

# Investigating the influence of employee perceived appraisal fairness on motivation: The mediator role of organisational commitment

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## Keywords

Appraisal fairness,  
Employee motivation,

Organisational  
commitment,

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## Abstract

The study examines the challenges of performance evaluation, highlighting the importance of fairness in motivating employees and encouraging organisational commitment. The main objective is to investigate the relationship between perceived fairness in performance assessment, organisational commitment and employee motivation. Furthermore, the study aims to understand how fairness perceived in assessments affects motivation, considering the role of mediation of organisational commitments. The cross-sectoral survey used quantitative research to gather information from full-time operational personnel at three university campuses. The findings show that participants generally consider the performance assessment moderately fair, but the level of organisational commitment and employee motivation varies from person to person. The study found moderate positive correlations between equity and organisational commitment and strong correlations between organisational commitment and motivation. The results suggest that improving the performance assessment process can enhance the perception of fairness and encourage organisational commitment and motivation. The study highlights the crucial role of fairness in performance evaluation for promoting organisational commitment and improving employee motivation, offering valuable insights for enhancing performance management systems.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The need for performance assessments (PAS) in higher education is indisputable, but implementation and management must be carefully considered to meet specific needs and

objectives. An effective HEI management control system is an essential component of national development and needs to be customised to support effective activities and achieve academic objectives (Tanveer et al., 2018). PAS may be complicated for managers who believe that rating promotes better performance, but employees may feel discouraged if the rating is unfair (Joti et al., 2020). The evaluation is necessary to retain the best talent and motivate employees, but if considered unfair, it may lead to low commitment, theft, and psychological anxiety (Claus, 2019; De Clercq, 2019; Nair & Salleh, 2015). According to a study by Baloch et al. (2021), if employees regard the evaluation system as fair and fair, they will accept more feedback. 2021). On the other hand, unfair performance assessment systems can lead to incorrect performance targets, failure to achieve targets and negative consequences, as Ikramullah et al. pointed out. (2012).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The effectiveness of performance assessment systems depends on how employees perceive fairness. If these systems are not properly implemented, they may adversely affect unemployment, shortages, turnover and broken relationships (Kampkötter 2016; Smither & London 2009). Fairness is a crucial predictor of organisational commitment (OC) behaviour, and performance evaluation should be given priority and done fairly to improve employee commitment and satisfaction (Salleh, 2013). It was found that PAS' perceived fairness positively impacted OC and motivation (Salleh et al., 2013). A fair evaluation of performance has a positive impact on job satisfaction and performance and has a significant impact on employee commitment (Sammel 2018; Aman et al. 2019). If PAS is deemed unfair, it can have a negative impact on employee motivation (Modipane et al., 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the influence of the perception of PAS fairness on motivation and whether the OC mediates the relationship between the perception of PAS fairness and motivation (Modipane et al., 2019). Based on the issues highlighted in the literature, the problem statement is that employees' perception of dissatisfaction with performance assessments may have a negative impact on their motivation. After identifying this problem, the researchers studied how PAS perception (organisational justice) affects the motivation of university employees. The study also examined whether organisational commitment (OC) mediates PAS's perceived fairness and motivation.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The study examined organisational performance assessment systems (PASs) by assessing how employees perceive fairness, motivation levels and organisational commitments. The study aims to measure both the fairness of the PAS and the level of motivation and organisational commitment of employees, to determine whether the PAS is fair and whether the organisation's commitment is a mediator between the PAS and individual motivation, and to determine whether the PAS is fair.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature reviews focus on the perception of fairness (independent variable), motivation (dependent variable) and organisational commitment (mediating variable).

### **Performance appraisal fairness**

The theoretical basis for this study is Colquitt et al.'s theory of justice. (2001) The study explores how the perception of justice influences employee attitudes and behaviour. The study identifies four forms of justice: procedural, interpersonal, informational, and distributive. These perceptions of fairness influence outcomes such as job satisfaction, physical health, and citizenship-related behaviour (Colquitt et al., 2001). Jha and Ray (2021) found that perceived fairness in performance evaluation systems positively influenced knowledge-sharing behaviours. However, their study is limited to the Indian IT sector and has a relatively small sample size (N=105), which may affect the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

The study by Wang and Li (2022) found that developmental performance appraisal positively impacts teaching and research performance through intrinsic motivation. Evaluative performance appraisal positively impacts teaching performance through extrinsic motivation but has a negligible effect on research performance. Perceived procedural fairness moderates the impact of performance appraisal on work motivation and job performance. However, the study does not explore distributive and interactional justice affecting work motivation and performance. Based on the findings of Khan et al. (2020), there is a significant positive

relationship between the administration's objectives and the distribution and procedural justice. Moreover, the developmental purpose of performance appraisal is strongly correlated with interactional justice, while employee satisfaction is significantly related to procedural and overall organisational justice. It is important to note that the study's cross-sectional design limited its scope, preventing an analysis of changes over time.

Furthermore, research has not investigated the potential variations in these factors in different regions of Pakistan's institutions and regions. According to Taneja et al. (2023), other types of organisational justice (processual, distributional and interactional justice) significantly impact the various outcomes in the workplace. The study highlights that performance evaluation criteria, feedback and organisational support are vital to shaping employees' perception of justice. However, it should be noted that the study's dependence on quantitative methods and the lack of a longitudinal approach limit a comprehensive understanding of the impact of cultural differences on the perception of justice and may overlook the specific experiences of employees. The review of the literature by Tarigan et al. (2023) highlights the critical impact of fairness in performance assessments on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. However, the study lacks empirical verification and does not consider the impact of practical implementation challenges and cultural and organisational environments outside the Indonesian public sector.

