



# To examine the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the employee appraisal system in a non-profit humanitarian and development organization in Zambia

Ronicah Muyatwa Simbeza

Postgraduate Student – Graduate School of Business,  
University of Zambia (UNZA), Lusaka, 10101

Chaste Nsama

Lecturer – Graduate School of Business,  
University of Zambia, (UNZA), Lusaka, 10101

Date of Submission: 13-03-2026

Date of Acceptance: 27-03-2026

## ABSTRACT

The study examined the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the employee appraisal system in a non-profit humanitarian and development organization in Zambia, CARE Zambia. The sample size 65 participants were selected using both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 key informants, while 60 employees were randomly selected to provide quantitative data. The sample size of 60 was arrived at using the Slovin's formula. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, complemented by secondary data from reputable journals and official publications. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns and meanings.

The study found that while the organization has a structured appraisal system, several barriers limit its effectiveness, including complex appraisal forms, inadequate feedback from supervisors, unclear performance expectations, delayed submissions, and contextual factors such as short project durations. Strategies to address these barriers were identified, including simplifying appraisal forms, enhancing feedback mechanisms, improving adherence to deadlines, ensuring fairness and transparency, addressing contextual factors, and recognizing high performers. The study recommends implementing these strategies to improve employee participation, motivation, and professional development, thereby strengthening the overall effectiveness of the performance appraisal system and aligning employee performance with organizational objectives.

**Key Concepts:** *Barriers to effective performance appraisal system, Employee performance appraisal, Non-profit humanitarian and development organization.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance appraisal is a fundamental component of human resource management that focuses on systematically assessing employees' job performance against predefined standards and organizational objectives (Armstrong, 2014). It serves as a structured mechanism through which organizations monitor employee contributions, clarify performance expectations, and align individual efforts with strategic goals (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Beyond performance monitoring, employee performance appraisal plays a critical role in key human resource decisions, including compensation, promotion, succession planning, and training needs assessment (Lubasi, Nsama & Sililo, 2025).

Employee performance appraisal has traditionally been understood as a periodic, often annual, evaluation process focused on measuring individual employee performance against predefined job standards, Key performance Indicators and targets. Historically, these systems emphasized control, compliance, and administrative decision-making, particularly in relation to promotions, salary increments, and disciplinary actions (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Such appraisal approaches were largely top-down, with supervisors acting as the sole evaluators, and employees positioned as passive recipients of feedback. While this model offered structure and consistency, it often failed to capture the complexity of employee performance in dynamic organizational environments, leading to



growing dissatisfaction with its rigidity and limited developmental value (Fletcher, 2001).

A key driver of departure from traditional performance appraisal systems lies in their inherent limitations, particularly issues of subjectivity, bias, and misalignment with organizational strategy. Research indicates that appraisal outcomes are frequently influenced by rater errors such as halo effects, leniency, and favoritism, which compromise fairness and credibility (Levy & Williams, 2004). Furthermore, once-off or infrequent appraisal cycles provide delayed feedback, reducing their usefulness for real-time performance improvement and employee learning. In rapidly changing work contexts, especially in development and humanitarian organizations, these static appraisal models struggle to accommodate teamwork, cross-functional collaboration, and evolving performance expectations, thereby necessitating alternative approaches (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011).

Consequently, organizations have increasingly departed from traditional performance appraisal toward more continuous, strategic, and development-oriented performance management systems. These modern approaches emphasize ongoing feedback, employee engagement, goal alignment, and capacity building rather than mere evaluation (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). By integrating coaching, competency development, and shared accountability into the appraisal process, performance management systems address many of the shortcomings associated with conventional appraisals (Daniels, 2018). This shift reflects a broader recognition that effective performance measurement should not only judge past performance but also support future growth, adaptability, and sustained organizational effectiveness (Noe, 2017). As a result, performance appraisal has evolved from a standalone evaluative tool into a more holistic performance management framework.

One such organization that has over the years departed from traditional performance appraisal toward more continuous, strategic, and development-oriented performance management systems is CARE international Zambia (CARE, 2012). CARE International is a global confederation of humanitarian organizations that has been operating in Zambia since 1992 (CARE Zambia, 2020). CARE Zambia operates in various fields, including health, education, agriculture, and livelihoods, with a focus on empowering women and girls to address poverty and social injustice in the country. The organization's history dates back to

1945 when a group of 22 American organizations came together to form the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE) to provide humanitarian aid to war-torn Europe after World War II. The organization's focus later shifted to addressing poverty and inequality in developing countries worldwide. CARE Zambia's specific history is detailed on the organization's website. In 1992, CARE International began working in Zambia to address the challenges facing the country, including high levels of poverty and inequality. In the early years, CARE Zambia focused on providing humanitarian assistance, including food and relief supplies, to those affected by the drought and famine that hit the country in the early 1990s. Since then, CARE Zambia has expanded its programs to address the root causes of poverty and inequality in the country. The organization's programs focus on promoting food security, improving health and nutrition, increasing access to education and livelihood opportunities, and empowering women and girls to participate fully in their communities (CARE Zambia, 2012).

Over the years, CARE Zambia has collaborated with various partners, including the Zambian government, other NGOs, and international development organizations, to achieve its objectives. CARE Zambia's impact on the country is evident in the significant improvements in the lives of the vulnerable people it serves (Sililo, and Mauzu, 2025).

Later in 2006, as the organization transitioned from emergency programming to implementing development, the system of measuring the performance of employees changed to Performance Management which was more strategic, ongoing and focuses on employee growth strategies, as well as team values. Progressively, a few modifications have been implemented (i.e changes in key tools); however, CARE has continued implementing performance Management system to measure employee performance for the past 19 years (CARE, 2012).

The employee appraisal system at CARE International in Zambia has faced several challenges in the years of the organization's existence. The human Resource unit took a deliberate initiative to engage various employees and their supervisors during one of the performance management and appraisal trainings. This preliminary investigation through group discussion review that, the employee appraisal process was too long and tedious. Most of the lower-level employees submitted that the appraisal form is complicated to fill in; hence they feel the organization is just ticking boxes on what



employees do not understand. Data from the CARE Country Office Human Resource unit indicates a notable decline in the submission of both semi and annual appraisal forms, with percentages of 65% in 2020, 60% in 2021, and the lowest recorded at 57% in 2022, despite several reminders. The concern over employee delays and non-submission of appraisal forms is a concern to management as non-measurement of performance shows failure in implementing the project and departmental Key Performance Indicators which are linked to the overall strategic direction of the organization.

