual confidential report (ACR):*An ACRis a report prepared by the superior of his subordinates' performance with respect to his punctuality and regularity, discipline and integrity, achievements or failures on the job, workplace attitudes and behaviors, personal traits etc. (Khanna & Sharma, 2014). ACR is written annually by the head of the organization. It is a summary of the employee'soverall performance and plays an important role in the employment decisions such as an employee'scareer advancement, rewards and recognition, demotion, etc.This practice has been around in the public sector for quite a while and is considered as a conventional practice. According to the interviewees, "The ACR covers the gap in appraisal, which is left open from other appraisal sources and methods." (F1)

"The ACR provides flexibility, and complements the other appraisal methods used for faculty evaluation. The head of the department or organizations is required to write this report and keep it safe in the employees' personal record. The report is usually kept confidential and not even revealed to the concerned person in normal circumstances. The ACR is a good tool because it can cover for deficiency in other appraisal systems, but the trick is how to use it. Because it is based on subjective judgment of the superior, therefore, care needs to be exercised in order to control any injustice creeping into the faculty evaluation." (A3)

"The report summarizes the performance of employee in written form and is kept under lock and key. The file may be shared with the employee only in cases of promotions." (D1)

## Challenges in the Performance Appraisal System

The performance appraisal and measurement systems are faced with several challenges. Some of the challenges are present in the default setting of the nature of the professional's job, whereas as others are attributable to the loopholes in the system and the individuals who are part of this system. The interviewees identified a range of issues in the performance appraisal of the faculty, however not all these issues were worth mentioning for two reasons. First, the focus was only the main issues and not the secondary issues and second, those issues have been included and discussed which were identified by almost all the interviewees. Some of the issues that have been included in this study include: problems in the information sources, subjectivity in the performance appraisal process, outdated system, beside others.

*Problems in the information sources*

According to Appling et al. (2001), each source of information in performance appraisal can provide unique information; however, each source is imperfect. Collecting information from multiple sources or triangulating can cover the deficiency left from one or more sources, thereby, converging on a

decision that is more accurate, rather than being based on a single source (Berk, 2005). Several organizations have adopted multisource feedback by seeking performance information from subordinates, peers, customers/clients, or self-evaluations in addition to the traditional reviews by supervisors (Bracken et al., 2016). Taking into account the complexity of teaching measurement, the decision maker should rely on multiple valid sources (Gómez & Valdés, 2019). Irrespective of the outcomes of performance appraisal, as long as the processes used to arrive at the emulations are perceived to be fair by the employees (Al-Nawab, 2020; Bohnet& Eaton, 2003).

*Inappropriate appraisal of the faculty by the students:* Student appraisal is a proxy for measuring teaching effectiveness, which is prone to abuse (Dzagourova&Smirnova, 2003; Barefoot et al., 2016). The students are not aware of the importance of the faculty's appraisal and they lack the necessary know-how or have a non-serious attitude towards filling the appraisal sheets. Hayward (2008) stresses that the faculty's appraisal by the students is not a reliable way of assessing teaching effectiveness because it is open to manipulation by the students as well as the faculty. It is common practice to link faculty's evaluation with students' exam scores. However, it is difficult to draw a logical inference regarding teaching quality from students' test scores (McCaffrey et al., 2003; American Statistical Association, 2014; Harris, 2011). Considering all discourses over the value of student appraisal, the respondents have shown their grave concern over using this source of information. Using students' test score as an indicator and linking it with the faculty's successful performance is misleading (Ballou& Springer, 2015).

Most students link the teacher's evaluation with their exam grades. This infers that the students put all the blame of their low score on the faculty, which might not always be the case. The students' feedback does not reflect the actual performance of the teachers' classroom instruction, rather the comments are a way to take revenge from the faculty for the bad grades in the exam. If the students score high the comments are all good and vice versa. The students go to the extent where they comment on the physical appearance of the teacher which has nothing to do with the teachers' competency.

