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PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM: POLICY AND REALITY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract
Performance appraisal in hotels is expected to align employee behaviour with service standards, support employee development, guide reward decisions, and enhance retention. However, its effectiveness depends on employees perceiving the appraisal process as fair, evidence-based, and developmental. This study examines the gap between appraisal policy and employees' experiences using cross-sectional data collected from 500 employees of 3–5-star hotels in the Coimbatore region, India. Data obtained through a structured questionnaire comprising 17 Likert-scale statements were analysed using descriptive statistics, PAS classification, Chi-square tests, multiple regression, and Categorical Regression (CATREG). The findings indicate that employees generally hold favourable perceptions of the appraisal system, particularly regarding its contribution to productivity, customer service, employee development, and organisational growth. Nevertheless, concerns over excessive scrutiny and appraisal-related conflict reveal a disconnect between formal appraisal policies and their implementation. Although 75.2% of respondents reported moderate to good perceptions of the appraisal system, hotel experience, total work experience, number of dependents, and number of children significantly influenced PAS scores. CATREG analysis further identified the number of dependents and hotel experience as the strongest predictors of appraisal perceptions. The study concludes that while performance appraisal policies are well institutionalised in the hotel industry, their success ultimately depends on transparent, fair, and developmental implementation. The findings offer practical implications for hotel managers seeking to strengthen appraisal practices, enhance employee acceptance and organisational commitment, and improve overall organisational performance.

Keywords: *performance appraisal; performance management; hotel employees; organisational justice; employee attrition; Coimbatore*

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1. Introduction

Hotels fulfil their service commitments through factors such as employee judgement, courtesy, coordination, safety, hygiene, speed, and handling service recovery. Performance appraisal is not merely an annual HR form; it functions as a governance mechanism that translates the hotel's service strategy into clear, observable expectations and employment decisions. A trustworthy system establishes standards, collects pertinent evidence, fosters learning, and provides a solid foundation for recognition or corrective measures. Conversely, an unreliable system may exacerbate hierarchy, politicisation in ratings, and fear. Performance appraisal entails the formal review and discussion of an employee's performance, while performance management constitutes a continuous cycle encompassing expectation-setting, observation, feedback provision, development, and the implementation of consequences. Research has shifted its focus from rating accuracy to the purpose of appraisal, contextual factors, employee reactions, and ongoing performance management processes (Fletcher 473-87; DeNisi and Murphy 421-33). Nevertheless, many organisations employ the terminology of performance management, while employees often experience only an annual retrospective evaluation.

This tension is particularly pronounced within the hospitality industry. Hotel operations are labour-intensive, customer-facing, schedule-sensitive, and interdependent. The performance of front-office services relies on the readiness of rooms; restaurant service depends on the kitchen, stewarding, and procurement; and a guest complaint may reflect several interconnected failures. Correspondingly, hospitality human resource management (HRM) research associates coherent people practices with service behaviour, service quality, organisational performance, engagement, and turnover (Kusluvan et al. 171-214; Tsaur and Lin 471-81; Cho et al. 262-77). Evidence from India also links HRM systems with hotel performance and demonstrates that supervisory, earnings, security, benefit, and work-life conditions influence the intention to leave among staff in luxury hotels (Chand and Katou 576-94; Mohsin, Lengler, and Kumar 48-58).

Appraisal is pertinent to employee attrition as it indicates how the organisation values individual contributions and allocates opportunities. Satisfaction with the appraisal process correlates with employee commitment, motivation, and intentions to leave (Kuvaas 504-22). Recent research demonstrates that commitment can mediate the effects of appraisal on turnover-related outcomes (Ghani, Malik, and Memon 2413-41; Alqahtani 55-70). This article focuses on performance appraisal in Star-Category Hotels in Coimbatore and investigates whether employees' experiences mirror the developmental, equitable, and service-oriented policy principles associated with appraisal. The study addresses three questions: (1) Which appraisal-policy features are recognised by employees? (2) Where do their responses indicate a gap between formal policy and lived experience? (3) Which demographic and career characteristics are associated with PAS classification and score?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Appraisal as an integrated hotel policy