CARE Zambia has continued implementing performance Management system to measure employee performance for the past 19 years (2006 to date). Progressively, a few modifications have been implemented (i.e changes in key tools), CARE. However, the employee appraisal system at CARE International in Zambia has continued to face challenges in the years of the organization's existence (CARE, 2020). It is from this background that this paper aims at examining the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the employee appraisal system in a non-profit humanitarian and development organization in Zambia.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### ii.i. Introduction

This section comprise of two sub-sections. The first sub-section reviews relevant literature related to the subject matter under study. The second sub-section provides a theoretical framework for this study.

### ii.ii. Prior Research

The effectiveness of performance appraisal systems has been widely debated in scholarly literature, with various studies highlighting critical hindrances that have emerged over the past decade. According to DeNisi and Murphy (2017) in their study "*Performance Appraisal and Management: The Impact of Feedback and Goal Alignment*," conducted in the United States, the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems is closely tied to how well their objectives align with organizational goals. Their research, based on a meta-analysis of over 50 empirical studies, concluded that organizations that design their appraisal systems to support both employee development and strategic goals achieve better outcomes.

Kluger and DeNisi (1996), in their seminal work titled "*The Effects of Feedback Interventions on Performance: A Historical Review*," emphasized that timely and constructive feedback is critical in ensuring the effectiveness of appraisal systems.

Their study revealed that when feedback is delayed or vague, employees struggle to improve their performance. This was further supported by Ramesh Kumar and Priya Patel (2019) in their study "*Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal Systems in Indian IT Companies: A Case Study Approach*." The study found that a lack of timely feedback and managerial favouritism were major hindrances to effective appraisals. Employees perceived the appraisal system as biased, reducing trust and engagement.

Adebayo and Okechukwu (2021) conducted a study titled, "*the Impact of Performance Appraisal on Employee Productivity in Nigerian Manufacturing Firms*," focusing on how performance evaluations affect employee efficiency in the manufacturing sector. The findings revealed that performance appraisals in Nigerian manufacturing firms were generally perceived as ineffective due to inconsistencies in implementation and the absence of meaningful feedback. Employees reported that appraisals were conducted irregularly, and when they were performed, they had little to no impact on career advancement or rewards. Many employees felt that their contributions were not adequately recognized, leading to decreased motivation and productivity.

Murphy and Cleveland (1991), in their study "*Understanding the Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Performance Appraisals*," argued that fairness and non-discrimination are crucial to maintaining employee trust and avoiding legal complications. This concern was echoed in Tanzania by Kweka and Mussa (2020) in their study "*The Impact of Organizational Culture on Performance Appraisal Effectiveness in Tanzanian Banks*." They found that appraisal criteria in Tanzanian banks were often unclear, leading to disputes over promotions and salary increments. Employees perceived the system as punitive rather than developmental, which negatively affected morale.

Adler and Gundersen (2008), in their study "*Cross-Cultural Aspects of Performance Appraisal*," highlighted that performance appraisal systems are not universally effective due to cultural variations. Their research, which analysed multinational organizations across Europe and Asia, found that some cultures view performance appraisals as confrontational, leading to resistance from employees. A study in Zambia by Mulenga and Mwansa (2020) titled "*Performance Appraisal Practices in Zambian NGOs: Challenges and Opportunities*" reinforced these findings. Using a qualitative case study approach, they analysed performance appraisal challenges in three major



NGOs and found that short-term project cycles, high staff turnover, and complex appraisal forms hindered effectiveness. Additionally, many workers reported that after performance evaluations were conducted, there was little to no follow-up action taken to address their concerns or support their career growth. As a result, employees perceived appraisals as a routine administrative task rather than a meaningful tool for development and motivation. The study recommended simplifying appraisal documentation to make the process more accessible and less burdensome for employees and supervisors. It also emphasized the need for continuous feedback mechanisms rather than relying solely on annual reviews, as regular communication could provide more timely and actionable insights for performance improvement.

While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into performance appraisal systems in organizations, they notably fall short in examining the barriers hindering the effective implementation of employee appraisal systems in non-governmental organizations in Zambia, particularly at CARE International Zambia.

#### **ii.iii. Theoretical framework**

This study is guided by Denison's Model of Organizational Culture and Social Exchange Theory, which together provide a basis for understanding the barriers to the effective implementation of employee performance appraisal systems in non-governmental organizations in Zambia, particularly at CARE International Zambia. Denison's model, developed by Daniel R. Denison in the early 1990s, posits that organizational culture influences performance through four traits: involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission (Denison, 1990). The model assumes that employee involvement fosters commitment, so lack of involvement may lead to negative perceptions and unwillingness to participate (Denison & Mishra, 1995). It also assumes that consistent internal systems support effective policy implementation, implying that poor communication and feedback can hinder appraisal effectiveness. Additionally, adaptability is necessary to adjust systems based on feedback, and failure to do so may result in challenges such as inadequate supervisor skills, outdated procedures, and ineffective appraisal methods. Finally, the model assumes that clear goals and mission improve performance, so unclear goal setting may confuse employees and negatively affect perceptions of the appraisal system. The Social Exchange Theory, developed by George C. Homans (1958) and expanded by Peter Blau (1964),

argues that workplace relationships are based on reciprocal exchanges where fairness, support, and recognition promote positive employee behaviors such as cooperation and participation (Blau, 1964). The theory assumes that trust, fairness, and mutual benefits are essential, meaning that poor supervisor skills, weak communication, or limited resources may undermine appraisal effectiveness. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture and workplace relationships contribute to barriers such as poor communication, poor feedback, unclear goals, supervisor skill gaps, employee unwillingness, and limited financial resources in the implementation of performance appraisal systems.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employed the pragmatist paradigm philosophical approach which employed a descriptive research design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, recognizing that this approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the employee appraisal system in a non-profit humanitarian and development organization in Zambia. The study population comprised 71 employees at International CARE Zambia, across all departments, from which a sample of 65 participants were selected. The sample size of 65 was arrived at using the Slovin's formula. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 key informants to provide qualitative data, while 60 employees were randomly selected to provide quantitative data. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, complemented by secondary data from reputable journals and official publications. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns and meanings. Reliability and validity were ensured through internal consistency checks and content validity, and ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

### **IV. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **ivi. Establishing lower-level employees and supervisors perceptions of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia**

The purpose of the section below was to analyze and interpret the perceptions of lower-level employees and supervisors regarding the performance appraisal process, specifically focusing on the ease of



completing forms, the timeliness of feedback, adherence to deadlines, and the perceived fairness of

the appraisal system at CARE international Zambia.