*Biased appraisal by the supervisors:* It is not just the students who can play around with their instructors' evaluation. The employee-management contention dates back to the inception of agency theory that deals with contractual problems due to goal conflict (Eisenhardt, 1989). The management can pull the reins of the employees who fail to comply with the organizational code of ethics by using their evaluation reports in important career decisions. The respondents have expressed their concern in the interviews. Although, they all talk about these recurring issues, however no one has done anything to curb the problem. If we want to get a true picture of a teacher's performance, we need to measure the value addition to the student's knowledge, skills and abilities at the time of joining the educational institution and after completion of their degrees. The pre and post difference will itself talk for the teacher's effectiveness. The errors in performance appraisal are quite common, e.g., personal likes and dislikes, stereotyping, cultural biases, etc.

Students are the primary stakeholders in faculty appraisal, yet the least education ones. They consider it as an opportunity to vent their feelings, particularly if they receive a low exam score. a student has scored badly in any particular module. Many students do not even properly understand the meaning of some of the words contained in the appraisal form. As a result, either answers to certain questions are left bank or filled out inappropriately. Even personal prejudices of the students have a strong bearing on the faculty's evaluation. Some students are petrified to express openly and voice their experiences of the faculty's effectives with respect to classroom teaching for a myriad of reasons, some of which include: later victimization by the faculty is they receive unfavorable evaluations from the students, non-comprehension of the students about the evaluative statements given in the evaluation proforma, or simply consider the entire exercise as baseless. The students need to be educated on the

importance of properly filling out the faculty's evaluation forms without withholding their honest opinion without fear or favor.

The interviewees admit shortcomings in the system that can be removed or mitigated through collaborative approach of all the stakeholders. The blame game can take us nowhere and rather stifle the work environment. Because the appraisal process fails to cover all the aspects of the faculty's job therefore much is left to the discretion of the supervisors using their subjective judgement. Supervisors are no doubt an important source of generating vital performance information, however the point of contention is use of this information for taking personal revenge. If the supervisors fail to exercise their judgment impartially, this would deny these professionals of their due rewards and fair treatment at the workplace. The dispositions that are most common in Pakistan are the cultural and personal prejudices that are quite evident in the performance evaluations.

The purpose of the appraisal should not be to harass or pressurize anyone but to make the employees understand what is important for their careers and the organization.  The role of a supervisor should be of an expediter and enabler. This can happen when the supervisors detach themselves from their personal likes and dislikes that can hinder the faculty development and should add value to the organizational bottom-line.

*Perils in the ACR:* ACR is another important piece of information, which is at the heart of performance evaluations in all public sector institutions based on which employee promotions are decided. In HEIs usually the head of the institution e.g., VC/ Director/Dean etc. are usually responsible to generate ACRs for the faculty. This report contains information that covers a wide array of academic and non-academic duties of these professionals. The ACR is a confidential document and is never shared with anyone. This raises the question of credibility of the report.  The interviewees expressed their concerns that the ACR system is quite an old one and supervisors have been reported to have misused this document because the report is mainly subjective and based on the opinion of the person generating the report.  Usually, the top-level management settles their scores with the employees for past unpleasant experiences with the employees.

ACR has several shortcomings due to raters' biases leading to inaccurate picture of employee performance (Hossain et al., 2012). Moreover, ACR is highly confidential document and no one except the authorized personnel have access to it (Anjum& Rahman, 2021). This deprives the employee's knowledge of his strengths or shortcomings in performance, which leave little change of improvement. Good performance appraisal tends to promote a shared understanding of work expectations and objectives and individual needs (Gichuhi et al., 2013).

*Subjectivity in the performance measures*

There is no evidence that one appraisal method is better than the other (Hong et al., 2018). Nonetheless, subjective measures are more open to misuse (Severgnini et al., 2018; Prendergast, 2002). Hoodboy (2009) believes that a system that completely relies on objective criteria is almost impossible. The effectiveness of measures used for teaching effectiveness are embedded in the essence of these measures (Berk, 2005). According to Lavy (2007), the faculty performance assessment system requires a set of measures that holistically covers all aspects of these professionals. Thus, reliance on multi-system assessment is a necessity that relies on both subjective and objective measures (Lazear, 2003). The interviewees expressed their concern over the subjective assessment of the faculty's performance. The lack of external verifiability leaves performance evaluations doubtful and open to challenge (Murphy, 2020).