Ayoun et al. (2022) discovered that satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback and the appraisal system is connected to distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice. However, the cross-sectional design and the study's limited focus on the United States hotel industry may limit the findings' applicability. Additionally, the study did not consider individual differences, such as personality traits, which could potentially influence the observed phenomena. According to Harrington and McCaskill (2022), employee-level goal difficulty and organizational-level goal specificity significantly influence the perceived fairness of performance appraisals. The study also emphasises the essential roles of intrinsic motivation and pay satisfaction in predicting perceived fairness. However, the research is limited to the United States and could benefit from exploring how demographic factors may moderate the relationship between goal-setting and perceptions of fairness (Harrington & McCaskill, 2022). Ryu and Hong (2020) found that constructive performance feedback positively influences the perceived fairness of performance appraisals, with trust in

supervisors mediating this relationship. However, the study's use of cross-sectional data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey limits its ability to establish causal relationships over time. Additionally, the focus on the U.S. federal government may limit the generalizability of the results to other cultural or organisational contexts (Ryu & Hong, 2020).

According to Setiawati and Ariani (2020), fairness of performance evaluations and job satisfaction significantly impact organisational commitment and job performance. However, the study focused on the healthcare industry in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and its findings may limit the generality. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design makes it difficult to track changes over time and determine the cause. Future research should explore the potential moderating effects of demographic factors. Zwiech, in 2021, also found that 45 per cent of employees felt that performance assessments were unfair, particularly in medium-sized enterprises and regular workers and medium-sized managers. However, the regional focus of the study may limit the generalisation of the findings. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth research into the root causes of perceived injustice and suggestions for improvement. The cross-section design of the survey also prevents tracking changes in perception over time.

### **Organisational Commitment**

According to Bach (2010) and Mathieu and Kohler (1990), organisational commitment is a multidimensional theory encompassing three domains: emotion, morality and continuity. The three-part organisational commitment model developed by Meyer and Allen in 1991 identified these three forms of commitment as affective, normative, and continuous. Affective commitment involves emotional attachment to organisations, whereas normative commitment is driven by the desire to stay, and the cost of recognising departure influences continuous commitment. This model has implications for employee behaviour, workplace satisfaction and retention decisions, as it can improve citizen behaviour and productivity (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Different factors affect the commitment of university academics to their institutions (Bashir & Gani, 2020). Bashir and Gani (2020) emphasise the importance of creating an environment that strengthens the retention and performance of teachers and emphasises the influence of educational level, gender and income on commitment. However, it should be noted that its

research focuses on some geographical regions, and its results may directly impact the generalisation of other cultural or educational environments. Furthermore, self-reported data's subjectivity and cross-sectional nature can create prejudices and limit the ability to track commitment changes over time (Bashir et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study did not fully explore the factors that regulate organisational culture and leadership styles (Bashir & Gani, 2020).

Similarly, Nangoli et al. (2020) discuss the relationship between integrity and organisational commitment and emphasise the role of leaders in promoting employee commitment. However, their research is limited to specific industries and regions and may affect the generalisation of the results. Furthermore, their cross-sectional design limits the ability to track changes over time and establish causes. The possible interaction of financial and non-financial incentives with organisational commitments has not been thoroughly studied (Nangoli et al., 2020). Furthermore, Osha and Idudia (2020) found that age influences employees' emotional and normative commitments. However, as their research focuses on a single demographic group in a particular area (women support staff), the results are limited to other situations or groups. The cross-sectional design also limits the ability to measure the change in commitment over time and does not explore the possible effect of different demographic factors on organisational commitment (Onuoha & Idemudia, 2020).

In addition, Holliman et al. (2022) highlight the relationship between perceived autonomy support and organisational commitment. However, their study focuses on an existing political technology institution, which may limit their findings' relevance to other higher education institutions. The use of cross-cutting design prevents the tracking of changes over time and the establishment of causal relationships. Moreover, 102 participants may be small in sample size and dependent on self-reported measurements, which raises concerns about possible reaction bias (Holliman and colleagues, 2022). Boateng and Ledimo (2023) discovered that the level of commitment of private school teachers varies depending on the age and experience of the teacher. However, because they focus on specific geographical regions, their research is limited, which can impact the generality of the results. In addition, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to assess changes in commitment and commitment over time. It has not thoroughly examined the impact of specific organisational

practices and policies that may explain the difference between public and private teachers (Boateng & Ledimo, 2023).

Fernández Mesa et al. (2020) underline the importance of tasks in formulating employee commitments. However, the cross-sectional design of this study limits the assessment of changes in commitment over time and the establishment of causal relationships. In addition, the sample of Spanish companies may limit the application of the results to other cultural or organisational contexts. Coetzee and Bester (2020) discovered a connection between relationships, career satisfaction, and organisational commitment. However, their cross-sectional design limits the establishment of causal relationships over time. Due to specific professional sample distributions in global regions, the results may be limited to other industries and cultural settings. Sudha et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership affects commitment and performance at work, and the organisation's engagement mediates this relationship. However, the cross-sectional design and the focus of their study on the Maldives may limit the applicability of the results to other regions or public sector environments. Fischer et al. (2020) investigated the interaction between trust and commitment and discovered that emotional trust is strongly linked to commitment, while cognitive trust is more closely linked to ongoing commitment. However, their studies are limited by relatively few studies incorporated in meta-analysis and monitoring potential modulation influences of contextual variables. Mokoena et al. (2022) highlight the impact of talent management on engagement and the reduction in employee desire to leave and emphasise the link between organisational commitment and the reduction in employee desire for turnover. However, their single-department focus and cross-sectional design may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, Sobaih et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership and transactional leadership affect different aspects of commitment and subsequently influence employees' desire to stay in luxury hotels. The study's limitations include its focus on a specific industry and geographic region, potential applicability restrictions to other sectors, and its use of a cross-sectional design that hinders tracking changes over time and establishing causation.

