EFFECT OF SUPERVISOR BIAS ON PERFORMANCE MOTIVATION DURING INCENTIVE-BASED PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

by

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Abstract

The effectiveness of performance appraisals concerning employee motivation and organizational outcomes has had a prominent presence in research over the years due to concerns about how failed appraisal processes hinder performance improvement, human resource functions, and corporate objectives. How employees perceive the review process plays a significant role in whether or not the method will deliver the intended motivators, such as feedback and job satisfaction. This study will focus on how perceptions of bias influence an employee’s drive to perform in the future among Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) within three Promedica skilled nursing facilities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Key words: performance management, motivation, leadership, bias
Dedication

This dissertation is, first and foremost, dedicated to God. Additionally, I acknowledge the sacrifices that had to be made to make this manuscript possible, and I am eternally grateful to my husband and son. I dedicate this work to them and thank them for their patience with me. I pledge to use this degree to give all of myself back to God and my family.
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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The effectiveness of performance appraisals concerning employee motivation and organizational outcomes has had a prominent presence in research over the years due to concerns about how failed appraisal systems hinder performance improvement, human resource functions, and corporate objectives (Iqbal et al., 2019). How employees perceive the review process plays a significant role in whether or not the performance management practice will deliver the intended motivators, such as feedback and job satisfaction (Waheed et al., 2018). With that said, ensuring the effectiveness of the current performance management system, along with other Human Resource (HR) functions within an organization, can positively contribute to the quality of care (Weech-Maldonado et al., 2019) as well as organizational outcomes (Kim et al., 2018).

This study focused on how perceptions of bias influence Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) drive to perform in the future within three Promedica skilled nursing facilities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The literature has covered individual aspects of this study, such as performance and motivation (Lee, 2019) and bias in performance appraisals (Belle et al., 2017). Still, there is limited information on how bias influences motivation and even less on this topic within skilled nursing. Advances in technology and healthcare have extended the average life expectancy. Many individuals have had to turn to residential facilities to ensure care; thus, the quality of care in skilled nursing facilities has become vitally important (Andela et al., 2018). One approach to ensuring the quality of care is to monitor the performance of those administering said care.

This project consisted of a single case study guided by research questions that asked how observing bias would impact performance motivation. Based on the literature, assumptions were made about what the results would reveal, including anticipated themes and theories that would explain outcomes. Using constructivism as the research paradigm, the inner workings of social
behavior were the primary focus. When dealing with such abstract concepts, reliable data collection methods that lead to distinct conclusions when analyzed are essential to proving reliability and validity. The two forms of data collection used were anonymous survey responses and interviews. The anonymous survey method was chosen with the anticipation that participants would be more candid in their responses. The interviews were designed to gather additional information on the areas covered in the surveys. In most cases, the interview results were confirmed by statements from the interviews; however, some results were conflicted.

When analyzing the results from both the surveys and interviews, four reoccurring themes surfaced: intrinsic motivation, a lack of trust in supervisor training, extrinsic rewards as motivators, and uniformity in ratings regardless of effort. The themes were then related to the literature, the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the anticipated themes found in the literature prior to field research. The connections made from the findings can be applied to professional practice by helping organizations improve leadership, improve individual performance, and manage compensation more effectively.

**Background of the Problem**

Skilled nursing facilities face severe challenges due to the high volume of aging individuals, medical advancements, policy reform, state funding declines, and client satisfaction standards (Andela et al., 2018). In this climate, well-motivated and highly trained medical professionals are critical to ensuring adequate care and patient satisfaction (Pillai et al., 2019). A common practice in managing the workforce within skilled nursing facilities is through incentive-based performance appraisals. A significant problem with this approach is that subjective performance evaluations, by nature, require supervisors to form personal opinions concerning an employee's performance. In addition, supervisors often lack the skill to execute
appraisals effectively, resulting in doubts about a supervisor's ability to assess performance and potentially stifling a worker's motivation to exert effort to perform well in the future (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018).

Performance appraisals are designed to compare an employee's quality of work with organizational outcomes. These comparisons justify decisions on pay and promotion (Pengulescu, 2018). Appraisals can also act as clarifying agents that define performance expectations; identify training and development needs; and facilitate communication (Pengulescu, 2018). However, an employee’s perception of the process's fairness is critical to any appraisal system's success (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). If employees perceive the performance review process negatively, reviews cannot motivate future performance (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018).

Research on performance management includes countless studies on how bias emerges in the appraisal process (Morandi et al., 2019; Bernardin et al., 2016; Wei et al., 2019). To combat this perception, some organizations have turned to calibration committees to minimize the potential for supervisor bias. A study by Demeré et al. (2020) found that employees felt a greater sense of fairness when committees were involved in the performance review process. On average, committees adjusted about one in four ratings that indicated bias. Other solutions to complaints about performance reviews include altering the scale format, including multiple raters, and training raters on fair evaluation processes (Speer et al., 2019).

**Problem Statement**

The general problem addressed in this study was that CNAs are often not motivated to perform above-standard requirements because of perceived bias from nurse supervisors during the subjective incentive-based performance review process within skilled nursing facilities.
According to the literature, appraisals are an essential HR practice that attempts to address organizational problems and prompt employees to act in the organization's interest (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018). To provide a working definition for performance appraisals, they are the process through which supervisors assess the job-related performance of their subordinates and allocate rewards based on those assessments (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018). The problem occurs when appraising performance becomes convoluted by personal opinions unrelated to performance. Kamphorst and Swank conducted a study that found two forces at work during the average performance review process. First, they discovered that subordinates wanted their efforts to be noticed by supervisors unless they felt the supervisor could not distinguish good work from bad; in those cases, the worker had no motivation to expand on their current efforts (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018). Kamphorst and Swank (2018) identified the second force as a supervisor’s tendency to rate workers higher to maintain a positive reputation or relationship with their subordinates. So from an employee standpoint, one wants to be recognized for their efforts only if they have faith in the supervisor's discretion. Conversely, supervisors who use less discretion may do so to avoid disrupting workplace dynamics.

Workplace politics can affect a manager’s judgment, making their evaluation of subordinates' performance intentionally and systematically biased (Rosen et al., 2017). In these cases, pay-for-performance evaluations fail as a motivator for performance (Kim, 2016). The specific problem addressed in this study is that subjective incentive-based performance appraisals leave too much room for nurse supervisor bias in Promedica skilled nursing facilities within Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, potentially resulting in CNAs' having a poor perception of the review process, which may lead to a lack of ability to retain productive and satisfying talent.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this flexible design single case study was to explore how perceptions of bias during subjective performance reviews impact the motivation of CNAs in skilled nursing facilities. The research determined that CNAs perceived that nurse supervisors used bias when administering performance ratings, and those ratings negatively impacted their merit increases. The larger purpose of this study was to highlight that performance reviews are not an effective motivator for positive performance outcomes in skilled nursing facilities if biases are applied to the evaluation process. Because of this, the care provided by CNAs has the potential to decline and leave residents in deplorable conditions progressively.

Research Questions

The research questions below investigate how employees’ perceptions about performance reviews shape their motivation to perform well in the future. The research questions relate to the general and specific problem statements because they attempt to understand if performance reviews are effective in the presence of perceived bias. In addition, the questions ask how monetary incentives influence motivation and reflect on the effort to perform well.

RQ1: How do perceived biases from nurse supervisors influence the performance motivation of CNAs?

RQ2: How do CNAs perceive monetary incentive amounts reflecting their performance efforts?

RQ3: How do incentive increase amounts from subjective performance reviews motivate future performance?
Nature of the Study

The three primary functions of an empirical research study are exploring, describing, or explaining. The goal or nature of the research dictates the design. This study aimed to understand if CNAs at skilled nursing facilities perceived that their supervisors used bias during the performance appraisal process and whether those perceptions positively or negatively affected their motivation to perform well. Interviews were conducted among CNAs from three Promedica skilled nursing facilities in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, until data saturation was achieved. The following section will discuss the specific research paradigm, design, method, and triangulation process that guided this study.

Discussion of Research Paradigms

The research paradigm of this study is constructivism. The primary goal of this research was to explore the deeper dimensions of the motivational psychology behind subjective incentive-based performance appraisals. Like positivism, constructivism explores the objective aspects of the human perspective by observing patterns and generalizations. However, this study sought to uncover the complex inner workings below the surface of human behavior, which called for a constructivist approach. According to Chirkov and Anderson (2018), the psychology of motivation searches for answers to the question, "Why do people act, experience, feel, and think the way they do?" (p. 713). Social constructs strongly influence perceptions, specifically concerning bias. Empirical level research only considers what is observed on the surface of an experience (Fletcher, 2017). Actual-level research seeks to understand the underlying motivators of events, even if the actual event is never witnessed, and real-level research looks at the underlying causes of events (Fletcher, 2017). Constructivism has the ability to capture all three research levels and create a clear separation between ontology and epistemology (Chirkov &
Anderson, 2018). Constructivism does not view theories as absolutes but allows research to support, elaborate, or deny an idea. This paradigm guided the research to be open-ended and exploratory. Only using one level of analysis would have limited the study's ability to look beyond the surface events and uncover the motivators behind future actions.

**Discussion of Design**

The fixed or quantitative design has been defined as a systematically objective process used to describe variables, test relationships between variables, and examine cause and effect associations between variables to generate numerical data (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Concerning research conducted in healthcare, a quantitative research design may be chosen if there is a lack of existing research on a particular topic or if the study requires an evidence-based method that could impact patient care (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Quantitative research is typically used to test a hypothesis using statistical analysis to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) identified the four main quantitative research types: descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental, and experimental. Each type concedes how variables work together to prove meaningful or casual relationships between variables as justification for predetermined predictions (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). While this design has been a helpful method in healthcare, the systematic approach does not provide the fluidity necessary for conducting a study that seeks to observe and document the human perspective.

Flexible or qualitative research design focuses on the social aspect of research by using open-ended questions to interview subjects to explore poorly understood problems (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). This design aims to understand the research subjects better rather than make predictions on outcomes, as seen in quantitative methods (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Qualitative
research methods are best suited for studying the human perspective as lived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary qualitative approaches include case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research designs provide a means to understand experiences, circumstances, and the underlying meaning shaping perspectives (Phoenix et al., 2018). This design can identify if the perception of bias is a widespread issue or simply an isolated incident. Qualitative research accepts that an individual’s world experience is subjective and may differ from one person to another (Phoenix et al., 2018). Conducting an exhaustive qualitative study acknowledges the possibility of more than a single reality. Qualitative research was the best choice for this research study for these reasons.