The things that can be objectively measured are the punctuality and regularity of the faculty and the contents of course covered during the semester. Subjective evaluation therefore becomes necessary for appraising the faculty's performance. Both the objective and subjective measurement has issues as subjective evaluation has the problem of inflating the performance measures, while objective metrics are costly and cannot cover all aspects of the faculty's work (Lavy, 2007). However, each imperfect but still informative. No appraisal instrument is without flaws (Ballou& Springer, 2015) therefore multiple indicators can yield accurate assessments (Solmon&Podgursky, 2000). Objectivity increases when appraisal is linked to performance goals, which are measurable, but when the appraisal is left to the judgment of the appraiser it becomes skeptical (Murphy, 2020).

The interviewees pointing towards the issue of subjectivity in performance assessment believe that many aspects of the faculty's job do not easily lend themselves to objective metrics, which has a domino effect. The metric is used as guidance for input for future performance and acts as a raw material. Thus, if the raw material lacks quality, the final product will be defective.The higher the subjectivity involved in the appraisal process the more it is liable for predisposition. The management is faced with the problem of how to strike a balance between the types of work of the faculty and the way it should be assessed and rationalized.

*Outdated system*

Performance appraisal system is outdated and does not cater to the demands of the faculty's job. The resultant evaluations do not provide an inaccurate picture of its overall performance. The appraisal system fails to capture the qualitative aspect of the faculty's job, which is not congruent with the multiple-tasking nature of the educator's job and fails to yield sufficient information about the quality of service rendered by these professionals.

*Proxy measures*

Direct measurement of teaching effectiveness is usually not possible therefore teaching proxy measures are used as substitutes of direct measures. The proxy measures have their own issues. Sometimes the proxy measures might measure a thing that is not intended by the principal. This is particularly true for tapping the important behavioral measures that constitute good teaching. The situation is further intensified due to noise in performance outcomes, towards which the measures are directed. Noise is any falsification in performance assessment that cannot be accounted for or linked directly to an individual's level of effort. It may also refer to time that parts the performance outputs from outcomes; the latter are manifested after a certain time period.

### Summary and Critical Reflection on Cross-CaseAnalysis

*First,* the analysis of the qualitative data reveals that in all the cases that the students are in the best position to provide feedback on the faculty's instruction part of their job because they are the direct recipients of their service and are in direct contact with them. Most of the aspects of effective teaching identified in the literature are exhibited by the faculty members during their classroom teaching and thus students can make a realistic and valid assessment of these aspects. Some interviewees consider student's evaluations as a substitute for direct monitoring of the faculty, which is not possible. The issues in direct monitoring are an infringement on the faculty's autonomy, which is costly and almost impossible.The appraisals are erred by comprehension of the appraisal forms by the students. A majority of the students belong to the background where English is not their first or second language.

The disability for the students is evident in the student's feedback of the teachers. In the appraisal form that requires the comments of the students about the faculty members teaching, class behavior, knowledge, etc. usually the students leave it blank. The students only fill the portion in the appraisal form that requires some numeric about the teacher'seffectiveness. Filling out the quantifiable portion is easy for the students, but the subjective part is usually left blank, which provides only half of the assessment by the students. Even the comments provided by the students yield little information regarding their teaching effectiveness, e.g., comments such as "I don't like the teacher", "The teacher not good" are of little value. The second main problem with the student's feedbackis that it is directly linked to the examination scores of students. Some students seem to be less bothered about this entire exercise and are simply indifferent towards filling out the appraisal forms. Moreover, still others withhold their honest opinion for fear of victimization by the teachers in the exam grading.With some odd concerns, overall appraisal by the students is taken seriously by the faculty members and the management and is believed to be fruitful for the faculty as well as the management.