## **Work Motivation**

According to McCormick and Ilgen (1992), motivation for work can be described as the combination of internal and external forces that induce individuals to engage in work-related

activities and affect the nature, duration and intensity of work). The impact of leadership on organisational success is significant as it influences behaviour and motivation (Purwanto et al., 2020). High work motivation improves performance and organisational commitment (Setiawan, 2021). Acquah et al.'s (2021) findings show a clear relationship between Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Alderfer's ERG Theory, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation, and McClelland's Need for Achievement Theory, indicating overlaps in higher and lower-order needs and motivational factors. Intrinsic motivation predicts performance and persistence across various domains.

When examining the commitment of university academics, it is evident that various factors influence their dedication to their institutions (Bashir & Gani, 2020). Bashir and Gani (2020) stress the significance of establishing an environment that enhances teacher retention and performance, and they highlight the influence of education level, gender, and income on commitment. However, it should be noted that the emphasis on specific geographic areas in the research can impact the generalisation of results in other cultural and educational contexts (Bashir et al., 2020). Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of self-reporting data and research may lead to bias and limit the ability to track changes in commitment over time (Bashir & Gani, 2020). In addition, the study did not fully explore factors such as organisational culture and leadership style (Bashir & Gani, 2020). Similarly, Nangoli et al. (2020) Discuss the relationship between the integrity of leadership and the organisation's engagement and emphasise leadership's role in promoting employee engagement. However, the scope of their research is limited to specific industries and regions, which may affect the generalisation of results (Nangoli et al., 2020). Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of their research limits the ability to track changes over time or determine causes. The potential interaction between financial and non-financial incentives has not been thoroughly studied to influence organisational commitment (Nangoli et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Onuoha and Idemudia (2020) found that age affects employees' emotional and normative commitments. However, due to their focus on specific demographic groups (female support staff), their study is limited, and the results are limited to other situations or groups. Cross-sectional designs also restrict the ability to measure changes in commitment over time and do not investigate the potential influence of different demographic factors on organisational commitment (Onuoha & Idemudia, 2020). In addition, Holliman et al. (2022)



highlight the connection between perceived autonomy support (PAS) and organisational commitment. However, their study focuses on a single former Polytechnic Institution, which may restrict the application of the results to other types of higher education institutions. The use of cross-sectional design makes it difficult to track changes over time and establish causal relationships. Furthermore, since the sample size is 102 participants, the study's results may be less robust, and dependence on self-reported measurements raises concerns about potential reaction bias (Holman et al., 2022). In 2023, Boateng and Ledimo (2023) discovered that private school teachers' commitment level varies depending on age and teaching experience. However, their research is limited by the focus on a particular geographical region, which may affect the generality of the results. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to evaluate changes in engagement and commitment over time. It did not research the impact of specific organisational practices or policies that could explain differences between teachers in public and private schools (Boateng & Ledimo, 2023).

Fernández-Mesa et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of tasks in forming employee commitment. However, the study's cross-sectional design limits the assessment of changes in commitment over time and the establishment of causal relationships. Furthermore, sample samples from Spanish companies may limit the application of the findings to other cultural or organisational contexts. Coetzee and Bester (2020) discovered connections between relationships, professional satisfaction and organisational commitment. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design of their research limits the establishment of causal relationships over time. Due to the unique professional demographic sample spread worldwide, the results may be limited to other industries and cultural environments. Sudha et al. (2023) discovered that transformational leadership affects commitment and performance at work and that organisational commitment mediates this relationship. However, the study's cross-sectional design, which focuses on Maldives, may limit the application of the findings to other regions or public sector contexts. Fischer et al. (2020) studied the connection between trust and commitment and discovered that emotional trust is closely linked to commitment, and cognitive trust is closer to ongoing commitment. Nevertheless, their research is limited by a relatively small number of studies incorporated into meta-analysis and surveillance of the potential moderating influences of contextual variables. Mokoena et al. (2022) emphasised the influence of talent management on engagement, reduced employee reluctance, and emphasised the relationship between organisational commitment and reduced employee

reluctance. However, their focus on a single department and their cross-sectional design may limit the generalisation of the results.

### **Relationship between performance appraisal fairness and motivation**

According to Dangol et al. (2021), fair and accurate performance evaluations consistent with job descriptions and providing constructive feedback significantly impact employees' motivation. Mok and Lee (2021) also emphasised the importance of a well-structured assessment process and recognising fairness in assessment processes, including distribution justice, procedural justice and interaction justice. Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) found an important impact of performance assessment on employment performance and a positive correlation between employee motivation and employment performance in Qatar's public sector. In addition, Kim and Rubianty (2011) point to the positive impact of procedural equity in evaluating intrinsic motivation. Majidi et al. (2021) emphasise the negative impact of lack of direct constructive feedback and the perception of subjectivity and injustice on motivation among health workers. Van Woerkom and Kroon (2020) suggest that strengths-based performance assessments significantly increase employee motivation. Finally, Berdicchi et al. (2022) found that the accuracy of performance management systems affects internal and external motivations by clarifying employment objectives and organisational expectations. These findings underscore the importance of performance assessment systems on employee motivation and performance at work, highlighting fairness, accuracy and effective communication as key factors to improve motivation and performance.

The above studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between performance appraisal and employee motivation. However, each study has its limitations. For example, Dangol et al. (2021) have limitations due to the lack of exploration of factors such as sample size, self-reported data, organisational culture, and economic conditions. Similarly, Mok and Leong's (2021) research is limited in generalisation due to its specific focus on geographical and industrial contexts and its reliance on quantitative survey data. Al-Jedaia and Mehrez's research (2020) is specific to Qatar and does not explore potential moderating variables or specific leadership styles. Kim and Rubianty (2011) focused only on American federal employees, while Van Woerkom and Kroon (2020) focused on a single organisational context for a Dutch consulting firm. Berdicchi et al. (2022) research is also limited due to its focus on a specific context in Northeast Italy, reliance on self-reported data, and cross-sectional

design. Although these researches have significantly contributed to understanding the impact of performance evaluation on employee motivation, future research should consider these limitations and explore additional factors influencing organisational culture, leadership styles and the long-term impact of performance evaluation systems on employment design.