An appraisal policy serves both administrative and developmental objectives. Its administrative functions include confirmation, increments, incentives, promotion, transfer, succession planning, and discipline. The developmental functions encompass expectation setting, gap analysis, coaching, training, and career development. Employees' responses vary depending on which purpose predominantly influences their experience (Boswell and Boudreau, 283-99). A comprehensive system links organisational goals, job analysis, role-relevant metrics, regular observation, appraisal discussions, developmental actions, and renewal (Aguinis). Performance management diminishes in value when administrative procedures replace daily expectation setting, observation, coaching, and follow-up activities (Pulakos, Mueller-Hanson, and Arad, 249-71).

For hotels, a balanced assessment should encompass common domains - such as attendance, safety, hygiene, teamwork, integrity, learning, and guest orientation - alongside role-specific outcomes that employees can influence. Measurements related to guests and team performance necessitate careful attribution, as service is provided collaboratively. A supervisor ought to synthesise evidence throughout the review period rather than depend solely on recent incidents or singular complaints. While an annual review remains a valuable administrative checkpoint, its occurrence alone does not demonstrate organisational effectiveness. Murphy contends that ratings often persist without corresponding performance improvements when organisations overlook performance leadership and coaching (13-31). The suitable approach involves maintaining essential evaluations while enhancing ongoing check-ins, documentation, and problem-solving efforts.

2.2 Justice, feedback, and employee acceptance

Organisational justice elucidates the reasons behind the varying reactions to systems that are technically similar. Distributive justice pertains to outcomes; procedural justice concerns methodologies; interpersonal justice relates to respectful treatment; and informational justice addresses adequate and truthful explanations

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(Colquitt 386-400). The due-process model translates these principles into measures such as advance notice, a fair hearing, and judgments based on evidence (Folger, Konovsky, and Cropanzano 129-77). In the evaluation process, employees should be informed of the standards and potential consequences beforehand, be provided the opportunity to present contextual information or correct errors, and receive a reasoned decision grounded in representative evidence.

Acceptance is essential because feedback is deemed credible only when employees perceive it as trustworthy. Appraisal responses encompass perceived fairness, accuracy, utility, and satisfaction with both the system and the discussion (Keeping and Levy 708-23). Active participation enhances employee reactions (Cawley, Keeping, and Levy 615-33), whereas trust, support, and the quality of supervisor-employee relationships significantly influence appraisal acceptance (Pichler 709-32). Consequently, the social context can surpass the technical sophistication of the appraisal method (Levy and Williams 881-905).

Goal-setting theory further suggests that specific, challenging goals and feedback improve performance more reliably than vague exhortation (Locke and Latham 705-17). Feedback, nevertheless, has mixed effects when it directs attention from the task to the self (Kluger and DeNisi 254-84). Strengths-based appraisal can enhance perceived supervisor support and motivation to improve, even after a relatively low rating (van Woerkom and Kroon, article 1883). Multisource feedback is advantageous in interdependent hotel work; however, improvement is generally modest unless employees accept the feedback, establish goals, receive coaching, and obtain follow-up (Smither, London, and Reilly 33-66).

2.3 Appraisal, service performance, and retention

Hotel human resource practices significantly influence service quality, both directly and through employee behaviour (Tsaur and Lin 471-81). A credible appraisal system can enhance these relationships by recognising controllable service behaviours and linking improvement areas to specific training. Conversely, perceptions of unfairness can diminish employee commitment and result in increased withdrawal. Employee turnover is costly, encompassing expenses related to recruitment, induction, training, supervisory oversight, service disruption, and the associated learning curve (Hinkinand Tracey 14-21). Therefore, retention strategies must integrate appraisal processes with employee development, work-life considerations, and talent management, rather than perceiving the rating as an isolated human resources event (Deery and Jago 453-72).