*Second*, regarding feedback by the supervisors, most of the respondents have a fear factor of the different types of biases that the supervisors might exhibit while providing their subjective feedback to the management. Two main issues that have surfaced from the data are the supervisor's harassment and personal prejudices. Both are issues and quite severe in nature and need serious attention by the management. The recent implementation of the "Harassment Act" in the educational institutions has put a pressure on the supervisors who try to act cautiously and therefore often commit the error of central tendency. The supervisors have to face several cases of litigation in cases where negative evaluations have been provided to the faculty members that have a strong bearing on the image of the institute because important decisions hinge on these evaluations. The evaluations should offer diagnostic feedback and should be aligned with the performance standards and the expected outcomes. The faculty's evaluation should be fair in terms of holding them accountable for what can be legitimately attributed to their performance. Subjective assessments and the actions that are followed as a result are open to legal challenges by the faculty. Most performance appraisal systems fail due to subjective evaluations of the employee performance (Murphy, 2020; Murphy et al., 2018).Regardless of how a performance appraisal system is designed, it will always be considered as a failure by both employees and the management (Pulakos et al., 2015; Adler et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2018).

*Third*, the ACR has its roots deeply embedded in the public sector traditions and has inherited all the tribulations of this sector. However, in the educational setting ACR is considered as a supplementary document rather than a main document.The respondents believe that ACRs are less prone to biases because the head of the institutions usuallydo not directly deal with the faculty members. The only problem with the ACR is that it only provides a bird's eye view of the faculty's evaluation that can be used in deciding the promotions and rewarding the faculty members, but has little utility in the faculty's training and development initiatives.

*Fourth*, besides the sources of information for the faculty evaluation and problem that was highlighted by the respondents is related to the problem of measurability of the faculty'swork/performance. This problem is generic rather than eccentric and has been discussed at length in the literaturereview as well as in the analysis section.

*Finally*, a certain degree of formalization is necessary for the smooth transaction of the business. Rules and regulations provide a framework for running the operations of the organization and remove ambiguities, but too rigidity can break the organization. Performance appraisal is a process that is applied to humans and ignoring the human aspect in this process can create issues for the management. Thus, balance needs to be maintained in formalization and flexibility. Closely related to the issue of

rules and regulations is its proper implementation, e.g., application of one part and ignoring the other or maintaining double standards in application are issues that shake the foundations of the organization. Empathetic leadership can solve this problem.

**Limitations and Future Direction**

Only qualitative data have been collected from the management level in the chosen universities and HEI's; however, collection of data from the faculty would have provided a more holistic picture of the appraisal process. Moreover, even in the top-level management, data were only collected from a single sex—male managers and supervisors, thus lacking diversity with respect to sex. The findings of this study have been further limited to the public-sector universities and HE institutions. We, therefore, cannot make a claim to generalization of the findings to the private sector universities and HEI's. Future research can be conducted in a similar area by collecting quantitative data from the faculty— which is the main stakeholder in the evaluation process— to find out frequency of the issues that relate to performance appraisal of the faculty and to validate the findings generated from analysis of the qualitative data.

**Discussion**

Many qualified people in Pakistan do not opt for academia as they think that there is no proper evaluation and reward mechanisms. According to Gratton (2004), the performance appraisal process is a "dehydratedritual" in which managers and employees are simply going through a process of little use (Murphy, 2020; Chubb& Reilly, 2011; De Waal &Counet, 2009). Many consider it as a process that is not equipped to bring a positive change in the organization (Colville &Millner, 2011).

In Pakistani universities, performance appraisal has been formally implemented in the recent past as previously with a haphazard process. The HEC made it compulsory for all universities and HEI's to conduct the faculty and staff appraisals on a regular basis using standardized criteria as provided by the HEC. The faculty's performance is linked to the overall rating of the university. A lower rating of a higher education institute will deprive the fund that the HEC provides these universities for a myriad of activities.

The participants are of the opinion that the universities share similar features as that of any other organization in the public sector.The HEC has a stronghold over the HEIs by providing a framework for operations and non-compliance might result in serious consequences. The main controlling string of the HEC is the accreditation of the university/institute. Non-accreditation means disarming the university from awarding degrees to the students and thus driving it out of the education field.The appraisal process is also standardizedto a larger extent by the HEC nationwide, making it an all-authoritative body.

A worrisome situation is that the faculty's evaluations are not properly utilized as important HR decisions and actions. The sporadic training arranged by universities and HEIs have little impact on improving the faculty's pedagogical skills and/or research skills. It isjust an exercise conducted on a periodic basis—the role of which has been marginalized.