### **Organisational commitment as a mediator**

It is widely recognised that organisational commitment (OC) is essential in various workplace relationships. Studies have shown that the OC acts as a mediator in several relationships, including the relationship between process justice and participation in the workplace (Ha et al., 2022), job satisfaction and organisational citizenship (Na-Nan et al., 2020), employee evaluation and motivation (Islam, 2023), employee quality and motivation (Agus et al., 2020), career expectations, family work balance and career development (Liu et al., 2020), transformational leadership and turnover intention (Donkor, 2021), and servant leadership and employee performance (Setyaningrum, 2020). However, studies by Ha and Lee (2022) and Na-Nan et al. (2020), Islam (2023), Agus, Selvaraj. (2020), Donkor et al. (2021), and Setyaningrum et al. (2020) have certain limitations. These include the limited focus on specific industries, regions or cultural contexts, the dependency on self-reported data, cross-sectional design that limits the ability to determine causality, and the absence of explorations of potential moderating variables. The results of Guo and Li (2023) show that organisational commitment is essential in the relationship between the conflict between work and family and turnover intention. However, their study also has limitations due to the dependence on specific cultural contexts, the use of cross-sectional designs, the absence of studies of potential modulating variables, and the dependence on self-reported data.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Method**

Phophalia (2010) defined research as a scientific endeavour that uses systematic processes to address important questions. The researcher uses a quantitative approach to incorporate rigorous research design and statistical analysis standards. This means that the conclusions drawn in this study are based on quantitative measurements, a characteristic of quantitative research (Phophalia, 2010).

### **3.2 Research Design**

Cross-sectional surveys have been used to answer research questions and objectives (Vaus, 2001). Participants are enrolled in e-mail questionnaires, and results and exposures are measured simultaneously to study their association.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The study follows the quantitative research approach based on the philosophy of positive research, emphasising empirical observation and measurement as the basis for knowledge (Patton, 2002). This approach prioritises factual evidence and statistical analysis while maintaining objectivity and distance from personal biases. Based on empiricism, positivism considers the universe composed of visible phenomena under deterministic laws. It usually uses a deductive method, which differs from the deductive approach of phenomenological research (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008).

### **3.4 Research Participants**

The research was conducted on full-time operations at three university campuses in South Africa. The study sample was selected using a probable technique called hypothetical sampling. As Bell et al. (2022) pointed out, sample size is crucial to representation. According to Acharya et al. (2013), sampling uncertainty may lead to biased results. According to Campbell et al. (2020), the study included non-university full-time staff who volunteered to participate. The purpose sample was used to select the most relevant sample for research objectives. This unlikely sampling technique allowed a deliberately selected participant who could provide valuable insights and data. The study aimed to understand the relationship between the perception of equity in performance evaluation, organisational commitment and employee motivation among full-time operational (non-academic) staff at three University campuses in South Africa. The purpose of the sampling ensured that the study was directed at people whose experiences and perceptions were directly related to the phenomena studied.

### **3.5 Measuring Instruments**

Electronic questionnaires were used in the study to determine the perception of performance assessment, CO and motivation among university employees. The questionnaire consists of four sections: demographic characteristics, fair assessment perception, CO and individual motivation. The study instruments included the assessment fairness scale of Colquitt (2001), the OC scale of Meyer and Allen (1993), and the Gagne et al. (2015) Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale.

Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alphas. The procedural, interpersonal, informational, and distributive justice scales showed high reliability, with alphas ranging from 0.90 to 0.93. The OC scales— affective, continuance, and normative commitment—also demonstrated good reliability, with alphas between 0.77 and 0.85. The motivation scale, which assesses various types of regulation and intrinsic motivation, yielded alphas of 0.74 to 0.92, indicating strong internal consistency across all measures.

### **3.6 Ethics**

The study received ethical approval (NWU-01890-22-A4) from the University's Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 20 February 2023. Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participant data, which was stored on a password-protected drive. Participation was voluntary, and all information was shared only for educational purposes under strict guidelines to avoid any harm or stress to participants. The study also complied with the Protecting Private Information Act, No. 4 of 2013, ensuring transparency, open communication, and compliance with the University Ethics Code of Conduct.

## **4. Results and Findings**

Descriptive analysis was used to describe demographic characteristics and measure employees' perceived performance appraisal fairness, OC, and motivation levels. It includes measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and variability (standard deviation, variance, kurtosis, skewness). Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation ( $\rho$ ) was used to determine the relationship between perceived fairness of performance evaluation and individual motivation. This non-parametric method evaluates the monotonic relationship between two variables based on their ranks rather than numeric values. Multiple regression analysis was

conducted to investigate the possible mediating effect of OC on the relationship between the perceived fairness of PAS and individual motivation.

#### **4.1 Descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics:**

The selected university campuses had 2 362 permanent full-time support staff as of August 2023. Of this number, only 170 staff members participated in the survey, resulting in a poor response rate of 7.2%. This means that most of the support staff did not participate in the survey, and their voices needed to be heard.

Of the 170 participants in the study, 70% were women, and 30% were men. The most represented age groups were 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 years, with 38.2% and 30.6% of the participants, respectively. The youngest (20-29) and oldest (60 years and older) age groups had the weakest representation in the study, with 8.2% and 6.5% of the participants, respectively. Most of the participants (71.2%) were on Level 1 (Peromnes 18-9), followed by 25.9% at Level 2 (Peromnes 8-6). Only 2.9% of the participants were at job level 3 (Peromnes 5 and below). More than half of the participants (59.4%) were from the Potchefstroom campus, 24.1% were from the Vanderbijlpark campus, and 16.5% from the Mahikeng campus.