The existing literature identifies the essential components of effective appraisal; however, empirical evidence from the Tier-II Indian hotel market remains limited. The policy-reality perspective applied herein assesses both the formal visibility of appraisal processes and the potentially detrimental relational signals that could undermine their legitimacy.

3. Methodology

The article uses the performance-appraisal component of a larger cross-sectional study of employee attrition in 3-5-star hotels in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. About 500 respondents participated in this research. The survey included 17 PAS statements rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items addressed annual appraisal, productivity, punctuality scrutiny, individual contribution in teamwork, customer service, skills, impartiality, compliance, 360-degree evaluation, interdepartmental feedback, employee relationships, necessity, work quality, organisational growth, management-defined standards, conflict or criticism, and healthy competition. The 17 items are scored from 1 to 5, producing a maximum of 85. Furthermore, the PAS score was categorised into three classifications: poor, moderate, and good.

Frequencies depict the sample and each individual item. For concise reporting, the categories ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ were merged as ‘agreement,’ while ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ were consolidated as ‘disagreement.’Direct item means use weights from 5 to 1. Chi-square tests examine associations between demographic characteristics and PAS classification. Multiple regression examines PAS score, and CATREG reports relative importance for categorical predictors.

4. Results

Table-1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 500 respondents included in the study. The results indicate that the majority were male (75.2%) and belonged to the 25–35 years age group (40.0%), followed by those aged 20–25 years (33.6%). More than half (55.6%) possessed an undergraduate degree. Most respondents had less than five years of total work experience (41.2%) and hotel industry experience (49.6%). In terms of annual income, 42.6% earned between 2 and 4 lakhs, while 35.6% earned below 2 lakhs. The sample comprised almost equal proportions of unmarried (50.6%) and married (48.8%) respondents. Additionally, over half of the respondents had no children (53.8%), and most reported having two (32.8%) or three (28.2%)

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dependents.The profile therefore captures a workforce for whom appraisal may carry immediate implications for development, income progression, and employment security.

Table-1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Profile	**N**	**%**
Gender		
Male	376	75.2%
Female	124	24.8%
Age Group		
20-25 years	168	33.6%
25-35 years	200	40.0%
35-50 years	111	22.2%
50 and Above years	21	4.2%
Educational Qualification		
School level	103	20.6%
UG	278	55.6%
PG	78	15.6%
Diploma	19	3.8%
Others	22	4.4%
Total Experience		
Below 5 years	206	41.2%
5-10 years	147	29.4%
10-15 years	101	20.2%
Above 15 years	46	9.2%
Hotel Experience		
Below 5 years	248	49.6%
5-10 years	136	27.2%
10-15 years	88	17.6%
Above 15 years	28	5.6%
Annual Income		
Below 2 lakhs	178	35.6%
2 –4 lakhs	213	42.6%
4 – 6 lakhs	88	17.6%
Above 6 lakhs	21	4.2%
Marital Status		
Unmarried	253	50.6%
Married	244	48.8%
Separated	3	0.6%
Number of children		
None	269	53.8%
One	118	23.6%
Two	104	20.8%
Three	9	1.8%
Number of Dependents		
One	91	18.2%
Two	164	32.8%
Three	141	28.2%
Four	70	14.0%
Five	34	6.8%

Overall, the sample is predominantly composed of young, undergraduate-educated, early-career hospitality employees with moderate income levels and relatively limited industry experience. The demographic characteristics are representative of the contemporary hospitality workforce, providing a suitable foundation for the subsequent statistical analyses.