The respondents were asked to assess the ease of understanding and completing the performance appraisal forms at CARE International Zambia. Table 4.1 reveals that the majority of respondents (70.0%) reported that the forms are easy to understand and complete, with 16.7% strongly agreeing and 53.3% agreeing.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	10	16.7	16.7	16.7
Agree	32	53.3	53.3	70.0
Disagree	14	23.3	23.3	93.3
Strongly Disagree	4	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.1: Clarity and Ease of Appraisal Forms**

This suggests that the appraisal forms are generally considered user-friendly by most employees and supervisors. However, a significant minority (30.0%) indicated difficulties in understanding and completing the forms, with 23.3% disagreeing and 6.7% strongly disagreeing. This highlights that, despite the majority's positive response, a notable portion of the workforce perceives the forms as challenging, which could potentially hinder their effectiveness. The complexity of forms aligns with studies by Brewster and Sparrow (2005), which highlight that overly complicated appraisal systems can reduce understanding and participation. This concern was echoed in Tanzania by Kweka and Mussa (2020) in their study titled "The Impact of Organizational Culture on Performance Appraisal Effectiveness in Tanzanian Banks.". They found that appraisal forms in Tanzanian banks were often complex leading to disputes over promotions and salary increments. Employees perceived the system as punitive rather than developmental, which negatively affected morale. This partially supports Denison's Model of Organizational Culture, which emphasizes simplicity clarity and consistency in organizational systems. However, unlike their

study where dissatisfaction was widespread, the present study shows that only a minority struggle with understanding the appraisal forms.

The study also sought to find out employees perception of the performance appraisal system at CARE International in Zambia in providing valuable feedback for employee development. The findings reveal that employees at CARE International Zambia generally perceive the performance appraisal system positively, especially in terms of its ability to provide valuable feedback for their development. A significant portion, 35.0% (21 out of 60), strongly agree that the system effectively supports their professional growth. When combined with the 50.0% (30 out of 60) who agree, 85.0% of respondents express a positive view of the system's developmental feedback. The findings reveal that 15.0% (9 out of 60) of employees disagree, indicating that the system may not meet the needs of all employees. While this group is a minority, their feedback suggests potential gaps in the system, possibly related to its implementation or alignment with specific roles. This minority response highlights areas that may require further attention and refinement. This is shown in table 4.2 below

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	21	35.0	35.0	35.0
Agree	30	50.0	50.0	85.0
Disagree	9	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.2: Feedback for Employee Development**



The findings reveal that most employees perceive the appraisal system as providing valuable developmental feedback to employees. These findings are similar with the findings by CARE Zambia (2012) which revealed that the performance appraisal system at CARE Zambia provides valuable information to both employees and the management that makes it easy for developmental decision making. This makes it easy for employees to respond well to work demands. This also supports Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees respond positively when organizations provide supportive feedback. However, the minority

who expressed dissatisfaction indicates possible gaps in implementation, differing from studies where dissatisfaction with appraisal feedback was more widespread.

The respondents were asked about their perception regarding adherence to deadlines for submitting appraisal forms at CARE International Zambia. Table 4.3 revealed that over half of the respondents (53.3% disagree, 1.7% strongly disagree) reported challenges in meeting deadlines. On the other hand, 45.0% of respondents (10.0% strongly agree, 35.0% agree) stated that employees adhere to deadlines.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
Agree	21	35.0	35.0	45.0
Valid Disagree	32	53.3	53.3	98.3
Strongly Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3: Adherence to deadlines

The findings highlight a critical challenge in adhering to deadlines for appraisal form submission. This indicates a significant issue with deadline adherence, which could be attributed to inefficiencies or barriers within the appraisal process. While this suggests some level of compliance, it is overshadowed by the majority who face difficulties in meeting deadlines. The finding reveal that many employees experience difficulties in meeting appraisal submission deadlines is consistent with studies by Herman Aguinis (2013) and Michael Armstrong (2014), who found that workload pressure and weak administrative coordination often delay appraisal processes. This also supports Denison's Model of Organizational Culture, which emphasizes consistent systems and effective organizational procedures for successful performance management. This discrepancy

highlights the need for improvement in ensuring that deadlines are consistently met.

The respondents were asked about their perception of the fairness and impartiality of the performance appraisal process at CARE International Zambia. Figure 4.1 revealed that 80.0% of respondents (25.0% strongly agree, 55.0% agree) believe the process is fair and unbiased, indicating a strong positive perception of the system's fairness among employees and supervisors. Despite the overall positive perception, 20.0% of respondents (11.7% disagree, 8.3% strongly disagree) expressed concerns about the fairness of the appraisal process. Although this represents a smaller portion of the sample, it points to the existence of potential issues related to perceived bias or unfairness in the evaluation process.