#### **4.2 Reliability of the Measurement Instruments**

A high Cronbach's alpha value (generally above 0.7) indicates strong internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items in measuring the intended construct (DeVellis, 2003). Evaluation of organisational justice within a specific sample revealed significant insights into four distinct but related constructs. Each of these constructs was evaluated using a series of questionnaire items, and their reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Procedural justice, encompassing six items, showed a Cronbach alpha of 0.85. This high value indicates that the elements are closely interdependent and are effective in measuring the concept of procedural fairness collectively. In the distribution of justice measured using four elements, Cronbach's alpha was remarkably high, 0.94. This indicates an even more robust internal coherence than procedural justice, implying that these elements are highly reliable in assessing distribution fairness. The interaction of justice showed the highest internal consistency with the Cronbach alpha of 0.96, measured on four points. This excellent

consistency highlights the reliability of the questionnaire in capturing interpersonal fairness perceptions. Information justice refers to fairness and equity in distributing and accessing information in a context. It contains 0.941 Cronbach alpha coefficients, indicating strong internal consistency between five elements, considered unusually high. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for six measures measuring continuous commitment are relatively low, at 0.60. The construction of normative commitments shows strong internal consistency, as demonstrated by the 0.86 Cronbach alpha coefficient calculated on six questions. The Affective Commitment measurement test demonstrates strong reliability, as evidenced by the Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.83 for six elements.

Amotivation has a high Cronbach alpha of 0.90 for three items. Extrinsic regulation-social shows a Cronbach alpha of 0.88 for three items, indicating good reliability. Extrinsic regulation material demonstrates moderate reliability with a Cronbach alpha of 0.73 for three items. The intra-jected regulation shows a Cronbach alpha of 0.88 for four items, indicating good internal consistency. The identified regulation exhibits high reliability with a Cronbach alpha of 0.94 for three items. Intrinsic motivation has an excellent Cronbach alpha of 0.96 for three items.

The results suggest that the scales used to measure organisational justice, commitment, and motivation demonstrate good to excellent reliability, as indicated by their Cronbach alpha values. Higher mean scores on factors such as interpersonal justice, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation suggest that these aspects are highly perceived or valued within the sample. Standard deviations indicate varying levels of response consistency across different constructs, with some showing higher variability (e.g., extrinsic regulations) than others. This comprehensive assessment provides valuable information on the different dimensions of organisational dynamics that respondents perceive.

**Table 1:** Reliability of the factors

Scales and factors	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
<b>Organisational justice scale</b>		20
Procedural justice	0.85	7
Distributive justice	0.94	4
Interpersonal justice	0.96	4
Informational justice	0.94	5

Scales and factors	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
<b>OC scale</b>		18
Continuous commitment	0.60	6
Normative commitment	0.86	6
Affective commitment	0.83	6
<b>Motivation scale</b>		19
Amotivation	0.90	3
Extrinsic regulation-social	0.88	3
Extrinsic regulation-material	0.73	3
Introjected regulation	0.88	4
Identified regulation	0.94	3
Intrinsic motivation	0.96	3

Source: Own compilation

### 4.3 Employee Perceived Performance Appraisal Fairness, Organisational Commitment and Motivation Levels

A descriptive analysis was performed to achieve research objective 1: establish the fairness, OC and motivation levels of perceived performance appraisal by employees. The mean score for the overall perceived fairness of 3.23 indicates that, on a scale of 1 to 5, respondents consider the impartiality of the performance appraisal in their section to be approximately 3.23. This indicates that perceived fairness measures are moderate. The calculated standard deviation of 0.90 suggests that, on average, the responses deviate by approximately 0.90. This indicates that perceptions of perceived fairness may vary. The average score (mean) for procedural justice is 2.69, with a standard deviation of 0.92, suggesting that respondents generally perceive a moderate level of fairness in the procedures and processes within their organisation. The low standard deviation indicates that the perceptions are relatively consistent. The mean score of 2.90, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.20, shows moderate agreement on the fairness of the distribution of resources or results. The higher standard deviation here compared to procedural justice suggests a broader range of perceptions among respondents. The respondents perceive a high level of fairness in interpersonal interactions, with a mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 0.97. This suggests that respondents generally feel treated with respect and dignity. The mean score of 3.48 with a standard deviation of 1.11 implies a moderate to high level of perceived fairness in communication and information dissemination within the organisation, with some variability in responses.



The mean level of OC reported is 3.16. This indicates that the individual is moderately dedicated to the organisation. The calculated standard deviation of 0.72 indicates a moderate degree of variability in the commitment scores of the individuals, as they differ from the mean by approximately 0.72. Respondents showed moderate commitment to their organisation, based on the perceived cost of leaving the organisation, with an average of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.75. The perception of costs associated with leaving the organisation is more consistent among the respondents, reflecting the relatively low standard deviation. The average score for standard commitment was 2.97, the standard deviation was 1.05, and the mood of respondents varied slightly. According to respondents' responses, there are moderate emotional attachments to the organisation, with moderate variability in these feelings, indicating an average score of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 0.98.

Respondents have a moderate level of commitment to their organisation based on the perceived costs associated with leaving it, as indicated by a mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.75 for continuous commitment. The perception of costs associated with leaving the organisation is more uniform among respondents, as reflected by the relatively lower standard deviation. A moderate sense of obligation to remain with the organisation is reflected in a mean score of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 1.05 for normative commitment, with moderate variability in these feelings among respondents. According to the respondents' responses, there is moderate emotional attachment to the organisation, with moderate variability in these feelings, as indicated by a mean score of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 0.98.