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Employees clearly recognised the formal presence and intended value of appraisal. Table-2 shows that annual conduct obtained 94.2% agreement. Productivity improvement and customer service each obtained 91.4%; knowledge and skill development obtained 90.0%; and organisational growth obtained 89.8%. Contemporary design features were also visible: 85.8% reported a 360-degree basis and 82.6% reported cross-departmental feedback. Impartiality received 83.0% agreement.The same responses reveal a policy-reality tension. Tardiness attracting intense scrutiny was endorsed by 76.6%, and 69.2% agreed that appraisal creates conflict or criticism. These adverse signals coexist with positive beliefs about quality, relationships, and competition. Employees may therefore accept appraisal's necessity while experiencing parts of its implementation as surveillance or interpersonal threat.

Respondents also held a highly positive perception of the performance appraisal feedback system in hotels, as reflected in mean scores ranging from 3.82 to 4.51. The highest-rated statement was that performance appraisal is conducted every year (Mean = 4.51), followed by its role in improving productivity (Mean = 4.40), supporting organisational growth (Mean = 4.39), and recognising customer service in appraisal (Mean = 4.38). Respondents also strongly agreed that the appraisal system identifies individual contributions in team settings (Mean = 4.37), improves work quality (Mean = 4.34), enhances employees' knowledge and skills (Mean = 4.32), and is essential in the hotel industry (Mean = 4.31). Comparatively lower, yet favourable, mean scores were observed for conducting appraisals impartially (Mean = 4.21), using cross-department feedback (Mean = 4.20), and creating conflict or criticism (Mean = 3.82), indicating that respondents were less convinced that appraisal feedback leads to interpersonal conflicts.

Table-2: The Performance Appraisal Feedback of the Respondents

Statement	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Mean
Conducted every year	94.2	2.8	3.0	4.51
Improves productivity	91.4	6.6	2.0	4.40
Tardiness attracts intense scrutiny	76.6	11.2	12.2	4.03
Identifies individual contribution in teams	88.6	9.2	2.2	4.37
Customer service positively affects appraisal	91.4	7.0	1.6	4.38
Uplifts knowledge and skills	90.0	8.2	1.8	4.32
Conducted impartially	83.0	12.6	4.4	4.21
Promotes company norms	87.4	11.0	1.6	4.29
Uses a 360-degree basis	85.8	11.6	2.6	4.28
Uses cross-department feedback	82.6	14.0	3.4	4.20
Supports healthy relationships	83.8	12.2	4.0	4.24
Is essential in hotels	88.4	9.8	1.8	4.31
Improves work quality	87.6	10.4	2.0	4.34
Supports organisational growth	89.8	8.6	1.6	4.39
Standards are set by management	84.8	12.0	3.2	4.27
Creates conflict or criticism	69.2	15.4	15.4	3.82
Promotes healthy competition	84.6	11.8	3.6	4.31

Overall, the results suggest that employees perceive the performance appraisal feedback system as a well-established and beneficial organisational practice that enhances individual and organisational performance. The consistently high levels of agreement across the statements indicate that appraisal feedback is viewed as an effective mechanism for improving productivity, employee development, and organisational effectiveness, while concerns regarding conflict arising from the appraisal process remain relatively limited.

Table 3 presents the classification of respondents based on their Performance Appraisal System (PAS) feedback scores. The findings reveal that the largest proportion of respondents (45.4%, n = 227) exhibited a moderate level of PAS feedback, followed by 29.8% (n = 149) with a good level and 24.8% (n = 124) with a poor level.

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The distribution indicates that nearly three-fourths of respondents (75.2%) perceived the performance appraisal system as moderate to good, while about one-fourth expressed relatively poor perceptions.

Table-3: The PAS Classification obtained from the Feedback

PAS Score	N	%
Poor (<72)	124	24.8%
Moderate (72-77)	227	45.4%
Good (>77)	149	29.8%

Overall, the results suggest that employees generally hold favourable perceptions of the performance appraisal system, with the majority reporting moderate to good levels of appraisal feedback. However, the presence of a considerable proportion of respondents in the poor category indicates the need for continuous improvements in the fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of the appraisal process to enhance employee satisfaction and acceptance.