The sources for generating information for the faculty's evaluations rarely focus on the quality of the academics rather it serves more of objective criteria. The validity of the information gathered is thus questionable as it does not depict the complete picture of the faculty's performance. In a collectivist culture like Pakistan relationships take precedence over professionalism and the system of

performance evaluation is thus corrupted by nepotism. Double standards for the employees have increased skepticism in the faculty and have lowered the trust in the management.

According to the literature the teaching job comprises noise,mainly because of diffused performancemeasures and delayed performance outcomes. Muddy performance criteria and lack of communication in terms of expectation from the faculty has derailedthe performance of these professionals. The only targets which these professionals are aware of is the teaching load and quantity ofpublications. Providing work targets to the employees'baselineactivity, which seems to be missing in the higher education sector in Pakistan.

The performance feedback given to the faculty members is a one-way process as the evaluation results are never discussed with them. According to Aguinis (2019),an effective performance appraisal should aim at improving the employees'performance and establishing connections between performance and reward (Ghurchian&Rahgozar, 2010)and assessingworkforce development (Saeed et al., 2011). Performance appraisals should be used as tool communicating and then matching the expected outcomes to the actual outcomes to identify performance gaps that create blockages in achievement of organizational goals (DeWaal, 2004). The evaluations should be used for setting the training contents as training refreshes their knowledge and skills and gives motivation to work effectively with morecourage and confidence (Rasheed et al., 2010).

Supervisors need to be cognizant of theBig Picture, to recognize how various parts of thesystem fit together(De Waal &Counet, 2009). An objective performance appraisal system needs to be supported by a well-establishedand well-defined communication system. This implies improving downward, upward and horizontal communication channels.Aguinis(2019) stresses performance appraisal to be a participative process.

Peer appraisaland self-appraisal are considered as important sources for employee appraisal, which seems to be missing in the universities/HEI'sin Pakistan. Elsewhere in the worldpeer appraisal is a norm. The concept of self-assessment, which supplements the other performance appraisal sources, seems to be absent in Pakistani universities. In a nutshell the performance appraisal system in the higher education sector is marred by several shortcomings. Some of these challenges are generic in nature while others are idiosyncratic.

## Contribution

The current study has also made several practical contributions. This case study has shown the criticality of performance appraisal for managing performance of the faculty, which is crucial to provision of quality education. The aim is to draw attention to some unacknowledged problems in the design and implementation of appraisal/evaluation system that incorporate value-added measures. Performance appraisal lies at the heart of HR decision making with respect to faculty training and development, salary increments, promotions, motivation etc. The management therefore needs to take this exercise in a serious manner with an effort to improve performance of these professionals. Interview data suggested the importance of a well-understood relationship between the performance appraisal and performance management system. Integrating these two systems so that a part of performance appraisal objectives clearly stem from performance management would prove beneficial, as then the systems would strengthen and complement each other. Moreover, aligning individual goals with objectives of the higher education system would not only help achieve bigger objectives of higher education, but also achieve the organizational goals and objectives.

## Conclusion

The empirical evidence shows a heart-rending picture of the performance appraisal system prevalent in the higher education sector. Not only the information gathering sources are flawed, but the process is also truncated after the results are generated. On the whole the use of performance appraisal systems as an effective tool is suggested, provided prudent use is made of this information. The main challenge is blending information collected from various sources for better comprehension of the actual performance of the educators.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1:List of Interviews**