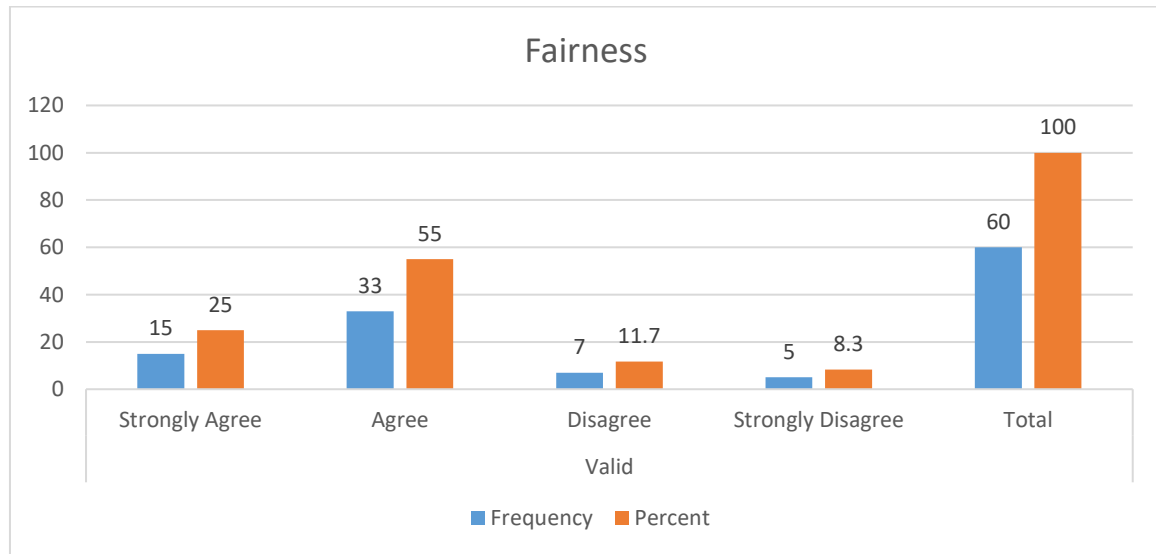


Figure 4.1: Fairness and Unbiased Process

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents perceive the performance appraisal process as fair and unbiased; the 20.0% who disagree or strongly disagree indicate areas where improvements could be made. However, the minority reporting unfairness reflects findings by David E. Bowen and Cheri Ostroff (2004), who noted that perceptions of bias may still occur even within generally accepted appraisal systems. The finding that most respondents perceive the appraisal process as fair aligns with studies by Michael Armstrong (2014) and Herman Aguinis (2013), which found that transparent appraisal systems enhance employee trust and acceptance. This also supports Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that perceived fairness promotes positive employee attitudes.

The respondents were asked whether social contexts within CARE Zambia influence their perceptions of the performance appraisal system. Table 4.4 revealed that the majority, 56.7%, disagreed with the idea that social contexts play a significant role in shaping their perceptions. Specifically, 46.7% disagreed, and 10.0% strongly disagreed, suggesting that the majority of employees do not believe that social factors within the organization affect the performance appraisal process. On the other hand, 43.3% of respondents, including 8.3% who strongly agreed and 35.0% who agreed, indicated that they believe social contexts influence their perceptions of the performance appraisal system.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	5	8.3	8.3	8.3
Agree	21	35.0	35.0	43.3
Valid Disagree	28	46.7	46.7	90.0
Strongly Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4: Social Contexts Affecting Perceptions of Appraisal

The key finding from the data is that most respondents (56.7%) do not see social contexts as a significant influence on their perception of performance appraisals at CARE Zambia. This suggests that, for the majority, factors like workplace culture, interpersonal relationships, or power dynamics are not seen as major contributors to their view of the appraisal process. Several

reasons could explain this perspective; including the possibility that CARE Zambia promoting a professional work environment where performance appraisals focus primarily on work-related competencies rather than social factors.

One potential reason for the lack of perceived influence from social contexts is the structure of the appraisal process itself. CARE



Zambia has designed its performance appraisal system based on clear, objective criteria, the impact of social dynamics such as employee relationships or organizational culture has been minimized. Additionally, employees are aware that performance appraisals are intended to assess work performance objectively, which could lead them to downplay any potential influence of social factors on the process.

However, the 43.3% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that social contexts influence perceptions suggest that workplace dynamics might still have some impact. This could include the role of relationships with supervisors or peers, organizational hierarchies, or informal networks within the workplace, which might subtly affect how feedback is delivered or received. The Key informants were asked whether the performance management tools aligned with Organizational Goals. Key respondent five stated that:

*‘The performance management tools aligned with the organizational goals’.*

A clearer understanding of the criteria being measured would help employees see how their individual performance contributes to the organization’s success, enhancing motivation and providing a sense of purpose (Lubasi, Nsama, and Sililo, 2025). While aligning the appraisal system

with the core values of CARE Zambia is essential, it is important to consider how well the organizational goals are communicated to staff at all levels. A lack of clarity around these goals could undermine employees’ ability to see how their individual efforts contribute to the broader mission, leading to disengagement. According to DeNisi and Murphy (2017) in their study conducted in the United States of America, titled ‘The Impact of Feedback and Goal Alignment,’ the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems is closely tied to how well their objectives align with organizational goals.

**ivii. To assess the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia.** These sections assess the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia. The respondents were asked if they encountered any challenge during the performance appraisal system in the last decade. Table 4.5 revealed that a significant majority (65%) of respondents have not faced challenges with the system. Specifically, 61.7% disagree, and 3.3% strongly disagree, suggesting that the performance appraisal system has generally been effective and well-implemented for most employees. This is shown in Table 4.5 below:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Agree	21	35.0	35.0	35.0
Valid Disagree	37	61.7	61.7	96.7
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.5: Challenges with the Appraisal System**

Table 4.5 reveals that 35% of respondents agree that they have encountered challenges with the system, indicating that some employees have experienced difficulties over the past decade. This group highlights that while the system works well for most, there are areas where it may be falling short for a portion of the workforce.

The respondents were asked whether short project durations at CARE Zambia posed as a challenge to the appraisal process. Table 4.6 revealed that 78.3% of respondents agreed, 30.0% strongly agreed and 48.3% agreed. In contrast, 21.6% of respondents, including 13.3% who disagreed and 8.3% who strongly disagreed, did not share this view. This is shown in Table 4.5 below.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Agree	18	30.0	30.0	30.0
Valid Agree	29	48.3	48.3	78.3
Valid Disagree	8	13.3	13.3	91.7
Valid Strongly Disagree	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4.6: Short Project Durations pose as challenges to the appraisal process**



The majority of the respondent (78.3%) indicated that the short duration of projects significantly influenced the effectiveness of performance appraisals. This large proportion of respondents highlighted that short-term projects presented challenges that made it difficult to conduct thorough and meaningful appraisals. Employees and supervisors alike recognized the limitation of limited project timelines in providing a comprehensive evaluation of performance, particularly for tasks that require more time for observable outcomes and personal development.

The 21.6% minority who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that short project durations affected the performance appraisal process suggested that some employees may have a different perspective. They could either perceive the short-term nature of projects as not being a hindrance to the appraisal process or believe that the system could remain effective even in the face of limited project duration. This differing viewpoint suggests that the impact of project duration may not be universally perceived and could vary depending on the specific nature of the work and the individuals involved.