Table-4 presents the results of the Chi-square test examining the association between respondents' demographic characteristics and their Performance Appraisal System (PAS) classification. The analysis revealed that age group ($\chi^2 = 26.924$, $p < 0.001$), total work experience ($\chi^2 = 29.617$, $p < 0.001$), hotel experience ($\chi^2 = 35.436$, $p < 0.001$), annual income ($\chi^2 = 20.665$, $p = 0.002$), marital status ($\chi^2 = 15.413$, $p < 0.001$), number of children ($\chi^2 = 10.043$, $p = 0.040$), and number of dependents ($\chi^2 = 34.672$, $p < 0.001$) had a statistically significant association with PAS classification. In contrast, gender ($\chi^2 = 2.507$, $p = 0.286$) and educational qualification ($\chi^2 = 6.381$, $p = 0.382$) did not show a significant association with PAS classification ($p > 0.05$).

Table-4: Chi-square between Demographic Profile and PAS Classification

Demographic Profile	□² value	P-value	Significance
Gender	2.507	0.286	NS
Age group	26.924	0.000	S
Education	6.381	0.382	NS
Total Experience	29.617	0.000	S
Hotel Experience	35.436	0.000	S
Annual Income	20.665	0.002	S
Marital Status	15.413	0.000	S
Number of Children	10.043	0.040	S
Number of Dependents	34.672	0.000	S

Overall, the findings indicate that employees' perceptions of the performance appraisal system are significantly influenced by most demographic characteristics, particularly age, work experience, income, marital status, and family responsibilities. However, gender and educational qualification do not appear to influence PAS classification, suggesting that employees perceive the performance appraisal system similarly across these demographic groups.

Table-5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the influence of demographic variables on the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) score. The model was statistically significant ($F = 8.317$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the selected demographic variables jointly predict PAS scores. The model yielded an R value of 0.465, with an R^2 of 0.216 and an Adjusted R^2 of 0.190, suggesting that 21.6% of the variation in PAS scores is explained by the demographic variables included in the model.

Among the predictors, hotel experience ($\beta = 0.366$, $p = 0.003$), number of dependents ($\beta = 0.427$, $p = 0.001$), total work experience ($\beta = 0.229$, $p = 0.014$), and number of children ($\beta = 0.119$, $p = 0.016$) significantly influenced PAS scores. In contrast, gender, age group, educational qualification, annual income, and marital status did not significantly predict PAS scores ($p > 0.05$).

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Table 5: Multiple Regression between PAS Score and Demographic Profile

Model Summary	**R**	**R^2**	**Adj. R^2**
	0.465	0.216	0.190
ANOVA	df	F-value	p-value
Regression	16	8.317	<0.001
Residual	483		
Coefficients	Beta	p-value	S / NS
Gender	-0.072	0.082	NS
Age group	0.181	0.173	NS
Education	-0.039	0.479	NS
Total Experience	0.229	0.014	S
Hotel Experience	0.366	0.003	S
Annual Income	0.072	0.605	NS
Marital Status	-0.079	0.217	NS
Number of Children	0.119	0.016	S
Number of Dependents	0.427	0.001	S

Dependent: PAS Score

Overall, the regression results demonstrate that demographic characteristics have a moderate predictive influence on employees' PAS scores, explaining approximately one-fifth of the total variance. Among the demographic factors, employees' work experience—particularly hotel experience—and family responsibilities, reflected by the number of dependents and children, emerge as the most significant determinants of PAS scores, whereas gender, education, age, income, and marital status do not exert a significant independent influence after controlling for the other variables.

Table-6 presents the relative importance of demographic variables in predicting the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) score using Categorical Regression (CATREG). The findings indicate that the number of dependents was the most influential predictor (Importance = 0.418), followed by hotel experience (0.191), age group (0.163), and annual income (0.122). Number of children (0.085) and total work experience (0.041) exhibited relatively lower contributions, while gender (0.014) and marital status (0.012) had minimal influence on PAS scores. Educational qualification recorded a negative importance value (-0.046), indicating a negligible and non-contributory role in predicting PAS scores within the model.