The mean motivation level reported by the respondents is 4.70. This signifies a relatively elevated degree of motivation. The calculated standard deviation of 1.05 indicates a significant degree of variability in motivation since individual motivation scores deviate from the mean by 1.05. The low mean of 1.72 and a standard deviation of 1.26 indicate a low level of motivation among respondents, although with a wide range of responses. This suggests that while most respondents are motivated, a significant subset feels unmotivated. Mean scores of 2.82 (social) and 3.26 (material), with high standard deviations (1.72 and 1.68, respectively), indicate a moderate level of external motivation influenced by social and material factors but with high variability in how respondents experience these motivations. A high mean of 4.90 with a standard deviation of 1.90 suggests that respondents strongly

internalise certain norms and pressures, but there is considerable variability in how strongly this is felt. The very high mean of 5.91 with a standard deviation of 1.61 indicates a strong identification with the goals and values of the organisation, with some variability in the intensity of this identification. The mean score of 5.00, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.89, suggests that the respondents generally have a high level of intrinsic motivation, but again, there is significant variability in this motivation.

The results in Table 2 suggest a picture of complex organisational justice, commitment, and motivation. High scores in interpersonal justice and identified regulation imply strong relationships and alignment with organisational values. Moderate scores on procedural and distributive justice and the various commitment levels suggest areas where perceptions vary more among respondents. The high variability in motivation-related factors (both intrinsic and extrinsic) highlights the diverse motivational drivers between individuals in the organisation.

**Table 2:** Employee Perceived Performance Appraisal Fairness, Organisational Commitment and Motivation Levels

<b>Scales and factors</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
<b>Organisation justice scale (PAF)</b>	1	5	3.23	0.90
Procedural justice	1	5	2.69	0.92
Distributive justice	1	5	2.90	1.20
Interpersonal justice	1	5	4.05	0.97
Informational justice	1	5	3.48	1.11
<b>Organisational commitment scale</b>	1	5	3.16	0.72
Continuous commitment	1	5	3.33	0.75
Normative commitment	1	5	2.97	1.05
Affective commitment	1	5	3.19	0.98
<b>Motivation scale</b>	1	7	4.70	1.05
Amotivation	1	7	1.72	1.26
Extrinsic regulation-social	1	7	2.82	1.72
Extrinsic regulation-material	1	7	3.26	1.68
Introjected regulation	1	7	4.90	1.90
Identified regulation	1	7	5.91	1.61
Intrinsic motivation	1	7	5.00	1.89

Source: Own compilation

#### **4.4 Relationship Between Perceived Appraisal Fairness, Organisational Commitment and Individual Motivation**

Spearman's rank order correlation ( $\rho$ ) was performed to attain research objective 2: determine whether there is a relationship between perceived performance appraisal fairness and individual motivation. First,  $\rho$  was performed between all the scales and between the scales only. The results revealed the following significant relationships among subfactors: For procedural and distributive justice,  $\rho = .749$ ,  $p < .001$ . This large correlation indicates a strong and significant positive relationship between procedural and distributive justice, suggesting that perceptions of fairness in these two domains are closely linked. For procedural and interpersonal justice,  $\rho = .561$ ,  $p < .001$ . This correlation is also large, showing a significant positive relationship between procedural and interpersonal justice. This implies that procedural fairness is strongly associated with fairness in interpersonal treatment. For procedural and informational justice,  $\rho = .678$ ,  $p < .001$ . This large correlation indicates a significant positive relationship, suggesting that perceptions of procedural justice are strongly related to informational justice. For procedural justice and amotivation,  $\rho = -0.203$ ,  $p < .01$ . This is a medium-practical visible negative correlation, indicating a positive relationship between procedural justice and amotivation. However, the practical significance of this relationship is limited. For procedural justice and identified regulation,  $\rho = .222$ ,  $p < .01$ . This small correlation suggests a positive but weak relationship between procedural justice and identified regulation. The results indicate strong and practically significant correlations among various types of justice, underscoring the interrelated nature of these constructs. Specifically, procedural justice is strongly correlated with distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice, indicating that fairness in procedures is closely linked to fairness in outcomes, interpersonal interactions, and information sharing. However, the relationships between procedural justice and motivational aspects, such as motivation and identified regulation, are weaker, suggesting that other factors may be more influential in affecting these motivational constructs.

**Table 3:** Spearman's  $\rho$  between subconstructs

		Procedural justice	Distributive justice	Interpersonal justice	Informational justice	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment	Affective commitment	Amotivation	Extrinsic regulation	Extrinsic regulation – material	Introjected regulation	Identified regulation	Intrinsic motivation
<b>Procedural justice</b>	$\rho$	1.000												
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
<b>Distributive justice</b>	$\rho$	.749**												
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000												
<b>Interpersonal justice</b>	$\rho$	.561**	.561**											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000											
<b>Informational justice</b>	$\rho$	.678**	.670**	.737**										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000										
<b>Continuance commitment</b>	$\rho$	-0.056	-0.097	0.031	-0.032									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.466	0.208	0.690	0.677									
<b>Normative commitment</b>	$\rho$	.375**	.306**	.317**	.317**	.252**								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001								
<b>Affective commitment</b>	$\rho$	.389**	.325**	.384**	.374**	0.116	.713**							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.132	0.000							
<b>Amotivation</b>	$\rho$	.203**	0.142	.169*	.162*	0.010	.421**	.437**						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	0.064	0.027	0.035	0.894	0.000	0.000						
<b>Extrinsic regulation -social</b>	$\rho$	0.014	0.072	-0.007	0.025	.259**	.207**	0.109	-.260**					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.860	0.351	0.930	0.745	0.001	0.007	0.158	0.001					
<b>Extrinsic regulation – material</b>	$\rho$	0.075	0.063	0.099	0.050	0.128	.181*	0.131	-0.143	.571**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.329	0.415	0.199	0.515	0.097	0.018	0.089	0.064	0.000				
<b>Introjected regulation</b>	$\rho$	0.094	0.127	.191*	0.132	.250**	.260**	.234**	.174*	.267**	.253**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.223	0.098	0.013	0.085	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.023	0.000	0.001			
<b>Identified regulation</b>	$\rho$	.222**	.219**	.213**	.224**	0.107	.366**	.337**	.459**	0.047	0.094	.664**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	0.004	0.005	0.003	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.540	0.223	0.000		
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>	$\rho$	.181*	.243**	.232**	.187*	-0.073	.407**	.384**	.402**	0.006	0.037	.357**	.565**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018	0.001	0.002	0.015	0.345	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.936	0.630	0.000	0.000	