| No. | Institution | Position | Interviewee Code | Interviewee Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | Vice Chancellor | A1 | 50 min. |
| 2 | A | Chairman Chemistry Deptt. & Director QEC | A2 | 1 hour & 10 min. |
| 3 | A | Dean Faculty of Social Sciences | A3 | 57 min. |
| 4 | B | Vice Chancellor | B1 | 1 hour |
| 5 | B | Director Advanced Studies and Research, Director ORIC | B2 | 47 min. |
| 6 | B | Director Advanced Studies and Director QEC | B3 | 1 hour & 5 min. |
| 7 | C | Dean Faculty of Crop Production Sciences & Genetics | B4 | 1 hour & 20 min. |
| 8 | C | Vice Chancellor | C1 | 1 hour |
| 9 | C | Dean Faculty of Electrical Engineering | C2 | 1 hour & 15 min. |
| 10 | D | Vice Chancellor | D1 | 48 min. |
| 11 | D | Dean Faculty of Physics & Numerical Sciences | D2 | 57 min. |
| 12 | D | Chairman Statistics Deptt. | D3 | 55 min |
| 13 | E | Vice Chancellor | E1 | 40 min. |
| 14 | E | Director QEC | E2 | 30 min. |
| 15 | F | Director | F1 | 55 min. |
| 16 | F | Deputy Director | F2 | 40 min. |
| 17 | F | Coordinator MSc Applied Sciences | F3 | 1 hour & 44 min. |
| 18 | F | Coordinator BBA | F4 | 40 min. |
| 19 | G | Chairperson Committee for Development of Social Sciences | G1 | 40 min. |

Table 2: List of Codes

| Short Description | Codes | Sub-themes/Category | Theme | Raw data |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Appraisal System | PAS | | Sources for faculty appraisal | |
| | PAS:*Std* | **PAS**: Appraisal by the Students | | "Students are the best judge of the faculty performance in the class. This is the only documented evidence regarding the faculty's performance. If the teacher is not teaching properly, the students are bold enough to report this to the concerned authorities because students are serious about their education……"(B1)<br><br>"Instead of calling it appraisal, I would rather call it student monitoring. Teachers can be monitored by their pupils in a far better way; especially for their punctuality, class teaching, and exam related issues. I would rather say that students' monitoring is better than monitoring by the management; as they are in the class so they can keep a better check on the teacher's class activities and routine."(E2)<br><br>"Every semester we conduct faculty appraisal by involving students in the process because I think they should be involved in the process."(E2)<br><br>"Feedback from [the] students ensure course completion by the faculty members of their assigned courses." (F4)<br><br>"The students are very candid about the teachers' performance and will demand any change if required. The change might be related to the teacher's teaching style or any other attribute of the instructor. Furthermore, if the students are totally dissatisfied with their instructor's knowledge base, they might even directly communicate this to the Director or Joint Director for the instructor to be replaced." (F1) |
| | PAS:*Spr* | **PAS**: Appraisal by the Supervisor | | "The coordinators are in direct contact with the students and they keep the faculty informed about its performance. The supervisors understand the system better, as they have also been a product of this system. They know better how to appraise a faculty member, based on his personal experience and sound judgement."(E2) |