Table 6: CATREG – Relative Importance

Variable	**Importance**
Number of Dependents	0.418
Hotel Experience	0.191
Age group	0.163
Annual Income	0.122
Number of Children	0.085
Total Experience	0.041
Gender	0.014
Marital Status	0.012
Education	-0.046

Dependent: PAS Score

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Overall, the CATREG analysis suggests that family-related factors, particularly the number of dependents, followed by hotel experience and age, are the most important demographic determinants of employees' PAS scores. In contrast, gender, marital status, and educational qualification contribute very little to explaining variations in PAS scores, implying that employees' appraisal perceptions are influenced more by their work experience and family responsibilities than by their personal demographic characteristics.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) is well established in the hotel industry of the Coimbatore region, with employees acknowledging its contribution to productivity, customer service, employee development, and organisational growth. The high level of agreement regarding annual appraisals and developmental outcomes suggests that hotels have adopted structured appraisal policies that are generally viewed positively by their workforce. These findings reinforce the importance of performance appraisal as a strategic human resource management practice.Despite these positive perceptions, the results also reveal a gap between policy and practice. A considerable proportion of respondents perceived that appraisal processes involve excessive scrutiny of employee behaviour and may lead to conflict or criticism. This suggests that although appraisal policies are designed to be objective and developmental, their implementation may not always achieve the intended outcomes. The findings imply that greater transparency, constructive feedback, and employee involvement are necessary to ensure that appraisal systems are viewed as developmental rather than punitive.

The PAS classification further supports this observation, as 75.2% of respondents reported moderate to good perceptions, while nearly one-fourth expressed poor perceptions of the appraisal system. Although the majority of employees accept the existing appraisal practices, the presence of dissatisfied employees indicates opportunities for improving consistency, fairness, and communication throughout the appraisal process.The demographic analyses provide additional insights into employees' appraisal perceptions. The Chi-square analysis showed that age, work experience, hotel experience, annual income, marital status, number of children, and number of dependents were significantly associated with PAS classification, whereas gender and educational qualification were not. However, multiple regression analysis revealed that only hotel experience, total work experience, number of children, and number of dependents significantly predicted PAS scores. The CATREG analysis further identified the number of dependents as the most influential predictor, followed by hotel experience and age group. These findings suggest that employees' perceptions of appraisal are shaped more by their work experience and family responsibilities than by personal characteristics such as gender or educational qualification.

Overall, the results demonstrate that while hotels have successfully implemented formal appraisal policies, improving the quality of implementation remains essential. Fairness, transparency, effective communication, and developmental feedback are likely to strengthen employee confidence in the appraisal process and reduce the gap between organisational policy and workplace reality.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that the Performance Appraisal System in hotels of the Coimbatore region is generally perceived positively and serves as an important mechanism for improving employee performance and organisational effectiveness. Most employees recognised the value of appraisal in enhancing productivity, service quality, and professional development, indicating that formal appraisal policies are well institutionalised within the hotel industry.However, the findings also reveal that the effectiveness of these policies depends largely on their implementation. Concerns regarding excessive scrutiny and appraisal-related conflict suggest that a gap still exists between policy intentions and employees' actual experiences. Furthermore, work experience and family-related factors emerged as stronger determinants of PAS perceptions than gender or educational qualification, highlighting the importance of employees' occupational and personal circumstances in shaping appraisal outcomes.The study recommends that hotel management strengthen appraisal implementation through greater transparency, regular feedback, evaluator training, and employee participation to enhance fairness and acceptance of the system.

Future research may extend this study by examining organisational factors such as leadership style, organisational justice, employee engagement, supervisor–employee relationships, and organisational culture that may influence appraisal effectiveness. Comparative studies across different regions, hotel categories, or hospitality sectors, as well as longitudinal research, would provide deeper insights into how performance appraisal systems evolve and contribute to sustainable organisational performance.

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