The findings suggest that the short duration of projects is a key factor influencing the

effectiveness of CARE Zambia's performance appraisal system. This results in limited time for monitoring, and rushed appraisals. These findings are similar with the finding conducted in Zambia by Mulenga and Mwansa (2020) titled "Performance Appraisal Practices in Zambian NGOs: Challenges and Opportunities", whose findings reinforced that short-term project cycles resulted in limited time for monitoring, rushed appraisals. This observation can also be explained by Goal-Setting Theory developed by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham (1990), which emphasizes that clear goals and adequate time are necessary for effective performance evaluation and feedback.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether the time limitations affected the quality of their performance evaluations. The majority, 68.4%, disagreed with the notion that time constraints negatively impacted evaluation quality. Specifically, 56.7% disagreed, and 11.7% strongly disagreed, suggesting that most employees do not perceive the limited time available for performance appraisals as a major issue in terms of evaluation quality. However, a smaller group, 30.5%, agreed that time limitations affect the quality of their performance evaluations, with 25.0% agreeing and 5.0% strongly agreeing. This is shown in figure 4.2 below.

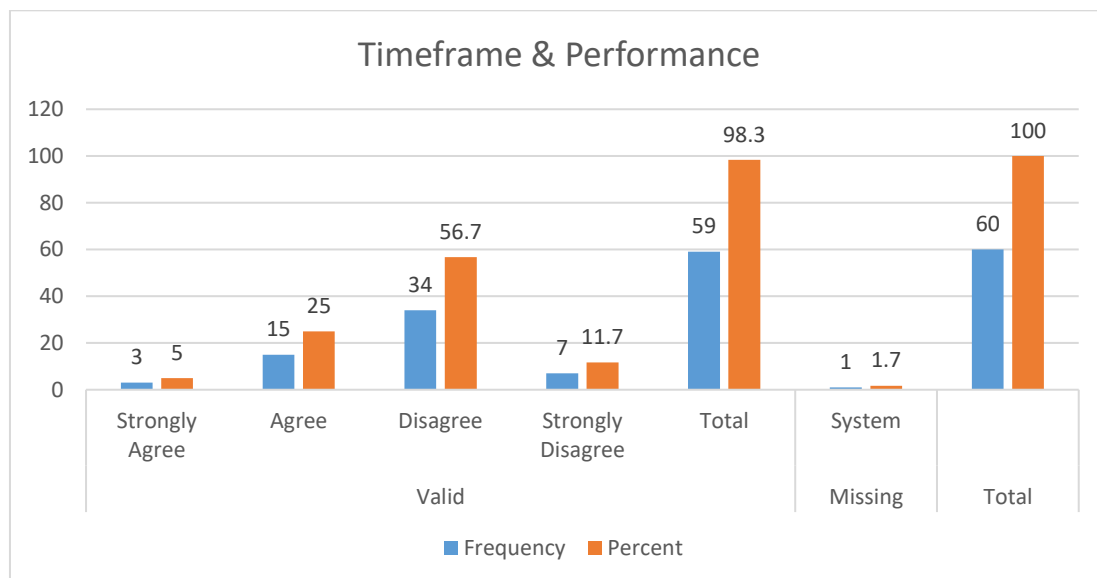


Figure 4.2: Impact of Limited Timeframes on Performance Evaluations

The findings indicate that time constraints do not appear to be a significant concern for most employees in terms of appraisal quality. One possible explanation is that the performance appraisal system at CARE Zambia is structured and efficient enough to accommodate tight deadlines

without compromising quality. This could include clear evaluation criteria, preparatory steps, and efficient systems that help supervisors conduct evaluations thoroughly, even within a limited timeframe. Employees who disagreed with the statement may not perceive the timeframes as



restrictive, and instead view the process as adequately managed despite time constraints.

On the other hand, the 30.5% of respondents who agreed that time limitations affect evaluation quality raise valid concerns about rushed assessments and insufficient feedback. The perception that limited time could lead to hasty evaluations may result in less detailed or comprehensive feedback, potentially limiting the effectiveness of the appraisal process

The respondents were asked whether language barriers impact communication during the

performance appraisal process at CARE Zambia. Figure 4.3 revealed that 53.3% disagreed, and 33.3% strongly disagreed with the notion that language barriers significantly affect communication during the appraisal process. This indicates that most employees do not perceive language barriers as a major issue. On the other hand, 13.4% of respondents, including 1.7% who strongly agreed and 11.7% who agreed, felt that language barriers were a concern during the performance appraisal process. This is shown in figure 4.3 below

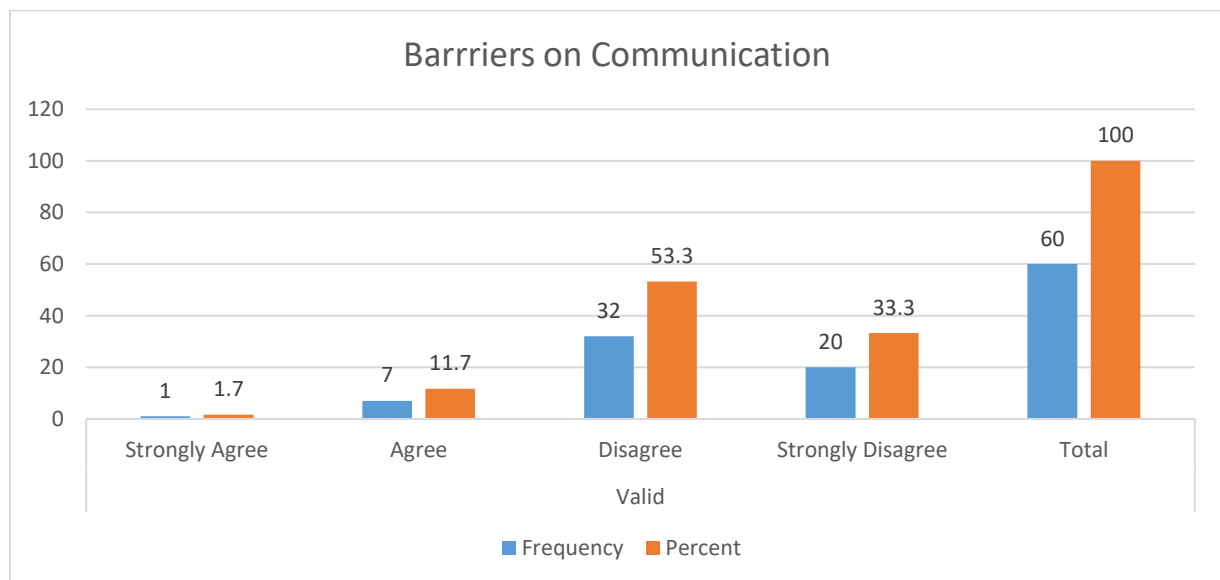


Figure 4.3: Impact of Language Barriers on Communication

The key finding from the survey results is that the overwhelming majority of respondents (86.6%) do not believe that language barriers have a significant impact on communication during performance appraisals at CARE Zambia. This suggests that, for most employees, language is not an obstacle to effective communication in this context. The reasons for this perception may include the widespread proficiency in English, Zambia's official language, as well as the organization's communication strategies to ensure clarity.