Mixed method design combines quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data, integrate findings, and make interpretations that would not be possible using one approach alone (Shannon-Baker, 2016). According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), there are five approaches to mixed-method research: 1) triangulation, which corroborates results using multiple methods; 2) complementarity, which elaborates on or clarifies results through the comparison of the two procedures; 3) development, which uses one method's results as a justification for the outcome of another method's results; 4) initiation, which uses contradictions between method outcomes; and 5) expansion, which extends the current range of knowledge. The key to choosing a mixed-method approach is to ensure a purposeful mixing of methods (Taguchi, 2018). A mixed-method design is ineffective if the study cannot achieve data that justifies the approach, and the study can be conducted more purposefully by a single method (Taguchi, 2018). The research questions of this study guided the research toward a qualitative
approach. Although adding quantitative methods could have reinforced the qualitative results, the data could not be integrated to justify a mixed-method model.

**Discussion of Method**

There are five qualitative research methods, case study, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods include observation in interviews, surveys, or historical analysis. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), a case study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific case. Ethnography looks at the learned practices of a group of people or culture; narrative recounts the stories people tell about their lived experiences, and phenomenology describes a meaningful event from the perspective of those who lived through the experience (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This section will discuss the standard techniques associated with the qualitative design, followed by an in-depth discussion of the selected case study method.

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory studies focus on emerging concepts and ideas as the research process unfolds rather than being determined before the study begins (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). This method has generated new concepts that further expand the current literature (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). According to Chun Tie et al. (2019), the various expressions of grounded theory are: traditional, evolved, and constructivist. The authors discussed that traditional grounded theory looks to generate a new theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior relevant to the problem (Chun Tie et al., 2019). The evolved method of grounded theory looks at the symbolic undertones of social interaction, and constructivist grounded theory looks at how people arrive at the conclusions that drive their actions (Chun Tie et al., 2019). This method uses
line-by-line coding to develop common themes that lead the researcher to new theories and is suited to uncover a deeper understanding of a problem (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).

**Ethnography**

Ethnographic research is robust and immersive in design and typically looks at many people to understand a cultural group (Jones & Smith, 2017). This design is appropriate for describing learned aspects of a group (e.g., values, behaviors, beliefs) (Jones & Smith, 2017). Unlike grounded theory, ethnographies demand that the group interact long enough for a culture to manifest and permeate throughout the group, so social thought patterns that shape the group can be explained and confirmed by theory (Mohajan, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), there are many ethnography forms, but the two more popular types are the realist and critical. The realist observes and narrates participants' observations from a witness’s perspective, leaving the environment undisturbed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In comparison, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that critical researchers tend to monitor an environment hoping to bring change. This method is best suited for an anthropology study where the researchers seek to immerse themselves within the culture (Jones & Smith, 2017).

**Phenomenological Research**

Tomaszewski et al. (2020) identified two objectives in phenomenological studies: 1) to determine the phenomenon and focus on creating descriptive categories based on the participants' narratives; 2) to explain what happened in the phenomenon and use people's interpretation of events to explain their choices. The phenomenological research method adheres to the following principles: discover the meaning of a phenomenon; record accounts of lived experiences of the phenomenon; gather descriptions of experiences, not opinions or intellectual interpretations; and not allow a theoretical framework to dictate the study before data collection (Thomas, 2021).
This design best suits a study where the researcher wants to understand a shared but separate experience (Thomas, 2021). Mohjan (2018) gave the example of a researcher interviewing widows to understand the phenomenon of losing a husband. Each woman will have their own experience, but they all have suffered from a shared loss.

**Narrative Research**

The narrative research method relies on oral histories, diaries, letters, interviews, artifacts, and photographs to collect data that provides perspective on the procedural and intangible aspects of a participant's experience (Mohajan, 2018). In this way, narratives can link scientific information to 'everyday' experiences by using interpretative language to create connections and patterns that can improve knowledge and enhance learning, provide insight into the causes of behavior changes, and document experiences throughout history (Roberts, 2017). This form of research is best suited for instances where the researcher attempts to uncover the cause and effect of an experience from a personal perspective (Mohajan, 2018).

**Case Study**

Case studies investigate real-life experiences in-depth and address a research problem's full complexity by incorporating multiple sources and types of evidence (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). According to Yin (2018), three approaches to case studies are used for research purposes: explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. The approach provides a direction for the research and is typically chosen based on the research questions and control over the observed events. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), case study research is a qualitative approach when the investigator explores real-life evolution through detailed, in-depth data collection, revealing comprehensive descriptions of the event and overarching themes.
The overarching themes can be used as evidence to explain or elaborate on current knowledge. Mohajan (2018) cited several types of single and multiple case studies. The various kinds of single case studies cited are as follows: a retrospective case study (views past experiences), a snapshot study (views a specific space in time), and a diachronic study (views changes over time). The types of multiple case studies cited are as follows: nested studies that compare elements within one case to another, parallel studies that happen and are studied concurrently, sequential studies that occur consecutively with the assumption that one point impacts the following, and theoretical idiographic case studies that illustrate an idea without a theoretical framework, disciplined configurative case studies that establish theories to explain the case, heuristic case studies that identify new, unexpected paths, theory-testing case studies that assess the validity and scope conditions of single or competing theories, and plausibility probes that determine whether further examination is warranted (Mohajan, 2018). These case studies build a foundation for other studies that contribute to a more comprehensive view of the problem.

Although case studies are one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods, authors have noted the need for a more uniform approach to ensure effectiveness (Rashid et al., 2019). Hancock and Algozzine (2017) noted that case studies are best used in instances when 1) The focus is on an individual representative group, organization, or phenomenon; 2) The research is bounded by space and time; 3) The case allows the researcher to gather a rich descriptive that is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. The information gathered is obtained using how and why questions that can be analyzed against the current literature to confirm a reoccurring problem (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).
Based on the analysis above, this research project's appropriate method was a single-case study because the objective was to explore a current system identified as having an issue. The comprehensive interviews from CNAs about bias perceptions during the performance review process rendered overarching themes that illustrate the problem rather than mapping the stories across time or culture as a narrative or ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This single case study is retrospective because CNAs had to recall previous review experiences. Still, the investigation was interested in how that retrospective perception influenced current and future performance. Phenomenology was not the best-suited approach because the research expanded beyond simply describing an event. The case study provided the flexibility to perform inductive, deductive, or abductive analysis when testing or refining a theory (Farquhar et al., 2020). This study built on the theoretical framework of the expectancy-value theory, thus ruling out grounded theory as a viable method. All methods have similarities, but the objectives set them apart, making one better suited than another for particular studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Discussion of Triangulation**

Triangulation is a strategy that uses multiple data sources, researchers, theories, or research methods to ensure that a research study's data, analysis, and conclusions are comprehensive and accurate (Moon, 2019). According to Abdalla et al. (2018), Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulation: 1) data triangulation; 2) theoretical triangulation; 3) researcher triangulation, and 4) methodological triangulation. Data triangulation means collecting data from different periods and sources; theoretical triangulation refers to exploring multiple theories to interpret the same data group; and researcher triangulation involves numerous researchers studying the same matter (Abdalla et al., 2018). Lastly, methodological
triangulation uses multiple methods to obtain more detailed data about the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Robson and McCartan (2016) stated that data collection can take three forms: observation, asking, and testing in qualitative research. To achieve these layers of credibility in this study, focused face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions were conducted until data saturation to ‘ask’ participants and ‘observe’ what they think, feel, or believe regarding perceptions of bias during the performance review process. Focused interviews allowed the participants to speak freely enough for their personal views and values to emerge. Still, a guided interview provides enough control to guide the interview to a specific subject matter (Robson & McCartan, 2016). A self-administered survey was issued to willing participants to ‘test’ or corroborate the perceptions identified from the interview process. The questions were framed on a Lickert scale, including the following responses: Strongly Agree; Somewhat Agree; Neutral; Somewhat Disagree; Strongly Disagree. The data collected from these two processes were used to determine if the expectancy-value theory was applicable in this instance. The current theoretical generalization found in expectancy-value theory gained additional strength and stayed reinforced (Sridharan, 2020), which acted as a second layer of credibility.

**Summary of the Nature of the Study.**

The design and method selected for this research study were a flexible qualitative design using a single case study method. The objective was to gather if biased perspectives were present among individuals subjected to a current process, otherwise known as subjective incentive-based performance reviews. The paradigm that shaped this study was constructivism, which was meant to report on empirical research that explained a social problem or informed policy. A multi-data analysis was used to triangulate data collected against the existing-value theory.
Conceptual Framework

As markets grow more competitive, the importance of employee performance for organizational effectiveness becomes a focal point for corporate investments. According to Sharma and Sharma (2017), performance evaluations are the most critical human resource (HR) practice for employee performance improvement and effectiveness. Dissatisfaction with the performance evaluation process can be linked to adverse employee outcomes such as higher turnover and lower commitment levels (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The conceptual framework of a research study should include a theory about what is taking place, why the various aspects or features are involved, and how they might relate to each other (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following diagram and discussion include the framework's elements and how they were anticipated to flow together.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Note. Figure 1 illustrates the hypothetical pathways based on expectancy-value theory if employees perceive bias during the review process.
Expectancy value theory states that motivation to perform is influenced by three factors, 1) the perceived value of the reward, 2) the perceived likelihood that the desired performance will be rewarded, 3) and the perceived likelihood that effort will result in the expected reward (Shoaib et al., 2019). If employees believe their endeavors reflect incentives appropriately, they will exert more effort into better performance. However, if merit or bonus pay is not accurately reflected in performance, future employee efforts will be lower (Shoaib et al., 2019). A counter-theory of choice execution was discovered in a study by Ludwiczak et al. (2020). The model separates effort-based decision-making into the categories of choice and execution. The study focused on whether positive or negative financial incentives significantly influenced behavior when participants evaluated the choice to act versus the effort associated with the task (Ludwiczak et al., 2020). The anticipated outcome was that if greater effort exertion were required, financial incentives would need to be higher to increase motivation on these tasks (Ludwiczak et al., 2020). The results indicated that participants strongly preferred high reward options, but reward and effort were significant predictors of people's choices during mental and physical trials (Ludwiczak et al., 2020). As reflected in Figure 1, this study anticipated that if CNAs believed their reward was reflective of their efforts, they would be motivated to perform well in the future. In contrast, when they did not feel their reward was reflective of their efforts, they exhibited a lack of motivation to perform well in the future.