| | PAS:*Topmgt* | PAS:Appraisal by the top management- Annual Confidential Report (ACR) | | "The system of the ACR has been in place and operational in the public sector for a long time.It is therefore a time-tested system. Every year the ACR's are prepared, which play a role in promotion."(B4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | "The ACR covers the gap in appraisal, which is left open from other appraisal sources and methods." (F1) |
| | | | | "The ACR provides flexibility, and complements the other appraisal methods used for faculty evaluation. The head of the department or organizations is required to write this report and keep it safe in the employees' personal record. The report is usually kept confidential and not even revealed to the concerned person in normal circumstances. The ACR is a good tool because it can cover for deficiency in other appraisal systems, but the trick is how to use it. Because it is based on subjective judgment of the superior, therefore, care needs to be exercised in order to control any injustice creeping into the faculty evaluation." (A3) |
| | | | | "The report summarizes the performance of employees in written form and are kept under lock and key. The file may be shared with the employee only in cases of promotions." (D1) |
| | | | | "When the ACR has adverse comments about an employee, it is a worrisome situation because he might be penalized in the form of job loss, withholding promotion, annual increments, etc. an employee might sometimes be asked to explain any substandard performance once it is documented in the ACR." (B2) |
| Challenges | CHA | | **Challenges in the performance appraisal system** | |
| | CHA:*Stud* | CHA: Inappropriate Appraisal of the Faculty by the Students | | "Student and peer evaluations have been recently introduced, but the system is still in its developing phase. The students do not know the utility of this system."(A1) |
| | | | | "The students should take it seriously. We need to develop a culture so that it will not only help them, but also for the incoming students if the evaluation |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | information is used to improve faculty's teaching. Feedback from students ensures course completion by the faculty members of their assigned courses." (F4)<br><br>"Students who fill out the assessment forms for the teachers do not recognize the importance of their feedback. They either consider it as an opportunity to take revenge from the teacher [they do not like] or to gain a soft corner. The student perceives that the teacher will award him/her marks in accordance with the evaluation he/she gets from a particular class. The students even link the class performance of a teacher with his personality traits."(B4)<br><br>"The appraisal done by the students reveals only half-truth. Teacher evaluations are biased, and at the mercy of the students, [which] all dependents on personal preferences."(C1)<br><br>"Students who are completing the assessment forms for the teachers do not recognize the importance of their feedback. They either take it as an opportunity to take revenge from the teacher or to gain a soft corner in his heart. The students perceive that the teacher will award him marks in accordance to the evaluation he/she gets from a particular class. The students' even link the class performance of a teacher with his personality traits." (B4) |
| | **CHA:***Sp rvsr* | **CHA:** Biased Appraisal by the Supervisors | | "...however, one limitation is that as the faculty and the management usually work together for many years, therefore the management cannot give an objective picture of the faculty's performance if there are performance lapses, due to informal relations that have developed over the years." (E1)<br><br>"The existing system is based on 'word of mouth' and can be considered as a more person-oriented system." (F1) |
| | **CHA:***T mgt* | **CHA:** Perils in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) | | "If a system has existed for long, this does not mean it is fair and flawless. People complain about the ARC, as the superiors have misused it in the past, due to the subjective nature of the Report. The person who prepares the ACR should detach himself from personal prejudice and give a fair picture of employee performance."(B4) |

| | | | | "Subjectivity is not a bad thing. The main concern is how this subjectivity is exercised by the individual who prepares the ACR. It was done in universities in the USA and was kept confidential. If there were any adverse comments about the faculty member, he should be given an opportunity to explain the reason for adverse performance."(F3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **CHA:M** *esr* | **CHA:** Subjective Performance Measures | | "The nature and complexity of the faculty's job do not allow many aspects of the job to be easily measured. For example, the number of credit hours spent in the classroom can be easily observed, but how that time was spent cannot be tape measured. There is no institute where work related to different aspects of the faculty's job can be converted into points or credit hours, besides teaching load to get a holistic view of the faculty's actual workload on all aspects of its job."(D3) |
| | | | | "In performance evaluation specific weightage is given to teaching, again if evaluations are well written and objective it carries weight, otherwise not."(B1) |
| | | | | "It is a dilemma about how the system should recognize goodness. There is no silver bullet to fix the system. Sometimes you know a person is really good, but then we can't do anything as people go to court and for us to defend; it becomes very difficult. To prove in front of the judge that someone is better than the other becomes very subjective."(E1) |
| | | | | "[The] faculty evaluation is based on objective as well as subjective criteria, such as 70% performance standard comes from students' evaluation. Besides, a qualitative assessment is also carried out. The Institute so far hasn't come up with any mechanism to check supervisors' biases in faculty evaluation." (F1) |
| | | | | "It can be stated that the faculty is evaluated only on a part of its job and not the entire job. Besides teaching, other activities or aspects of the faculty's job are ignored in the evaluations or given lesser importance. The [evaluation] form needs to be revised, so as to get an objective opinion of the students, regarding the teaching aspect of [the] faculty."(F3) |
| | **CHA:O** *utdate* | **CHA:** Outdated System | | "Faculty appraisal system in our university or I would rather say, in our educational system is not a |

| | | | | comprehensive one."(A1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | "[The] style of education is changing and we are still stuck with the system of ACR and students filling out the appraisal sheets". (D2) |
| | | | | "We need to understand that new systems should be introduced if you want to improve the working of the faculty members. But I doubt that we are going to see a new system in the university..."(F4) |
| | | | | "We have individuals in our systems who by default are hardliners. They should understand that quality teaching is not all about students' scores. We cannot put everything into a straight jacket. Faculty evaluation should be a package deal."(A3) |
| | | | | "... The faculty appraisal is not done in a structured manner..."(B1) |