Source: Own compilation

First, the analysis between the perceived appraisal fairness of the assessment and OC yielded a  $\rho$  of .371 ( $p < .001$ ), falling into the medium range. This statistically significant result suggests a moderate positive relationship between how employees perceive the fairness of their evaluations and their commitment to the organisation. In practical terms, as employees view their appraisals as fairer, their commitment to their organisation tends to increase moderately. This finding is crucial for organisations aiming to improve OC, highlighting the importance of perceived fairness in evaluations.

On the contrary, the correlation between perceived fairness and motivation was somewhat lower, with a  $\rho$  of .243 ( $p < .001$ ). This small but medium practical visible negative correlation indicates that although a positive relationship exists between perceived fairness in evaluations and employee motivation, it is not particularly strong. This finding suggests that, while fairness in appraisal processes is somewhat linked to motivation, other factors might be more crucial in motivating employees. This insight is valuable for organisations focussing on motivation enhancement, as it implies the need to explore other avenues beyond the fairness of the appraisal.

Most importantly, the relationship between OC and motivation revealed a strong correlation, with a  $\rho$  of .497 ( $p < .001$ ). This significant correlation suggests a robust positive relationship between these two variables. Specifically, it indicates that as the OC increases, so does the motivation of the employees. This relationship is of significant practical importance, suggesting that strategies to increase OC could effectively boost employee motivation.

The study highlights the strongest and most practically significant relationship between OC and motivation. This implies that organisational strategies that focus on increasing commitment could yield significant benefits in terms of employee motivation. Although the  $\rho$  between perceived appraisal fairness and OC is moderate. Of some practical relevance, the impact of appraisal fairness on motivation, although statistically significant, appears to have limited practical importance. This suggests that the organisation should consider other factors besides fairness in the evaluations to increase employee motivation.

**Table 4:** Correlations between Perceived Fairness of Evaluation, Organisational Commitment and Motivation (main constructs)

SPEARMAN'S RHO		PAF	OC	Motivation
Perceived Appraisal Fairness	$\rho$			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Organisational Commitment	$\rho$	.371**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
Motivation	$\rho$	.243**	.497**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	

\*\* . The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Own compilation

#### 4.5 Mediator Role of Organisational Commitment in the Relationship between Performance Appraisal Fairness and Employee Motivation

Multiple regression analysis was performed to achieve research objective 3, namely, to establish whether OC mediates the relationship between the perceived fairness of performance evaluation and individual motivation. The statistics reveal a correlation between perceived fairness and the mediating effect of OC, but it can be considered a moderate correlation. The rest of the statistics are not relatively important. There is no apparent correlation between motivation and perceived appraisal fairness and perceived appraisal fairness and motivation, regardless of the path. There is a small indication that perceived performance appraisal plays a role in motivation through the path of OC. The 'percentage explained' by a particular mediator was used, which is the percentage of the total effect of the dependent variable that is explained by the indirect effect. In this case, there is minimal effect. The variable OC appears to exert a notable impact on motivation, as evidenced by its statistically significant coefficient and low p-value. On the contrary, the influence of perceived fairness on motivation within the given model does not show statistical significance. The model suggests that OC is a significant predictor of motivation with a positive relationship (0.688). However, the relationship with perceived fairness is not statistically significant. The constant term (2.198) represents the expected value of motivation when all predictor variables are zero. The model, particularly with the inclusion of OC, demonstrates a statistically significant association with the motivation of the dependent variable. However, the contribution of perceived fairness is not statistically significant.

A value near 1 is considered a good fit and usually indicates how well the data fit the theoretical constructs. In this case, it is concluded that the data do not fit. Furthermore, with baseline comparisons on the default model, CFI values larger than 0.95 indicate a good fit. In this case, the CFI was 0.783 and is deemed insignificant. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is a statistical metric employed in structural equation modelling (SEM) to assess the adequacy of a proposed model's fit (Bentler, 1990). The assessment evaluates the degree to which the suggested model aligns with the observed data compared to a baseline model. Values closer to 1 indicate a higher level of fit, as per Hu and Bentler (1999).

The root-mean-square error of approximation assesses how far a hypothesised model is from a perfect model. An MSEA around 0.05 is considered a sign of a good fit. Again, this does not meet the criteria for a good model. Multiple regression analysis showed that OC does not mediate the relationship between perceived fairness and motivation. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is a widely used statistic in structural equation modelling (SEM) to assess model fit (Steiger, 1990). Measure the discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix, adjusted for model complexity (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Lower RMSEA values indicate a better fit of the model to the data.

## **5. Discussion**

The first objective was to measure the perceived fairness of PAS, OC, and employee motivation levels. The results of the descriptive analysis provide valuable information on employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of PASs, OC, and motivation. The mean score of 3.23 on a scale of 1 to 5 suggests a moderate level of perceived fairness in PAS. The standard deviation of 0.90 indicates the variability in these perceptions among employees. A mean of 3.16 signifies moderate OC, with a standard deviation of 0.72 reflecting moderate variability. A high mean score of 4.70 reflects a high level of motivation among respondents, with significant variability (SD = 1.05).