**Concepts**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers' standard error in analyzing qualitative data is to advance to the comparison or the relationship analysis without first understanding the core concepts or ideas that act as the foundation of the study. In this study, the naturally emerging concepts include the concept of bias, effort-based decision-making,
motivation, and pay-for-performance. These concepts surfaced from the study's objective and must be fully understood before applying them to research outcomes.

**Bias**

Biases are preconceived opinions or predispositions that stem from stereotypes based on interactions with others in the regular course of society (Dunham, 2018). Implicit biases are the unconscious manifestations of attitudes that guide thinking, often beginning early in life, to help individuals interpret the world around them (Dunham, 2018). Implicit attitudes emerge from hard-wired cognitive processes that are socially learned through multiple sources, such as observation, media, family, community, and social interactions (Zabel & Zabel, 2020). Furthermore, they are maintained through confirmation bias and subtyping and persevere despite contradictory information (Zabel & Zabel, 2020). According to the literature, there are more than 150 cognitive biases, with five directly impacting the workplace, including affinity bias, halo effect, perception bias, confirmation bias, and groupthink (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). When various types of bias are not addressed in the workplace, they can affect working relationships and trust, diverse talent recruitment and retention, work productivity, promotion and professional development, and creativity and innovation (Dalton & Villagran, 2018).

**Effort-based Decision Making**

Choices about how effort is invested to achieve goals are frequently made with incomplete information, where either the action required or the possible reward being gained is uncertain (Arulpragasam et al., 2018). Adaptive behavior related to mental and physical effort exertion requires gathering information from the environment and integrating that information with individualized goals (Vassena et al., 2019). According to cognitive dissonance theory, the more effort exerted, the more valuable the reward; however, another perspective in research
suggests that the more effort exerted, the less associated value with the incentive (Harmon-Jones et al., 2020).

**Motivation**

Motivation is a psychological construct that describes how individuals and groups choose behavior (McInerney, 2019). Motivation is typically associated with self-determination theory and is broken down into two common forms: intrinsic and extrinsic (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is the desire to perform an activity for internal drivers that lead to pleasure and satisfaction experiences (Giger et al., 2020). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is typically defined as the desire to execute an action to attain a positive, tangible reward, such as an incentive, or avoid negative consequences, such as a punishment (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Most employers try to increase employees' intrinsic motivation by providing job independence and constructive feedback while also providing incentives intended to increase extrinsic motivation (Kuvaas et al., 2017). However, in some cases, a single form of motivation can overshadow the other, causing an individual to act primarily out of a single form of motivation (Giger et al., 2020).

**Pay for Performance**

In pay-for-performance models, the underlying assumption is that goals are associated with positive effects when met with success or positively reinforced behaviors (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Failure or negative reinforcement is related to adverse effects (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). The anticipation of the effect mentioned above activates a behavioral tendency to approach or avoid a specific goal; however, situational stimuli such as incentives can override this tendency and cause one to pursue a goal associated with aversion (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Another side of pay for performance that should be noted is the ability to
hurt motivation. A study conducted by Thibault-Landry et al. (2017) found a positive correlation between incentive motivators and performance; however, the researchers noted that financial incentives could negatively affect motivation if employees perceive them as a controlling means of motivation evaluation and surveillance. Conversely, when financial incentives are awarded as a token of appreciation for work performed, employees are more likely to perceive them as providing a source of positive feedback (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017).

**Theories**

Researchers have debated whether best to begin with or without a theory to make sense of what is happening within a situation or phenomenon (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Some theories emerge through the research or are introduced to explain findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In this study, the theory is a stepping stone for investigation. To generate actions to execute said theory, actors must be in place to string the constructs and variables together to create an event. The theory selected to support this study was the expectancy-value theory, which individually addresses the concepts by isolating effort from motivation.

**Expectancy-Value Theory**

As mentioned, the research framework for this study consulted the expectancy-value theory, which states that motivation to perform is influenced by the perceived value of the reward, the perceived likelihood that the desired performance will be rewarded, and the perceived likelihood that effort will result in the expected reward (Ferguson, 2019). If employees believe their efforts will appropriately reflect incentive amounts, they will exert more effort into better performance. However, if merit or bonus pay is not perceived to be accurately reflective of performance, future employee efforts will be lower (Choi & Whitford, 2017). An overarching theme found in expectancy-value theory literature is that an authority figure can potentially
thwart success outcomes making participants less likely to expect they can reach goals, resulting in the devaluation of high-performance effort (Ferguson, 2019). Applications of bias tend to leave individuals feeling that their actions are in vain because the biases prevent evaluators from objectively looking at performance efforts (Dalton & Villagran, 2018).

**Actors**

A CNA is someone who receives a minimum of 75 hours of training and can be responsible for the day-to-day care of over 15 residents, depending on the shift and state mandatory staffing ratios (Travers et al., 2020). During an eight-hour shift, CNAs are expected to complete the following responsibilities: Get residents up for the day, wash, dress, toilet, and feed them, among many other tasks overseen by a registered nurse and a licensed practical nurse (Travers et al., 2020). For this study, the focus was on the CNA’s perception of bias during the review process. A second actor was the nursing supervisor. This study defined these individuals as clinical, managerial staff who executed performance appraisals. Human resource management's Resource-Based View (RBV) identifies corporate strategy as attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining employees who accomplish a company's objectives (Widyanty et al., 2020). Human resource managers (HRMs) are responsible for facilitating these practices. For this study, HRMs will act as facilitators of the performance review process by ensuring reviews are completed in their entirety in a timely fashion.

** Constructs**

Constructs or variables can be used to validate data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pulled from the theoretical framework and expected research outcomes, the constructs for this study included employees' perceptions of bias and performance appraisals, bias influence on motivation, and
how perceptions of bias impact human resource efforts. Individually these constructs contributed to the understanding of research outcomes.

**Employees' Perceptions of Bias and Performance Appraisals**

Biases result in discrimination claims amidst the appraisal process leading to negative perceptions of appraisals (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). Su (2020) conducted a study that examined the quality of performance appraisals through the lens of trust, clarity, communication, and fairness concerning employee motivation and performance empowerment. The study found that employees who perceived the performance appraisal process as trustworthy, transparent, a forum for open communication, and fair were more receptive to feedback and satisfied with review outcomes despite financial associations (Su, 2020). Another study confirmed that employees were more receptive to performance appraisals when conducted by more than one source, suggesting that having multiple sources helped increase trust and fairness in the appraisal process (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). Employees felt that when only managers conducted performance appraisals, there was a higher probability of error since managers might have preconceived or inaccurate opinions about employee performance. At the same time, those who believed they were being evaluated were more likely to be motivated to make changes that strengthened their performance than those who did not (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018).

**Bias Influence on Performance Motivation**

Performance appraisal systems have improved job performance by regularly assessing efforts and providing constructive feedback (Dangol, 2021). Evidence has shown that employees may be motivated to perform well if they feel the appraisal process is fair, accurate, and based on current information; however, if employees think these evaluations are inaccurate, the result could be a lack of motivation (Dangol, 2021). Research claims that employees' motivation for
performance improvement after receiving feedback largely depends on their attitude toward the performance appraisal system (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Feedback interventions hurt performance when the receiver negatively perceives the feedback intervention process (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Negative feedback can improve performance when employees trust the evaluation process (Sharma & Sharma, 2017).

**How Perceptions of Bias Impact Human Resource Efforts**

Using adequate HR policies and practices, organizations can build a positive work environment that sustains employees' development and encourages communication, innovation, and proactive attitudes and behaviors (Ciobanu et al., 2019). However, human resources practices and decision-making are bounded by their ability and the availability of information for making that decision; hence, organizations should make a conscious effort to use information systems that facilitate unbiased decision-making (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Employee perception strongly influences the relationship between HR practices and individual outcomes, and implementing high-performance HR practices may not always be perceived positively (Ciobanu et al., 2019). Similar to what is illustrated in effort models, if employees feel the organization does not reciprocate their effort, they may experience negative feelings. Still, when there is a high commitment to HR practice, employees may feel a stronger sense of well-being and feel viewed as a valuable resource (Ciobanu et al., 2019).

**Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Actors, and Constructs**

The central concepts in research relating to performance reviews included bias, effort-based decision-making, motivation, and pay-for-performance. The idea of bias relates to expectancy-value theory because bias interrupts an expected reward's natural progression concerning efforts. Affinity bias tends to gravitate toward individuals that look like oneself
(Dalton & Villagran, 2018). Suppose nursing supervisors engage in this discriminatory practice during the performance review process. In that case, the results may not accurately reflect the performance efforts of those employees who do not look like them. The halo effect tends to think a person is 'good' just because one likes them (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). Nursing supervisors who complete performance reviews based on personal preferences will skew evaluation outcomes for CNAs, resulting in a lack of future motivation, otherwise known as the leniency effect (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018). Perception bias uses stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups, creating obstacles when objectively judging a person's performance (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). A nursing supervisor who engages in this practice does not look at a CNAs performance objectively but rather through the lens of whatever stereotypes and assumptions they associate with that CNA. Bias such as confirmation and groupthink play into workplace politics, influencing performance appraisal outcomes (Rosen et al., 2017).

The perception of performance appraisal bias can determine how a CNA's observation of supervisor bias during the review process influences their interpretation of the reward received concerning future motivation efforts. The diagram presented at the beginning of this document shows what should be expected if employees do not perceive bias during the review process and what we should expect if bias is sensed during the review process. The method relates to HRMs and HR practices as performance appraisal systems are among the most critical HR functions (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Each concept has a place within the following constructs, employee perceptions of bias, how those biases influence performance motivation, and how this phenomenon impacts human resource efforts surrounding performance management.
Summary of the Research Framework.

Performance management is a driving force of organizational success, encouraging HRMs to invest in effective performance management systems by monitoring their accuracy and execution (Son et al., 2020). Incentive-based performance appraisals have enhanced employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Kuvaas et al., 2017). When executed without biased perceptions, they have been found to generate positive outcomes when employees feel they are trustworthy and fair (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). When employees do not trust the review process due to unfairness related to bias or incentive amounts, there is a potential for an adverse outcome, such as a lack of motivation for future performance (Choi & Whitford, 2017). This study investigates this phenomenon among CNAs and nurse supervisors within skilled nursing facilities.