One possible explanation for the lack of concern regarding language barriers is the general proficiency in English among CARE Zambia's employees. As English is the official language of Zambia, employees are likely equipped to understand and engage in the appraisal process without significant language barriers. Additionally, CARE Zambia may employ strategies such as using local languages when needed, translating key documents, or offering additional support to

employees requiring assistance, further minimizing the potential for communication breakdowns during the appraisal process.

Although the majority of respondents did not perceive language barriers as an issue, the 13.4% who agreed that language difficulties impacted communication suggest that there may be specific circumstances where language remains a concern. Employees in remote areas or with lower educational levels may encounter challenges understanding appraisal-related language or forms. Regional language variations might also contribute to misunderstandings, particularly with performance-related terms.

The respondents were asked on what their views were regarding the complexity and terminologies of the performance management forms. Key respondent One stated that:

*'Many employees, particularly those at lower levels, struggle to understand the terminology used in the performance*



*appraisal system. Terms like "Globally scaled" and "gender equality" are seen as irrelevant to their work.*

This suggests a need for the system to be more tailored to the specific roles and responsibilities of lower-level employees, ensuring the language used is accessible and relevant to all staff. The complexity of the terminology used in the appraisal forms reflects a disconnect between the language of the system and the everyday responsibilities of lower-level employees. This issue highlights the broader concern of accessibility and inclusivity within the appraisal process. Although simplifying the terminology would make the system more comprehensible, it also raises the question of whether the system, as currently designed, effectively captures the full scope of employee performance across varying roles and responsibilities. Striking the right balance between simplicity and comprehensiveness is crucial to

ensure the system serves all employees without compromising its ability to evaluate performance accurately. The finding that lower-level employees struggle with the complexity and terminology of appraisal forms highlights a gap between the language of the system and employees' day-to-day responsibilities. This aligns with studies by Brewster and Sparrow (2005), which note that overly technical or generic appraisal language can reduce accessibility and employee engagement.

The respondents were also asked if they were any other barriers hindering the effective implementation of the performance appraisal system in the organization. Figure 4.5 revealed that respondents identified several hindrances they have experienced with the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia. The most frequently mentioned issue was the complexity of the appraisal forms, with 36.7% of respondents reporting this as a barrier. This is shown in figure 4.5 below:

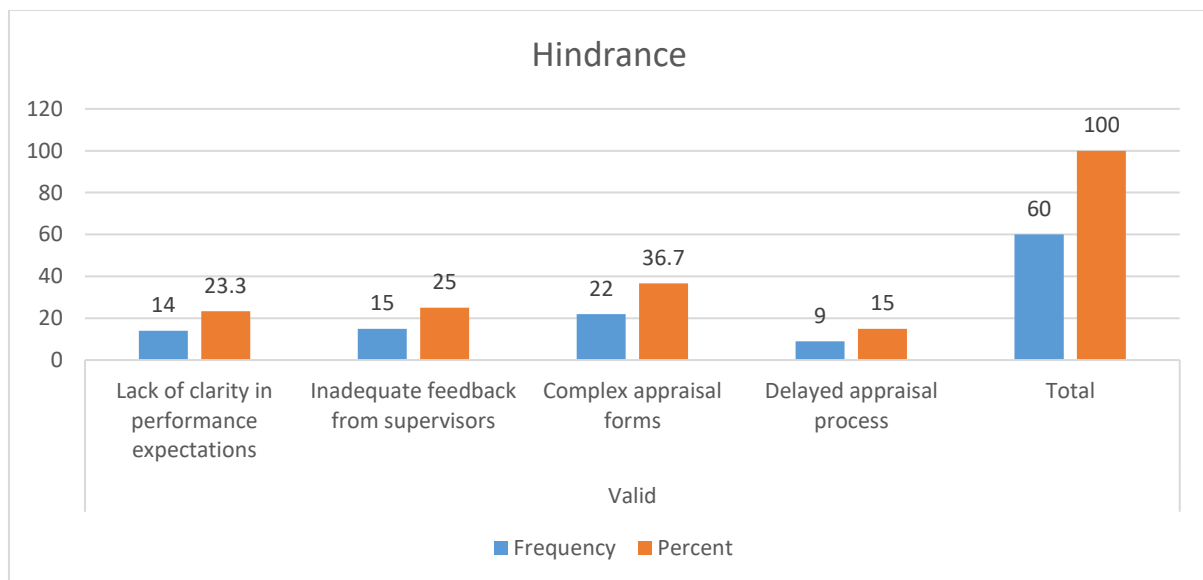


Figure 4.5: Hindrances in the Appraisal Process

This suggests that the structure or design of the forms may be too complicated, making it difficult for both employees and supervisors to complete or understand effectively, potentially leading to errors or delays in the process. Another significant challenge reported by 25.0% of respondents was inadequate feedback from supervisors. This gap in communication may leave employees unsure of their performance or unclear on how to improve, undermining the effectiveness of the appraisal system in supporting their development. Similarly, 23.3% of respondents noted

a lack of clarity in performance expectations, indicating that unclear goals or criteria may lead to misunderstandings about job requirements and performance standards. To enhance clarity, there is a need to digitize the process and employee records. Kaluba, Nyirenda, and Sililo (2025) argues that there is always a need to initiate orientations and training in the utilization of digital humanities and any technological task in managing records in the organization, as this will help the employee have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and technologies.



Key informant seven stated that

*'Delays in the appraisal process as a hindrance'.*

Although this issue was less prevalent, delayed appraisals can affect timely feedback, disrupting employees' ability to align their goals and impacting overall motivation. Addressing these hindrances would help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia.