Various studies have also been conducted on the subject, concluding that the motivational effect of performance management has not lived up to the standards first established for it (Harrington & Lee, 2015). Intrinsic motivation has been found to play a significant role in the perception of the appraisal system as fair (Wolfe, 2005), and it has been suggested that an

effective performance management system should be established on the foundation of mutual consensus between the employee and the employer (Armstrong, 1999). According to De Vos (2008), the psychological contract is the primary conceptual framework for understanding employees' perceptions of the fairness of performance evaluation based on their perceptions of the performance of the psychological contract.

The second research objective was to establish a relationship between the perceived fairness of PAS and individual motivation. The results of the Spearman rank-order correlation analysis revealed significant relationships among subfactors. Specifically, procedural justice was strongly and positively correlated with distributive justice ( $\rho = .749, p < .001$ ), interpersonal justice ( $\rho = .561, p < .001$ ), and informational justice ( $\rho = .678, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, a moderate negative correlation was observed between procedural justice and amotivation ( $\rho = -0.203, p < .01$ ), and a weak positive correlation was found between procedural justice and identified regulation ( $\rho = .222, p < .01$ ).

First, the analysis between perceived fairness and OC yielded a  $\rho$  of .371 ( $p < .001$ ), falling in the medium range. This statistically significant result suggests a moderate positive relationship between how employees perceive their assessments' fairness and OC. In practical terms, as employees view their appraisals as fairer, their OC tends to increase moderately. This finding is crucial for organisations that want to enhance commitment, highlighting the importance of perceived fairness in evaluations.

The correlation between perceived fairness and motivation was somewhat lower, with  $\rho = .243$  ( $p < .001$ ). This small but medium practically visible negative correlation indicates that although there is a positive relationship between perceived fairness appraisals and employee motivation, it is not particularly strong. This relationship is practically nonsignificant. This finding suggests that, while fairness in appraisal processes is somewhat linked to motivation, other factors might be more crucial in motivating employees. This insight is valuable for organisations focussing on motivation enhancement, as it implies the need to explore other avenues beyond the fairness of the appraisal. The latest findings contradict previous studies. For example, Dangol (2021) discovered a strong correlation between employee satisfaction with the performance evaluation system and their motivation. Similarly, Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) determined that PASs significantly impact employee motivation and job performance.



The study found a strong correlation between OC and motivation, with  $\rho = .497$  ( $p < .001$ ). This suggests a positive relationship between these two variables. As OC increases, employee motivation also increases. This relationship is practically significant, implying that strategies to increase OC could effectively increase employee motivation.

The third research objective was to establish whether OC mediates the relationship between the perceived fairness of performance evaluation and individual motivation. OC is crucial in the relationship between employee-perceived appraisal fairness and motivation levels. A study by Meyer and Allen (1990) found that OC was positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions. According to Meyer and Allen's study, OC has been found to mediate the relationship between performance appraisal fairness and job performance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). The significance of OC as a mediator in the relationship between perceived fairness and employee outcomes has been highlighted in numerous studies, indicating its importance in performance management systems. In short, how employees feel about how fair their performance reviews affects their loyalty to the company and how well they do their jobs. However, the multiple regression analysis showed that, unlike previous studies, OC does not mediate the relationship between perceived fairness of performance appraisal fairness and motivation.

## **6. Managerial Implications**

The study presented various findings and a comprehensive discussion on improving the performance appraisal process, employee motivation, and commitment at the three universities. It identified gaps and strengths in the organisation, and the recommendations aim to leverage these strengths and address the identified gaps to create a positive working environment and achieve better performance results. University guidelines should be more transparent and easy to understand to improve the fairness of performance evaluation systems. This involves providing comprehensive training to appraisers and actively involving employees in developing and understanding evaluation criteria. By doing so, universities can create more comprehensive and equitable evaluation systems. It is essential to recognise and address individual differences in employee motivation. Consequently, universities should develop personalised development plans, create opportunities for professional growth and offer incentives and rewards that reflect various motivating factors. This approach helps to

meet the needs and increases motivation and engagement. It is essential to continuously evaluate employee perceptions about organisational justice, commitment and motivation. Therefore, universities should conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions to collect employee insights, identify areas of improvement, and track progress over time. This ongoing dialogue can help adapt strategies to meet employee expectations and improve satisfaction and performance.

## **7. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

The research investigates how fair employees' perceptions of performance evaluation systems relate to their level of commitment to the organisation and motivation of a particular university in South Africa. The study revealed a moderate level of evaluation fairness and a positive correlation between evaluation fairness and organisational commitment. In addition, there is a strong link between organisational commitment and motivation. The study emphasises the importance of fairness in performance assessments in strengthening organisational commitment and motivation and provides valuable insight into improving performance management systems. It also suggests areas for further research to study these dynamics more in detail.

The study has limitations; the response rate was relatively low, with only 170 support staff members participating. Such a small sample size may not be sufficiently representative to generalise the results to a larger population and introduces a risk of nonresponse bias. Furthermore, the study focuses on support staff at the university, which limits its applicability to other universities or employee groups. Thus, it is recommended to exercise caution when interpreting and applying the findings in different contexts.

Future studies should investigate the factors contributing to the lack of commitment to their jobs. This involves examining the management and personal aspects influencing the commitment to continuous improvement. Future research could explore how the work environment, leadership styles, job positions, and organisational culture affect employees' long-term commitment. This would provide insight into how to foster a more committed workforce. There is a need for research on enhancing the fairness of performance reviews on variables such as job satisfaction, job performance, employee well-being, motivation, and

dedication. This could help identify strategies to improve the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system.

Further exploration of individual differences among employees that affect their levels of motivation and commitment could provide insights into creating tailored organisational initiatives. This could help meet employees' diverse needs and improve their engagement and motivation. Future research could explore the impact of improvements in the perceived fairness of the performance assessment process on motivation and commitment levels. Practical insights could be gained to improve employee perceptions and appraisal outcomes.

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