Definition of Terms

For a better understanding of this study, the following terms are defined in the context of this research.

Bias. Biases are preconceived opinions or predispositions stemming from stereotypes based on interactions with others in the regular course of society (Dunham, 2018).

Effort. An effort is to process integrating information regarding the task constraints, rewards, and subject's state (André et al., 2019).

Motivation. Motivation is a psychological construct that describes how individuals and groups choose behavior (McInerney, 2019).

Certified Nursing Assistant. A certified nursing assistant (CNA) is an individual who receives a minimum of 75 hours of training and can be responsible for the day-to-day care of
over 15 residents, depending on the shift and the existence of state mandatory staffing ratios (Travers et al., 2020).

*Nursing Supervisor.* This is a clinical, managerial staff member that executes performance appraisals (Escrig-Pinol et al., 2019).

*Performance Appraisal.* These are the activities through which organizations seek to assess and develop employee competence, enhance performance and distribute rewards (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2020).

*Pay for performance.* Pay for performance means paying higher wages for higher productivity (Lazear, 2018).

*Perceptions.* Perceptions are predictions about outcomes based on information received from the environment and incoming data (de Lange et al., 2018).

**Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations**

Assumptions can be broken into five distinct areas: focus, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study considered the possibility of multiple realities based on how each participant experienced the performance review process from an ontological approach. Epistemologically, time in the field was limited not to disrupt the natural function of the environment or encourage more negative associations with the review process. Limitations are potential flaws in the research study that are not in the researcher's control but can impact the results (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Alternatively, researchers set parameters to guide the research to specific objectives and keep the study from moving away from research goals, known as delimitations (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The research paradigm addressed axiology, and the limitations and delimitations shaped the research methods.
Assumptions

There was an assumption that participants would answer the interview questions honestly and candidly; however, some participants may have altered their responses based on fear, perception, or discussion with others (Demetriou et al., 2019). There was an assumption that the sample size was sufficient to provide enough variation among individuals who had experienced at least one performance review as a CNA in a skilled nursing facility. Data were collected until saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes or concepts emerged from interview interactions (Fofana et al., 2020). There was an assumption that the interview questions would accurately reflect the phenomenon of perceptions of bias and would elicit enough data to address the research questions. Open-ended interview questions allowed the topic to be explored in-depth to identify cause or correlation (Weller et al., 2020). There was an assumption that participants would have a sincere interest in participating in the research and did not have any other motives. No incentives were offered to encourage participation in this study. Finally, there was an assumption that the results of this study would be relevant to human resource professionals and act as a foundation to improve existing performance management practices.

Limitations

Internal and external validity efforts can create limitations within a study that hinder the researcher's ability to collect unimpaired data. Ross et al. (2019) provide examples of internal and external threats that can shape researcher outcomes. Some threats to internal validity include the interpretation of history, changes in participants due to time, attrition, and changes in participant responses due to repeated measuring (Ross et al., 2019). External threats to validity include factors that might inhibit the study results from being generalized across a larger population (Ross et al., 2019). Other researchers have provided a systematic approach to
ensuring confidence in qualitative data, such as the GRADE-CERqual method, which assesses the methodological limitations, the adequacy of data supporting findings, the coherence of findings, and the relevance of findings (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019).

The foreseen methodological limitations for this study included sample size, the measure used to collect data, and self-reported data. The sample size of this study was limited to CNAs within three Promedica skilled nursing facilities within the greater Pittsburgh area. Another limitation of that population was the ability to access those who receive subjective incentive-based performance reviews. The objective was to ensure that all participants had the same experience with the phenomenon to accurately depict the shared experience from various perspectives (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). For this study, a subjective incentive-based performance review was defined as a review conducted by one nursing supervisor who oversaw the performance of the CNA being reviewed. Although a larger sample size would have been ideal, interviews were only executed until data saturation within the population limits, the most widely used determining factor for sample size (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

The process of conducting interviews is a commonly used method that relies on an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee to develop a mutual understanding of the interviewees' perspectives of what is essential or relevant about a specific topic, thereby potentially highlighting issues that the interviewer might not have considered (Young et al., 2018). Although video conferencing allowed some of the same advantages as in-person interviews, there were also various drawbacks. Irani (2019) highlighted some of the limitations associated with video conferencing, including the inability to assess the participant's environment, limited observation of body language and nonverbal communication; further, reductions in the sample size due to limited access or comfort with the technology, and
connection issues affect the clarity of voice and image, as well as the quality of the interview and audio-recorded file.

Finally, an aspect of self-reported data can present bias, such as selective memory, telescoping, attribution, and exaggerations, threatening internal validity (Ross et al., 2019). Participants' awareness of being part of a research study could have also influenced outcomes. People are often influenced by social expectations that lead to a propensity to manage how they may appear to others; this is known as the Hawthorne effect (Nguyen et al., 2018). There was a risk that the awareness of the study would trigger discussions on how to respond to research questions, causing the data the be skewed because participants would provide the collective approved answer rather than their opinion. Probing during face-to-face interviews offered additional background, and the self-reported surveys provided a veil of confidence that allowed for more honest feedback.

**Delimitations**

The parameters set for this study were developed to address how CNAs’ perceptions of bias during the performance review process can lead to a lack of motivation to perform above-standard requirements within skilled nursing facilities. Expectancy-value theory evaluates the expectancy of success and the value associated with the effort to achieve success (Hodis, 2018). The theoretical background of expectancy-value theory was chosen instead of other approaches that have guided other studies, such as self-determination theory because motivation is a byproduct of the main focus of this study, which is the perception of bias. Self-determination theory observes the autonomous and controlled aspects of motivation (Schwatka et al., 2020), which have their place within this research. Still, due to time parameters, this study could not follow participants into another appraisal year to verify if their feelings of motivation are present.
in their future performance. Ultimately the study sought to determine if incentive-based performance reviews are an effective means of performance motivation. The research questions are in line with qualitative guidelines and specifically focus on uncovering perceptions of bias concerning the review process to determine if bias causes participants to view appraisals as an inaccurate measure of performance which renders them ineffective.

The triangulation method of face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions until data saturation uncovered what participants thought, felt, and believed regarding perceptions of bias during the performance review process. Focused discussions allowed participants to speak freely enough for their personal views and values to emerge. Still, they gave the interviewer enough control to guide the interview to a specific subject matter (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Self-administered surveys on a Lickert scale were administered to affirm perceptions identified from the interview process (Simms et al., 2019). Using one method alone would not provide enough context or validity; however, the two forms of data together provided enough information to determine if the expectancy-value theory is applicable in this instance.

Significance of the Study

When considering the significance of a study, how the research will contribute to discovered information typically comes to mind. The ability to answer questions surrounding the phenomenon in life is an invaluable asset that can help shape the present, change the future, and make sense of the past. Literature can act as a biography that reveals chasms that need bridging. Biblical integration should touch every aspect of one’s life, with work and research being no exception.
Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

The literature surrounding performance management has been extensive and comprehensive. This study seeks to build upon that foundation and explore how bias during the performance review process influences future motivation. Lee (2019) noted that the literature on performance management has not progressed beyond acknowledging that the success of performance management is contingent on various factors. Lee (2019) informed the reader that few empirical studies have systematically examined what particular conditions and execution of practices motivate employees to work harder or less hard. Specifically studying the performance appraisal bias, Belle et al. (2017) conducted a systematic literature review and did not discover any empirical study on cognitive biases in performance appraisal; however, this study only reviewed aspects of the anchoring and halo effect in the field of public administration. This study aimed not to look at one particular type of bias but to observe any form of prejudice and how that perception influences an employee's motivation to perform moving forward. The literature presented in this study displayed various individual aspects of this study; none relate entirely to the objectives of this research.

Implications for Biblical Integration

A worldview combines a person's values concerning beliefs about the world's functions (de Lange et al., 2018). A Christian worldview or biblical perspective allows God and His Word to shape reality to act on faith and belief even when no concrete evidence supports or refutes the concept (Clark et al., 2017). Faith encourages questions and seeks answers from the Word of God, but varying levels of comprehension do not always lead to a black-and-white solution. There is an agreement between faith and reason (Clark et al., 2017). Research is a tool that allows the exploration of various concepts and beliefs, but a foundation in God's Word should
act as a sounding board to discern what is true and what goes against the teachings found in the Word.

The process of conducting research should be done with God at the forefront. 1 John 4:1 tells us to be on the lookout for false prophets. Matthew 5:37 says to let ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and ‘no’ be ‘no.’ Proverbs 25:2 speaks to God's authority to conceal what His followers are not yet ready to understand, but the believers must seek understanding. The research process should be a blueprint for the author’s conclusions and the affirmed findings through previous studies. Studies that lack supporting evidence tend to make claims that have not been confirmed with truth, leading to false information. Biblically guided researchers are not meant to scratch the surface but rather to go deeper to uncover hidden truths. "[T] he simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps" (John McArthur Study Bible, 2013, Proverbs 14:15). The Bible encourages those who believe in seeking answers but continually be mindful of falsehoods that may lead them away from the truth.

Qualitative research is a sound method of collecting and analyzing data that may aid in making objective and educated decisions surrounding ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ This research study fulfills the research requirement from a biblical perspective because the primary focus is on investing in God's people. The goal is to invest in creating an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to continue serving others. This study aims to identify the perceived level of integrity present during the performance review process. Certain biases diminish integrity and prevent viewing God's people as He intended.

**Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate**

Performance appraisals have improved organizational outcomes by serving as a developmental and evaluation tool (Kim et al., 2018) to increase competitive advantage. From a
developmental standpoint, they encourage employee growth by setting expectations (Schleicher et al., 2018), providing constructive feedback (Baird et al., 2020), and providing a forum for coaching opportunities (Schleicher et al., 2018). They can enhance human resources and organizational objectives (Perkins, 2018). Ineffective performance practices may lead to setbacks in employee development and an inability to improve HR objectives such as organizational commitment (Matookchund & Steyn, 2020), trust in leadership, and job satisfaction (Pagan & Malo, 2021). Without the pillar of human resources, organizations cannot nurture their most valuable asset, human capital.