The findings indicate that the complexity of appraisal forms, inadequate feedback, unclear performance expectations, and delays in the appraisal process are key barriers to effective implementation at CARE International Zambia. The complexity of forms, reported by 36.7% of respondents, aligns with studies by Brewster and Sparrow (2005), which highlight that overly complicated appraisal systems can reduce understanding and participation. The lack of adequate feedback, noted by 25% of respondents, supports Social Exchange Theory, emphasizing that fair and constructive feedback fosters employee cooperation and trust (Blau, 1964). Similarly, unclear performance expectations (23.3%) reflect principles of Denison's Model of Organizational Culture, which stresses that clarity in goals and systems is crucial for effectiveness (Denison, 1990). Delays in the appraisal process, although less common, can disrupt timely feedback and employee motivation, reinforcing the need for consistent, well-coordinated appraisal procedures to enhance system effectiveness.

**iviii. Establishing strategies that can be put in place to deal with barriers affecting the effective implementation of employee appraisal systems at CARE International Zambia.**

The study sought to identify strategies that could address the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia. Based on survey responses and key informant interviews, several strategies emerged as critical for improving the appraisal process. Key Informant Three stated that:

*"Simplifying the appraisal forms and providing clear, constructive feedback throughout the year are essential to ensure all employees understand and benefit from the system."*

The finding emphasizes that simplifying appraisal forms and providing clear, constructive feedback are fundamental strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at CARE International Zambia. Regular and meaningful

feedback ensures that employees are aware of their performance strengths and areas for improvement. Providing constructive feedback throughout the year, rather than only during formal appraisal sessions, fosters continuous learning, increases employee engagement, and strengthens trust in the system. This aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that when employees perceive fairness, support, and recognition from the organization, they are more likely to respond with positive behaviors such as cooperation and commitment (Blau, 1964). The key informant was asked how feedback could be improved in the appraisal process. Key Informant Three stated:

*"Providing regular and constructive feedback throughout the year will help employees understand their performance and areas for improvement."*

Training supervisors to provide observation-based, meaningful feedback ensures that evaluations are accurate, fair, and actionable. It fosters trust between employees and management, reinforcing positive workplace relationships, which aligns with Social Exchange Theory employees are more likely to engage and cooperate when they perceive support, fairness, and recognition from their organization (Blau, 1964). Overall, implementing this strategy can bridge communication gaps, enhance employee understanding of performance expectations, and promote professional growth.

The key informant was asked what could be done to ensure timely submission of appraisal forms. Key Informant Two stated:

*"Establishing clear guidelines, reminders, and incentives for timely submission of appraisal forms will help improve compliance with deadlines."*

This strategy addresses delays in appraisal submissions by clarifying expectations and offering flexible timelines where feasible, particularly for short-term projects. The strategy suggested by Key Informant Three establishing clear guidelines, reminders, and incentives to improve timely submission of appraisal forms aligns with findings from other reputable studies in organizational performance management. For instance, Aguinis (2013) emphasized that clear communication of deadlines and structured timelines enhances compliance and reduces delays in performance appraisal processes. Similarly, Armstrong (2014) noted that implementing reminders and accountability mechanisms significantly improves adherence to appraisal schedules in both public and private organizations.



The key informant was asked how the appraisal system could be made fairer and more transparent.

Key Informant Three stated:

*"Developing transparent evaluation criteria and providing unbiased supervisor training will ensure fairness and consistency in the appraisal process."*

Aguinis (2013) emphasizes that clearly defined, transparent appraisal criteria increase employee trust in performance evaluations and reduce perceptions of bias. Similarly, Armstrong (2014) notes that supervisor training on objective assessment methods enhances consistency and fairness, which in turn improves employee engagement and motivation.

The key informant was asked how contextual factors affecting performance appraisals could be addressed. Key Informant One stated:

*"Adapting the appraisal system to project-specific objectives, offering multi-language support, and minimizing the influence of social dynamics will enhance its effectiveness."*

This strategy aligns with findings from Mulenga and Mwansa (2020), who reported that short-term project cycles in Zambian NGOs often constrain effective monitoring and lead to rushed appraisals. Setting realistic, project-specific goals ensures that appraisals are meaningful, achievable, and relevant to employees' responsibilities. Additionally, providing multi-language support addresses potential communication barriers, a finding supported by Brewster and Sparrow (2005), who highlighted that linguistic and cultural factors can influence employees' understanding of performance evaluations.

The key informant was asked how employee motivation and engagement could be enhanced through the appraisal system. Key Informant Four stated:

*"Implementing a system that recognizes and rewards top performers will motivate employees, encourage engagement, and reinforce positive performance."*

This strategy directly addresses the need to foster motivation and commitment among employees. By recognizing and rewarding high performers, employees perceive that their efforts are valued, which encourages continued engagement and higher productivity. This aligns with Expectancy Theory, which argues that individuals are motivated to perform when they believe their effort will lead to desirable outcomes, such as rewards or recognition (Vroom, 1964).

Similarly, research by Lubasi, Nsama and Sililo (2025) emphasizes that differentiated reward

systems in performance appraisals increase employee motivation, commitment, and retention. In NGOs and other project-driven organizations, recognizing contributions is especially important for maintaining morale and engagement, as employees often face short-term contracts or high workloads (Mulenga & Mwansa, 2020). Therefore, implementing a structured recognition and reward mechanism can reinforce positive performance, support employee development, and strengthen overall appraisal effectiveness at CARE International Zambia.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the barriers hindering the effective implementation of the employee appraisal system in a non-profit humanitarian and development organization in Zambia, specifically at CARE International Zambia. It can be concluded that while the organization has a structured appraisal system in place, several barriers limit its full effectiveness. These include the complexity of appraisal forms, inadequate feedback from supervisors, unclear performance expectations, occasional delays in submission, and the influence of contextual factors such as short project durations. Although the majority of employees perceive the system positively, a significant minority experience challenges that undermine their engagement and trust in the process.

It can also be concluded that key barriers are closely linked to both organizational culture and workplace relationships. For example, poor communication and complex forms reflect gaps in consistency and involvement, as outlined in Denison's Model of Organizational Culture, while inadequate feedback, fairness concerns, and motivation gaps highlight the importance of reciprocal exchanges between employees and the organization, as emphasized by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). Contextual factors such as short project durations further limit the system's adaptability, often resulting in rushed appraisals and reduced effectiveness.