Performance management systems are directly related to the human resource cognate and can be considered essential (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Adequate HR policies and practices can build a positive work environment that sustains employees' development and encourages communication, innovation, and proactive attitudes and behaviors (Ciobanu et al., 2019). These factors are crucial to the future of any organization, making HR instrumental to the accomplishment of organizational sustained competitive advantage (Ismail et al., 2021).

**Summary of the Significance of the Study.**

Performance management practices can create a productive and sustainable environment where employees can develop and contribute to the organization's success. This study will contribute to research concerning how perceptions can shape an individual's reality to the extent that they impact the person’s future actions, specifically performance. The findings of this study will directly benefit human resource professionals who are considering an effective performance management system to implement within their organization by helping them understand how external factors such as bias can render the process completely ineffective. In addition, if incentive-based performance reviews are already being practiced, this study highlights areas
where HR professionals can focus training efforts to minimize risks associated with rater bias. More effective performance management practices will provide a more accurate depiction of the current workforce and create a clear framework for focusing on future organizational efforts.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The following section includes the literature on how performance appraisals improve organizational outcomes and individual performance, two of their primary functions (Kennedy et al., 2019). Previous studies have highlighted performance appraisals' ongoing problems, such as bias (Morandi et al., 2019) and rater error (De Clercq et al., 2019). Based on the information found, anticipated, and discovered, themes surfaced that help pinpoint where the literature has been focused and where there is potential for more work. Despite extensive research, there appears to be a gap in the literature related to subjective incentive-based performance appraisals leaving too much room for nursing supervisor bias in skilled nursing facilities within the United States. Lee (2019) highlighted the contradictions concerning the motivational effects of performance management found in the literature and how the literature has not progressed beyond claiming that the success of performance management is contingent on various factors. More specifically, “[T]here have been few empirical studies systematically examining under what conditions the execution of performance management motivates employees to work harder and under what conditions it did not” (Lee, 2019, p.2). The following literature review is an exhaustive assessment of the current literature about this case study.

Business Practices Related to Performance Motivation

The assessment and management of employee performance have been studied in the literature for centuries as a solution to improve organizational outcomes (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). In addition, human motivation has also been a topic of discussion due to the practice's
ability to predict employee behavior related to organizational success (Schjoedt & Shaver, 2020). Linking performance and motivation is a human resource (HR) practice known as a performance appraisal system. These systems are used to formally evaluate a person’s performance against a set of predetermined criteria associated with a score or level of performance, resulting in a final rating of the overall performance of an individual, which can impact their ability to be promoted or receive additional compensation (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Concerning this case study, incentive-based performance reviews may motivate employees to perform well if executed effectively. Most incentive-based reviews use a score or performance benchmark assigned during the review process to allocate a reward, typically a dollar amount (Mulvaney, 2019).

Existing literature on job or work performance shows how closely related motivation is to job performance (Chen et al., 2019). Work performance refers to the behaviors or actions relevant to the organization's goals and is divided into four dimensions: interpersonal performance, adaptive performance, dedicative performance, and task performance (Chen et al., 2019). Chen et al. (2019) defined interpersonal performance as the relationship between facilitation and collaboration; adaptive performance as adaptive behavior in an organization; dedicative performance as the degree to which a person copes with difficulties; and task performance as an individual’s ability and work knowledge that contributes to the organization's growth. Although the self-determination theory is one of the most cited theories used to explain the relationship between performance and motivation, the process theory has been used to describe how performance appraisals bring change (Perkins, 2018). The social exchange theory explains how appraisal systems encourage strategic organizational outcomes through a manager’s implementation and interaction with employees to shape their attitudes and behavior in organizationally important ways (Keegan & den Hartog, 2019). Other research has utilized the
agency theory to understand how performance appraisals align an organization's interests with the employees (Evans & Tourish, 2017). The agency theory assumes that people are motivated by self-interest in the form of monetary value unless overridden by intangible forces such as trust, loyalty, and friendship networks (Evans & Tourish, 2017).

The literature has revealed that despite organizational efforts to track and manage performance through the appraisal process, many employees feel the annual performance review process does not add value to the organization because they tend to be untimely and ineffective (Kennedy et al., 2019). “Understanding the full extent of how relative performance feedback (hereafter feedback) affects employees is complex, as competing social mechanisms are likely to influence employees simultaneously” (Gjedrem, 2018, p. 1). For example, particular internal motivators may be drowned out by external mechanisms. Other research has focused on how a supervisor’s psychological state can impact review outcomes. Managers often experience anxiety due to evaluating and providing feedback on employee performance (Bell et al., 2020). As a result of the associated pressure, managers often apply coping strategies to the appraisal process that are detrimental to the goals of the performance evaluation system. Such strategies include rating leniency, deliberate distortion of performance results, intentional disengagement from the employee, rating all employees the same, and failure to foster employee development (Belle et al., 2020). These anxiety-coping actions by an appraising manager insert bias and decrease the validity, value, and use of a performance appraisal system in the eyes of those being rated, which may decrease performance motivation.

Appraisals and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been used to describe the relationship between staff and the organization (Hoeve et al., 2018). The three-part model driving the discussion surrounding
organizational commitment in the literature includes (1) a desire or affective commitment, (2) a need or continuance commitment, and (3) an obligation or a normative commitment (Hoeve et al., 2018). Affective commitment alludes to an individual's sense of belonging, thus fostering a desire to maintain an affiliation with the organization. Continuance and normative commitments refer to the need to remain out of obligation, whether that obligation is financially or morally charged. In healthcare, a solid organizational commitment decreases turnover and improves job productivity and the quality of patient care (Sepahvand et al., 2020).

Organizational commitment in terms of manager-employee communication can be enhanced through an effective performance appraisal process by allowing an exchange of leadership skills, respect/recognition, autonomy and empowerment, and orientation and collaboration (Sepahvand et al., 2020). In addition, effective performance appraisals can shape commitment and engagement toward organizational development by increasing employee satisfaction, creating positive attitudes towards the organization, and improving performance standards (Kadiresan et al., 2017). Organizational commitment is also referred to in the literature as behavior congruent with values, a culture of integrity, and a willingness to devote physical and mental effort to participate in various company activities (Na-Nan et al., 2020). Research has found that organizational commitment is the primary facilitator between human resource management and work performance (Na-Nan et al., 2020). Fairness of work procedures and appraisals positively affected organizational outcomes (Na-Nan et al., 2020). Considering how organizational commitment impacts the quality of care and the importance of appraisal performance in achieving goals within healthcare facilities, a study focused on the impact of the improved performance appraisal process is vital.

Appraisals and Trust in Leadership
The literature has defined trust as a trait, a state, and a cognitive process that requires the willingness to be vulnerable with another person, in this case, another person in leadership (Fischer et al., 2020). However, the method used to measure employee trust is not consistent. Some examples from the literature measure trust as an overall global construct, while others measure specific dimensions of trust separately (Fischer et al., 2020). The most common language used to describe the duality of trust are affective and cognitive trust; affective trust is dependent on the quality of relationships, while cognitive trust calls for the leader to display a level of integrity that fosters trust (Fischer et al., 2020). Employees who view leaders as trustworthy believe that their leaders are competent and their actions are meant to benefit them rather than harm the organization's interests and employees (Belsito & Reutzel, 2020).

Performance appraisals provide opportunities for social exchanges between members of leadership and staff, which leaders can use to display integrity and cultivate relationships to build trust (Belsito & Reutzel, 2020). The interpersonal communication often displayed during the performance appraisal process allows leaders and staff to carry out conversations about the organization's primary functions, increase motivation and emotional disclosure, and share information (Susilawati & Supartha, 2020).

**Servant Leadership.** Servant leaders demonstrate a leadership style identified in the literature as an approach that allows leaders and staff to carry out activities that benefit each other and the organization (Susilawati & Supartha, 2020). Servant leaders take a selfless approach, followed by a humble attitude, which deems being a leader an opportunity and obligation to serve the staff who work for them (Susilawati & Supartha, 2020). Servant leadership emphasizes the leaders’ involvement in the success of their employees’ growth, development, and fundamental interests (Peng & Chen, 2020). When servant-leaders occupy
formal management positions, they are seen as trustworthy role models who perpetuate positive relationships that increase employee motivation and performance (Peng & Chen, 2020).

In contrast, employees are less likely to show positive work behavior when their trust in the leader is inconsistent with trust from the leader/organization (Kim et al., 2018). Suppose subordinates trust their supervisors but do not feel trusted. In that case, they may think their efforts will not reciprocate appropriately. They may become reluctant to exert high energy and effort, resulting in poor performance ratings and a lack of job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2018).

**Transformational Leadership.** Transformational leadership is described as a combination of the following factors: (1) idealized influence: Leaders lead by living out the proposed work ideals as role models and having followers emulate them; (2) inspirational motivation: Leaders emphasize shared values and shared goals and communicate clearly how these can be attained by working together; (3) intellectual stimulation: Leaders challenge their followers intellectually by stimulating and encouraging creativity and new approaches; (4) individualized consideration: Leaders understand and address followers' needs and personal values (Kammerhoff et al., 2019). Transformational leaders can increase employees' motivation by providing performance feedback and offering accurate incentive pay (Han et al., 2018). Transformational managers develop relationships that foster trust, so followers are more receptive to new visions and goals, alternative ways of doing things, and coaching during the review process (Han et al., 2018). Transformational leaders pay considerable attention to employees personally (e.g., acknowledging personal goals within the workplace) while distinguishing that information from an individual’s performance level. This observed balance makes employees willing to conquer specified organizational objectives even if particular objectives are only in the organization’s interest (Ullah et al., 2021). Ullah et al. (2021) noted
that studies had confirmed the significant impact of transformational leadership on the following areas: organizational performance, employee creativity, employee retention, service quality, burnout, and other negative psychological states, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, motivation, and other positive psychological states, and project success. Considering the aforementioned areas, leaders contribute to an organization's overall culture and improve or deteriorate employee satisfaction by performing their job.

**Appraisals and Job Satisfaction**

One of the most apparent indicators of a declining condition in an organization is the lack of job satisfaction among the workforce (Taba, 2018). On the contrary, high job satisfaction can signify a well-run organization. Studies have shown that job satisfaction strongly correlates with employee performance levels because of increased morale and the passion necessary to execute tasks in the organization's best interest (Zain & Setiawati, 2019). In other words, a satisfied employee will improve their performance in quantity and quality more than an unsatisfied employee (Zain & Setiawati, 2019). Organizations attempt to achieve employee satisfaction through performance-related pay, which requires a formal monitoring process based on managers' judgments, opinions, and evaluations; this process is known as a performance appraisal system (Pagan & Malo, 2021). However, the literature has revealed that performance appraisal systems can lead to unfair treatment, procedural inequalities, and biased evaluations because of supervisor misperceptions and a lack of objectivity during the evaluation process (Pagan & Malo, 2021). Taba (2018) asserted that employees need a system of pay and promotion that is perceived as fair, unambiguous, and in line with their expectations to perform to the best of their abilities. This concept is essential because, if used effectively, reward systems attract candidates to join an organization, retain them, and motivate them to work hard (Taba, 2018).
Performance appraisals are a means of setting clear and achievable goals. Research on goal-setting theory has suggested that setting measurable and challenging goals to align the objectives of individuals and companies leads to higher motivation levels, more significant employee work effort, and employee satisfaction (Kampkotter, 2017). Other literature shows that performance appraisal characteristics, perceived fairness, and rating accuracy are essential for the effectiveness of the performance assessment process. In contrast, rating distortions lead to less employee acceptance and satisfaction and decreased incentives to exert effort (Kampkotter, 2017). Dal Corso et al. (2019) conducted a study that confirmed the importance of positive perceptions of performance appraisals and that performance appraisal justice enhances well-being outcomes, namely job performance, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Thus, if executed effectively, performance appraisals can positively affect job satisfaction. Supervisors must exhibit dignity during appraisal meetings to ensure appraisals are unbiased procedures and adequately explain the procedures. In this way, performance appraisal justice can be achieved, and positive work outcomes can increase (Dal Corso et al., 2019).

**Employee Motivation and Organizational Success**

Employee motivation tends to be viewed in the unidimensional context of someone having more or less. Self-determination theory describes motivation by considering the drivers or motivational forces contributing to a person’s behaviors (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Rigby and Ryan (2018) noted that some types of motivation depend on external or internal pressure and are primarily disconnected from personal needs and interests. Other motivational efforts are dictated by the employees’ needs, values, and interests. Thus, in theory, the more robust connection to the employee’s personal needs or interests, the higher the motivation. Araujo et al. (2020) identified two major factors that affect business success and organizational performance, one of which is
employee motivation. Organizations attempt to increase motivation by creating a culture of high performance. Corporate culture strives to permeate key elements of managerial focus, otherwise known as organizational objectives or goals (Cunha et al., 2018).

Performance management practices link the organizations’ strategic goals and policies with individual goals (Cunha et al., 2018). Performance appraisals act as a platform to facilitate conversations around change and further develop techniques to help employees meet their personal goals. Specifically, performance appraisals inform employees about their contributions to the associated performance standards, resulting in a valued reward. For example, employees are more likely to support change or work toward organizational objectives if they agree with the goals and anticipated outcome (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Evidence points to a strong direct correlation between the effectiveness of implementing business change and business success (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Appelbaum et al. (2018) recounted the essential steps to change as (1) creating a sense of need and urgency, (2) communicating objectives and ensuring participation, and (3) providing anchoring points and a base for the achievement of change. The success of any organizational objective is contingent on the individuals necessary for accomplishing the task; thus, motivating employees to work towards corporate objectives is imperative.

Performance Appraisals Improve Individual Performance

Performance appraisals have often been used to improve employee performance by providing employees with feedback (Toong, 2019), setting expectations (Baird et al., 2020), and developing goals in line with organizational outcomes (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). A performance appraisal clarifies roles and expectations, allows communication between employees and supervisors, and evokes employees' feelings of trust and fairness regarding evaluating their performance (Baird et al., 2020). One aspect of performance management and human resource
development is implementing planned training and development interventions that teach, instill, and modify competencies, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and behavior through new learning experiences (Mehale et al., 2021). Employees must continually learn new skills to keep up and meet job demands. Studies have confirmed that training is an excellent way to improve employee skills, knowledge, and development opportunities and that training positively impacts employee performance (Mehale et al., 2021). Performance appraisal processes help identify gaps in understanding and execution to implement appropriate training (Mehale et al., 2021).

**Provide Performance Feedback.** Research has indicated that performance improvement after receiving performance feedback largely depends on the attitude toward the performance appraisal process (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Reasons for non-acceptance of the performance feedback include disagreement with the appraisal system, disagreement with evaluation ratings, and evaluations providing insufficient information for employees to improve performance (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Unfavorable feedback is not readily accepted, but there is evidence that even negative feedback can result in performance improvement if that feedback is received by employees (Gnepp et al., 2020). Negative feedback may improve future performance by leading to error awareness, clarifying performance-related expectations, and outlining how adequate performance can be accomplished (Grundmann et al., 2021). The challenge is getting various individuals to accept and trust the feedback provided. Shin et al. (2020) discussed how person-oriented feedback requires the rater to speak to an individual’s ability and competence, while task-oriented feedback focuses on the individual’s ability to execute a task making implementation more manageable for the rater to articulate and the recipient to accept.

Much research is geared toward the emotional implications of feedback and how various coping skills can enhance one’s ability to accept negative comments. However, the presenter's
approach often dictates the effectiveness of the dialog. Gong et al. (2017) proposed two dimensions of feedback: the focus (i.e., self or other) and the nature (i.e., positive or negative). Positive feedback reflects areas where an employee performs well, whereas negative feedback indicates areas that need improvement. The two dimensions generate four types of feedback-seeking behavior (Gong et al., 2017). The first two types of behaviors concerning feedback related to the employee are 1) negative feedback-seeking; 2) positive feedback-seeking; the employee seeks information regarding areas or aspects in which they do well (Gong et al., 2017). The third and fourth types of behavior concern information on peers. While performance appraisals should not outwardly express comparisons of peer-related performance, bias and rating criteria often lead supervisors to consult the performance of an employee’s peer concerning the employee being rated.

360-Degree Method. Most studies support that the 360-appraisal system seems to be the most comprehensive and fair appraisal system among the other available systems (Haddad et al., 2019). This method of appraisal system gives rise to a positive work environment, with high levels of perceived organizational justice that leads to an increase in positive work attitudes and behaviors, job satisfaction, and job commitment (Haddad et al., 2019). The 360-degree method involves evaluating inputs from multiple levels within the firm, including senior managers, employees, supervisors, subordinates, peers, team members, and internal or external customers, rather than relying solely on an individual supervisor’s input (Zondo, 2018). Because of the diverse opinions, 360-degree feedback appears to impact employees’ perceptions of organizational justice on a distributive, procedural, and interactive level; both procedural and interactive levels are indicators of a fair work environment (Haddad et al., 2019).
**Set Performance Expectations.** Research has suggested a direct negative link between role ambiguity and job performance and that goal setting positively impacts individual and group performance (Schleicher et al., 2018). Task clarification and goal setting as part of the performance appraisal process has improved employee reactions and performance (Schleicher et al., 2018). Goal setting has been shown to result in higher levels of performance when goals are either assigned to individuals or when individuals are allowed to set goals for themselves (Islami et al., 2018). Setting expectations influences performance by changing the direction of action by the degree of effort exerted; and the persistence of action over time (Islami et al., 2018). When an employee is provided explicit instruction to improve work quality and minimize errors, that employee will focus energy on producing a higher-quality product than if told to “do your best” on the task (Schleicher et al., 2018). The literature has confirmed how transformational leaders contribute to increased feedback, allowing employees more control over decision-making (Lee et al., 2019).

**Setting Goals.** Performance appraisals allow supervisors and employees to set goals for future performance. Goal-setting theory indicates that specific, challenging goals improve task performance and increase effort investment than easy or vague “do-your-best” goals (Espedido & Searle, 2018). Welsh et al. (2020) conducted a study that evaluated the impact of individual and organizational goal setting. The results show that high-performance goals are cognitively motivating and improve in-role performance. Still, looking deeper, Welsh et al. uncovered discrete implications stemming from appraisal processes concerning organization-set goals increasing anxiety and self-set goals increasing enthusiasm (see Figure 2). The authors admit both anxiety and enthusiasm reflect a high degree of activation resulting in emotional exhaustion, but they have opposing outcomes when manifested in workplace behaviors (Welsh et al., 2020).
Organization-set goals drive anxiety, which leads to negative workplace behaviors, while self-set goals result in enthusiasm and positive workplace behaviors. Balancing these expectations during the review process is vital to improving individual performance.

**Figure 2. Goal-Setting Theory**

![Goal-Setting Theory Diagram](image)

*Note. This figure illustrates the progression of goal-setting theory.*

**Performance Coaching**

Coaching is another activity that has gained popularity in the business world, but to date, there is no universal definition for coaching. DiGirolamo and Tkach (2019) stated that coaching is an inherently participative activity in which energy, knowledge, and information are shared and co-created within the relationship. Supervisory coaching has been defined as a face-to-face interaction between a supervisor and employee to reach a collaborative understanding of job knowledge, improve skills, develop a stronger working relationship, and create opportunities for the employee’s professional growth (Lee et al., 2019). Although the coaching skills used by managers and leaders share some similarities with professional coaching, there are many
significant differences. Managers and leaders typically have little to no training in coaching skills and tend to utilize a more conversational approach than structured sessions (DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019). Managers and leaders who take a more directive approach will likely experience obstacles when adding coaching skills to their repertoire. Being too authoritarian and controlling is counterproductive to creating a partnership (DiGirolamo & Tkach, 2019).

Effective appraisal systems allow managers to conduct ongoing informal conversations that provide employees with continuous feedback on how to improve their performance in a passive non-authoritative way. Without ongoing coaching, employees become less effective, more stressed, and less capable of achieving positive results for their managers and the organization (Longenecker & Fink, 2017). Coaching throughout the performance period makes conducting effective written and face-to-face reviews of the employee's performance less daunting. In addition, ongoing coaching prevents minor, easily fixable employee performance problems from becoming more significant or causing employees to feel that no one cares when they are performing well. (Longenecker & Fink, 2017). Effective coaching in leadership touches on four measurable areas of leadership behaviors: task-related behaviors, relationship-related behaviors, behaviors related to self-enhancement, and self-regulation (Dello Russo et al., 2017). Influential coaching leaders can inspire passion and enthusiasm in followers and act as integrity and ethics role models. (Dello Russo et al., 2017). This form of coaching has become an integral tool in training and performance improvement and a viable leadership development strategy for overcoming individual and organizational performance challenges (Gan et al., 2019). Supervisory coaching is essential in activating employees’ external and internal motivation and shaping employee work attitudes (Lee et al., 2019)
The Problem

The following section will discuss problems found in the literature regarding performance appraisal systems. The issues were referenced throughout the literature and tended to be the basis of most research on performance and motivation; whether to prove or disprove the issue was what differentiated one study from another. The issues are also relevant to the research questions in the current study. Having a comprehensive understanding of these issues enhances the ability to apply the results of this study and answer the research questions effectively.