The study also identified strategies to mitigate these barriers. Simplifying appraisal forms, enhancing feedback mechanisms, improving adherence to deadlines, ensuring fairness and transparency, addressing contextual factors, and recognizing high performers emerged as critical measures. Implementing these strategies can enhance employee understanding, participation, and motivation, thereby strengthening the overall effectiveness of the performance appraisal system. Key informant insights reinforced that continuous



improvement, role-specific customization, and transparent communication are essential for building trust and engagement.

Overall, it can be concluded that while CARE International Zambia has made significant efforts to implement an employee appraisal system, its effectiveness is constrained by structural, procedural, and contextual barriers. Addressing these challenges through the strategies identified in this study can improve appraisal outcomes, foster employee development, and enhance organizational performance, ensuring that the system supports both individual and organizational growth

### REFERENCES

- [1]. Adler, S., & Gundersen, A. (2008). Performance appraisal in Scandinavia: Effects of context and purpose. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(4), 665-684.
- [2]. Aguinis, H. (2013). *Performance management* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- [3]. Armstrong, M. (2014). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice* (13th ed.). London, UK: Kogan Page.
- [4]. Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- [5]. Brewster, C., & Sparrow, P. (2005). *European human resource management: Contemporary issues and perspectives* (2nd ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- [6]. CARE International. (2020). Our history. Retrieved from <https://www.care-international.org/who-we-are/our-history>
- [7]. CARE Zambia. (2012). *CARE Zambia: Celebrating 20 years of impact*. CARE Zambia.
- [8]. CARE Zambia. (2021.). About us. Retrieved from <https://www.carezambia.org/about-us/>
- [9]. Colquitt, J. A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 386-400.
- [10]. Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- [11]. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- [12]. Culbertson, S. S., et al. (2014). The effects of feedback frequency on learning and task performance: Challenging the "more is better" assumption. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 124(1), 23-40.
- [13]. Daniels, A. (2018). Performance management: Changing behavior that drives organizational effectiveness. *Performance Improvement*, 57(10), 45-51.
- [14]. Davenport, T. H., Harris, J., & Shapiro, J. (2015). Competing on talent analytics. *Harvard Business Review*, 93(10), 52-58.
- [15]. DeNisi, A. S., & Kluger, A. N. (2000). Feedback effectiveness: Can 360-degree appraisals be improved? *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1), 129-139.
- [16]. DeNisi, A. S., & Murphy, K. R. (2017). Performance appraisal and performance management: 100 years of progress? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421-433.
- [17]. DeNisi, A. S., & Murphy, K. R. (2017). Performance appraisal and performance management: 100 years of progress? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421-433.
- [18]. Denison, D. R. (1990). *Corporate culture and organizational effectiveness*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- [19]. Denison, D. R., & Mishra, A. K. (1995). Toward a theory of organizational culture and effectiveness. *Organization Science*, 6(2), 204-223.
- [20]. Fletcher, C. (2001). Performance appraisal and management: The developing research agenda. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74(4), 473-487.
- [21]. Gomes, A. B., et al. (2018). The impact of performance appraisal on the level of job satisfaction. *Journal of Human Resources Management and Labor Studies*, 6(2), 47-63.
- [22]. Kaluba, C.; Nyirenda, W.; Sililo, R. (2025) Utilization of Digital Humanities in Managing Archives and Records in the Public and Private Sectors in Zambia. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 2514-2519, <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25mar1470>.
- [23]. Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1996). *The Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into Action*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- [24]. Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback



- intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.
- [25]. Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.
- [26]. Kothari, C. (2004). *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques 2nd Edition*. India: New Age International.
- [27]. Kweka, A., & Mussa, R. (2020). The impact of organizational culture on performance appraisal effectiveness in Tanzanian banks. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 10(4), 45–60.
- [28]. Latham, G. P. (2007). *Work motivation: History, theory, research, and practice*. California, CA: Sage Publications
- [29]. Levy, P. E., & Williams, J. R. (2004). The Social Context of Performance Appraisal: A Review and Framework for the Future. *Journal of Management*, 30(6), 881-905.
- [30]. London, M., & Beatty, R. W. (1993). 360-degree feedback as a competitive advantage. *Human Resource Management*, 32(2-3), 353-372.
- [31]. Lubasi, L., Nsama, C. and Sililo, R. (2025) Employee Perception of the Organizational Employee Retention Strategies in State Owned Insurance Firm. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(4), 2333-2343. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25apr1283>
- [32]. Mount, M. K., & Johnson, E. (2006). Performance appraisal of behavior-based constructs: Deciding what to evaluate. *Human Resource Management Review*, 16(3), 269-287.
- [33]. Mulenga, L., & Mwansa, S. (2020). Performance appraisal practices in Zambian NGOs: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of African Human Resource Management*, 8(1), 12–28.
- [34]. Murphy, K. R., & Cleveland, J. N. (1991). *Performance appraisal: An organizational perspective*. Allyn & Bacon.
- [35]. Noe, R. A. (2017). *Employee Training and Development*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- [36]. Orodho, J. A. (2003). *Techniques of writing research proposals and reports in education and social sciences*. Maseno University Press.
- [37]. Peeters, M. A., Taris, T. W., & Kompier, M. A. (2006). Juggling work and personal life: Work–nonwork boundary management and work–related well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 11(3), 168-184.
- [38]. Pulakos, E. D., & O'Leary, R. S. (2011). Why is performance appraisal important? Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.
- [39]. Schleicher, D. J., & Day, D. V. (1998). A cognitive attributional-intentional (CAI) model of appraisal accuracy: Implications for training. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 74(2), 89-120.
- [40]. Schuler, R. S. (1980). Definition and conceptualization of career-related variables. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 17(2), 238-287.
- [41]. Sililo, R., and Mauzu, N. (2025). Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Integration in Orphanages and Home Based Facilities, and Barriers to African Government's Initiatives: Lessons from Zambia. *Journal of Rural Sociology, Microfinance, and Poverty Studies*, 2(1), 21-31. <https://doi.org/10.54536/jrsmps.v2i1.4658>
- [42]. Tziner, A., Fisher, M., Senior, T., & Weisberg, J. (2012). Organizational politics, justice, and support: Their impact on misbehaviors and turnover intentions of hospital workers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(8), 1916-1952.
- [43]. Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- [44]. Zellars, K. L., Tepper, B. J., & Duffy, M. K. (2002). Abusive supervision and subordinates' organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(6), 1068-1076.