Bias in the Performance Appraisal Process

The personal bias of supervisors is a grave concern in organizations because these perceptions hinder deserving employees' growth and development by denying rightful promotions and compensation, leading to their diminished contribution to organizational development (Wei et al., 2019). Bias in evaluations directly deteriorates employees' performance, leading to job dissatisfaction and ultimately affecting organizational performance (Wei et al., 2019). Generally, employees feel unfairly treated when considering how these biases influence their promotions and career path progressions. Supervisors treat annual performance appraisals as an extra workload and do not do justice to employees' efforts throughout the year (Wei et al., 2019). This unfair treatment can also result from inequalities in procedures, a tendency toward centrality, and biased evaluations because of a supervisor’s misperceptions and lack of objectivity in evaluating efforts (Pagan & Malo, 2021).

The dual-process theory attempts to bring clarity to the concept of cognitive bias. The dual-process theory states that the human mind makes decisions through two interconnected cognitive systems (Nagtegaal et al., 2020). System one allows people to make rapid, automatically, and intuitive decisions, while system two is slower and more reflective (Nagtegaal
et al., 2020). System one is advantageous in dangerous situations because the response triggers a person to act without consciously thinking. Still, system two will enable people to go beyond their first instinct and consider more complex factors, such as memories, that may be relevant to the problem (Nagtegaal et al., 2020). Evidence has shown that system two does not always correct the errors observed in system one conclusions (Nagtegaal et al., 2020). Researchers have been particularly successful at identifying system one biases, such as status quo and confirmation bias, which refer to people interpreting or looking for information concurrent with their existing beliefs (Nagtegaal et al., 2020). Recently, theorists have acknowledged that this logic is too simple and that beliefs influence logical reasoning on a similar level, to the extent that reasonable conclusions are deemed more acceptable than unbelievable ones regardless of logical validity, the strength of the arguments, and whether the task involves formal or informal reasoning (Trippas et al., 2017). The reflexive response of belief judgments depends on various mediating factors, such as mindset and task demand (Trippas et al., 2017).

Other common forms of bias in the literature concerning performance appraisals are anchoring and halo effects. Anchoring is the cognitive tendency that estimates unknown quantities by adjusting from an initial value (Cantarelli et al., 2020). Different starting points or anchors yield different estimates, which are biased toward the initial values; for example, if a rater is evaluating someone at a higher point in their career, they will rate them more positively than someone who is at a lower point (Cantarelli et al., 2020). The halo effect tends to like (or dislike) everything about a person—including actions one has not observed, maintaining the consistency of one’s judgments to understand the environment's explanatory narratives (Belle et al., 2017). In the performance appraisal process, this is manifested as supervisors having a bias toward making ratings consistent across different dimensions, regardless of available
information, e.g., allowing attendance criteria to influence ratings related to customer service (Belle et al., 2017). In essence, raters affected by halo error tend to transfer their impression of each person they review from one person to another and do not consider that individuals are likely to exhibit relative strengths and weaknesses on different performance dimensions (Belle et al., 2017).

**Perception of Review Outcome is Not Reflective of Actual Performance Efforts**

Supervisors and workers form a perception of the worker's past performance, and they may not match up. Research has shown that perceptions of performance appraisal by nonsupervisory employees often depend on three factors: (1) the purpose for which the appraisal is used, (2) the extent to which the process is considered fair, and (3) the degree to which the results are seen as accurate (Lin & Kellough, 2019). Supervisors are more likely to base their perceptions on the appraisal process's specific structural and operational aspects. They may be less optimistic than nonsupervisory employees regarding how performance appraisal discussions help improve employee performance (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018). In addition, Kamphorst and Swank (2018) identified that workers want the fruits of their efforts to be observed, but if they have a negative perception of their supervisor, e.g., not being confident in the supervisor’s ability to distinguish good work from subpar work, the worker's incentives to expend effort will be absent. Organizations attempt to use performance-related pay as a motivator to attract, incentivize and retain talent. The problem arises when returns do not match the performance efforts of the individual being reviewed, factual or not.

Typically, three variables in the performance appraisal process determine pay: position or seniority, skill or knowledge, and contribution to organizational performance (Singh & Mishra, 2016). Research predominately agrees that pay for performance does not improve work morale
unless the payment is sufficiently large and that small incentive returns can be detrimental to work enthusiasm (Chen, 2018). Literature on justice and fairness has suggested that when employees’ perception of their pay levels properly reflects their own opinions about their contributions, the appraisal system is deemed legitimate (Kim et al., 2020). When regarded as legitimate, pay differentials are likely to produce positive outcomes that lead to adverse effects when regarded as illegitimate (Kim et al., 2020). Specifically, perceptions of high pay fairness are likely to lead to the belief that pay differentials are necessary to achieve workplace equity, resulting in more significant pay differentials and providing a stronger incentive and increased work efforts (Kim et al., 2020).

Supervisors Rate Employees Higher to Maintain Workplace Politics

Research has focused on perceived politics and described the concept as an individual’s subjective evaluation of how coworkers and supervisors demonstrate self-serving behavior in the work environment (Hochwarter et al., 2020). Specific political behaviors include striving for ingroup status, pandering to others, backstabbing, and pursuing personal goals instead of those that benefit the group or organization (Hochwarter et al., 2020). In essence, political behavior uses informal influence to obtain desired outcomes unavailable through company-approved means (Hochwarter et al., 2020). Self-serving behavior is manifested in the performance appraisal process as 1) a desire to fulfill supervisory obligations by providing accurate assessments and 2) protecting personal resources by avoiding conflict and maintaining social ties (Rosen et al., 2017). For example, appraisals are less likely to reflect political drivers when the employee is a high performer because the rater does not have to give a poor rating. In contrast, a rater reviewing a poor performer may lean on political behaviors to maintain the status quo or justify a low rating without feeling accountable (Rosen et al., 2017).
Pay for Performance Reviews Fail As a Motivator If Unfairness Is Perceived

In pay-for-performance models, the underlying assumption is that goals are associated with positive outcomes when met with positively reinforced behaviors (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Failure or negative reinforcement is related to adverse implications (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Humans have a behavioral tendency to avoid taxing goals unless motivated by additional factors such as incentives (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Another side of pay for performance that should be noted is the ability to hurt motivation. Thibault-Landry et al. (2017) found a positive correlation between incentive motivators and performance; however, the researchers noted that financial incentives could negatively affect motivation if employees perceived them as a controlling means of motivation evaluation and surveillance.

Conversely, when financial incentives are awarded as a token of appreciation for work performed, employees are more likely to perceive them as providing a source of positive feedback (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017). Research from a study conducted by Ryu and Hong (2020) addressed the relationship between constructive performance feedback and the perceived fairness of performance appraisal and found that constructive feedback was significantly related to the perceived fairness of performance appraisal. Ryu and Hong also found that trust in supervisors facilitated the relationship between constructive performance feedback and the perceived fairness of performance appraisal.

Concepts

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers' standard error in analyzing qualitative data is to advance to the comparison or the relationship analysis without first understanding the core concepts or ideas that act as the foundation of the study. In this study, the
naturally emerging concepts include the concept of bias, effort-based decision-making, motivation, and pay-for-performance. These concepts surfaced from the study's objective and must be fully understood before being applied to research outcomes.

**Bias**

Biases are preconceived opinions or predispositions that stem from stereotypes based on interactions with others in the regular course of society (Dunham, 2018). Implicit biases are the unconscious manifestation of attitudes that guide thinking, often beginning early in life, to help individuals interpret the world around them (Dunham, 2018). Implicit attitudes emerge from hard-wired cognitive processes and are socially learned through multiple sources, such as observation, media, family, community, and social interactions (Zabel & Zabel, 2020). Furthermore, they are maintained through confirmation bias and subtyping and persevere despite contradictory information (Zabel & Zabel, 2020). When various types of bias are not addressed in the workplace, they can affect working relationships and trust, diverse talent recruitment and retention, work productivity, promotion and professional development, and creativity and innovation (Dalton & Villagran, 2018).

According to the literature, there are more than 150 cognitive biases, with five directly impacting the workplace. These include affinity bias, halo effect, perception bias, confirmation bias, and groupthink (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). According to Oberai and Anand (2018), affinity bias is defined as the “like me” bias, which occurs when someone feels they have an affinity with another; for example, the reviewer and employee grew up in the same neighborhood or went to the same college. The halo effect is the tendency to like or dislike everything about a person—including things not observed and even exaggerate the consistency of judgments to maintain coherent and straightforward explanatory narratives (Belle et al., 2017). Perception bias
forms stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that make executing objective judgments impossible (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). Confirmation biases lead us to look for evidence to validate our assumptions, even with no overstated reason, to conclude (Oberai & Anand, 2018). Finally, groupthink occurs when people attempt to fit into a particular group by mimicking others or holding back thoughts and opinions (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). These forms of bias influence decisions at various organizational levels and can deteriorate performance effort, alter diversity levels and increase turnover (Oberai & Anand, 2018).

**Effort-Based Decision Making**

Literature related to effort-based decisions and performance is often associated with the concept of incentives. Choices about how effort is invested to achieve goals are frequently made with incomplete information, where either the action required or the possible reward is uncertain (Arulpragasam et al., 2018). Adaptive behavior related to mental and physical effort exertion requires gathering information from the environment and integrating that information with individualized goals (Vassena et al., 2019). Avgoustaki and Frankort (2019) broke work effort down into two dimensions: 1) extensive work effort or the duration of work; and 2) work intensity, which has been defined as “the rate of physical or mental input to work tasks performed during the working day” (p. 638). According to cognitive dissonance theory, the more effort exerted, the more valuable the reward; however, another perspective in research suggests that the more effort exerted, the less associated value with the incentive (Harmon-Jones et al., 2020). Literature concerning economics and psychology preceptive seems to contradict whether monetary incentives effectively motivate effort and improve work performance (Robinson & Farkas, 2021). For example, agency theory examines each agent's outward costs or benefits,
while self-determination theory looks more at intrinsic motivators that encourage long-term fulfillment (Robinson & Farkas, 2021).

**Motivation**

Motivation is a psychological construct that describes how individuals and groups choose behavior (McInerney, 2019). Motivation is typically associated with self-determination theory and is broken down into two common forms: intrinsic and extrinsic (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is the desire to perform an activity for internal drivers that lead to pleasure and satisfaction experiences (Giger et al., 2020). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is typically defined as the desire to execute an action to attain a positive, tangible reward, such as an incentive, or avoid negative consequences, such as a punishment (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Work motivation is a desire to work hard and perform well in work settings (Demirkol & Nalla, 2018). Most employers try to increase employees’ intrinsic motivation by providing job independence and constructive feedback while also providing incentives intended to increase extrinsic motivation (Kuvaas et al., 2017). However, in some cases, a single form of motivation can overshadow the other, causing an individual to act primarily out of a single form of motivation, known as crowding out (Giger et al., 2020). One study found that higher levels of self-determination were related to high levels of energy and mental resilience, dedication, and absorption, i.e., being entirely concentrated on and engrossed in one’s work (Demirkol & Nalla, 2018). Rigby and Ryan (2018) conducted a study and found that individuals with lower levels of motivation tended to be driven by extrinsic motivators and were less productive, creative, satisfied with their job and pay, and did not remain loyal to the company in contrast to those who had higher levels of intrinsic motivation (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Motivational Quality Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOWER MOTIVATION</th>
<th>HIGHER MOTIVATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amotivation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>External Pressure</td>
<td>Internal Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled by:</td>
<td>Controlled by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards/Empty</td>
<td>Guilt/Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Self-pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punishments/</td>
<td>Ego-involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threats</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forced by others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal Value</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATED WITH:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Productivity</td>
<td>Strong Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Creativity</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Learning</td>
<td>More Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Job/Pay Satisfaction</td>
<td>Higher Job/Pay Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Commitment to Policies</td>
<td>More Loyalty and Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Loyalty and Trust</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Pay for Performance

Pay-for-performance models work when the value of the external rewards outweighs the natural tendency to avoid a challenging task (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). Cabanas et al. (2020) highlighted that employees have the freedom to choose their workplace based on the current reward system and advocated that individuals driven by external factors will find more satisfaction in areas that offer substantial rewards. For those individuals, when performance goals are aligned with personal values and psychological growth, they have the potential to increase the satisfaction of intrinsic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Cabanas et al., 2020). A study conducted by Thibault-Landry et al. (2017) found a positive correlation between incentive motivators and performance; however, the researchers noted that financial incentives could negatively affect motivation if employees perceive them as
a controlling means of motivation evaluation and surveillance. Conversely, when financial incentives are awarded as a token of appreciation for work performed, employees are more likely to perceive the rewards as positive feedback (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017).

**Theories**

Throughout the literature, many theories related to work motivation have assumed that individuals work to fulfill fundamental needs, which are generally grouped into five basic categories: “safety, security, belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization” (Green et al., 2017, p. 4). In addition to identifying needs as a motivational force, these theories emphasize that pain or displeasure is often associated with unmet needs (Green, Finkel, Fitzsimons, & Gino, 2017). Other approaches look at the work itself as a means of motivation. For example, research on the job characteristics theory (JCT) has repeatedly shown that “five core motivating job characteristics (i.e., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) are positively related to work outcomes such as job satisfaction, internal work motivation, and job performance” (Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018, p. 1230). The theories covered below were identified countless times and appear to be the research building blocks surrounding performance and motivation in the workplace. For example, self-determination and goal-setting theory are two more prominent ideologies explaining motivation. Excluded theories touched on aspects of human psychology that did not directly relate to the topic.

**Expectancy Theory**

Vroom developed the expectancy theory, believing that human motivation hinges on valence, expectancy, and instrumentality (Lee, 2019). Valence refers to the value of the potential reward as a result of achieving the performance target; expectancy refers to the estimated probability that one can reach the performance target; and instrumentality refers to the likelihood
that the promised rewards will be given when performance goals are achieved (Lee, 2019). These three variables have been placed into an equation (see Figure 4). According to Lloyd and Mertens (2018), each variable is assigned a value – “expectancy 0 to 1, instrumentality 0 to 1, and valence -1 to 1. Motivational forces, as described by the expectancy theory, are based on an individual’s belief that a specific effort will lead to a given performance (expectancy) and that performance will lead to attainment (instrumentality) of a desirable or undesirable (valence) reward” (Lee, 2019, p. 29). Therefore, “if any variables are equal to 0, the motivational force will be absent. If the valence is less than 0, the motivational force will be directed towards avoiding the reward” (Lee, 2019, p. 29).

**Figure 4. Expectancy Theory**

![Diagram of Expectancy Theory](image)

*Note.* This figure illustrates how the individual components combined equal motivation.

**Expectancy-Value Theory**

The research framework for this study consults the expectancy-value theory (EVT), which states that motivation to perform is influenced by the perceived value of the reward, the perceived likelihood that the desired performance will be rewarded, and the perceived likelihood that effort will result in the expected reward (Ferguson, 2019). EVT emphasizes how individuals’ perceptions are shaped over time by various personal factors or influences from different socializing agents. Those perceptions, in turn, can influence decision-making and
achievement outcomes (Fong et al., 2021). There are two significant kinds of beliefs identified in EVT. The first set of beliefs, expectancies, defined individuals' ideas about how well they will perform on future tasks. The second set of beliefs encompasses how individuals value specific tasks concerning the four categories of subjective task values: intrinsic value, attainment value, utility value, and cost (Fong et al., 2021). If employees believe their efforts will appropriately reflect incentive amounts, they will exert more effort toward better performance. If merit or bonus pay is not perceived to be accurately reflective of performance, future employee efforts will be lower (Choi & Whitford, 2017).

An overarching theme found in expectancy-value theory literature is that if an authority figure can potentially thwart success outcomes, participants are less likely to expect that they can reach goals, resulting in the devaluation of high-performance effort (Ferguson, 2019). Applications of bias tend to guide this theory toward individuals feeling that their actions are in vain because the biases prevent evaluators from objectively looking at performance efforts (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). This theory helps to facilitate guidelines for pay-for-performance plans to achieve employee motivation and enhance employee performance. According to Singh and Mishra's (2016) list, these guidelines are as follows: (1) pay for performance plans are expected to establish goal clarity and goal feasibility while considering the employee’s ability and organizational constraints; (2) employees expect to be fairly evaluated and will obtain desired rewards during pay for performance plans; (3) employees expect the communication regarding performance and pay should be clear. If these principles are in place, employees will find value in the pay-for-performance plan because they feel the method can be trusted (Singh & Mishra, 2016).

**Self-Determination Theory**
Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that individuals experience four different types of motivation concerning their work which relies on a continuum ranging from autonomous to controlled regulation, as seen in Table 1 (Manganelli et al., 2018). The theory acknowledges that the various types of incentives that influence motivation shape approaches to human resources management, such as efforts to promote job satisfaction and well-being (Manganelli et al., 2018). Based on a review of the literature on SDT, the most critical needs that contribute to an individual’s job satisfaction and well-being are autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casademunt, 2018). The need for autonomy reflects an individual’s desire to take action on their behalf by making their own choices, and competence is how they can carry out a task to the best of their ability and achieve desired outcomes. Relatedness concerns how individuals feel connectedness, acceptance, and relatedness with others (Gomez-Baya & Lucia-Casademunt, 2018).

Conversation surrounding SDT has touched on the meaningfulness of work, specifically how a person’s subjective perception that their work allows them to contribute to the greater good facilitates personal growth and holds significance (Autin et al., 2021). In theory, the more satisfied a person’s basic psychological needs are, the more internal work motivation will be present. People who experience their work as meaningful are more likely to report greater engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, better job performance, and lower withdrawal intentions (Autin & Allan, 2020). A supervisor’s leadership has been identified as a facilitator for subordinates’ positive work behavior and overall job satisfaction (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020). SDT has been used to build various leadership theories contributing to or deteriorating employee motivation. For example, leader autonomy support theory is a leadership
style that seeks to foster employees’ intrinsic motivators (Slemp et al., 2018). SDT speaks to psychological drives that develop a workplace culture from both perspectives.

**Agency Theory**

Agency theory is defined as business relationships in which one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), who then performs that work (Calvo & Calvo, 2018). According to agency theory’s assumptions, companies and employees must manage business indicators to achieve HR and organizational objectives such as performance management. Calvo and Calvo (2018) presented seven principles identified in agency theory research that influence the dynamic of the employer-employee relationship: 1. Both companies and employees look out for their respective interests. Specifically, companies are interested in obtaining resources and capacities from their employees that give them a competitive advantage in the market. At the same time, employees look for higher salaries and more promotions than they would receive in other companies. 2. Organizational changes can imbalance a new job’s requirements and an employee's skills, resulting in misalignment when setting goals. 3. The rationale of the decision-makers can be biased according to their perceptions of previous experiences, mutual trust, and hidden costs. 4. Information about the expectations of employer-employee collaboration can generate opportunistic behaviors. 5. Efficiency is directly related to the organization’s potential for collaboration with the employee. Some evidence points to a positive response in the presence of increased income/cost per employee associated with employees' knowledge of organizational procedures. Still, employees will also take into account their work/life balance. 6. Companies worry about potential competitors taking advantage of their training investment by recruiting their qualified employees, while employees may worry about the possibility of dismissal for organizational reasons. 7. Using information as a commodity means that employers can control
the potential opportunism of an employee's behavior by investing in HR systems that gather data on employees' skills, performance, and even expectations.

**Motivation Crowding Theory**

Motivation crowding theory is based on the notion that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation cannot function simultaneously (Putra et al., 2017). The theory assumes that when financial rewards are introduced to intrinsically motivated individuals, the rewards will diminish the individuals’ motivation to fully engage in a particular activity (Putra et al., 2017). Most studies focused on monetary incentives in the workplace found that motivation crowding theory impacted employees’ performance (Putra et al., 2017). More specifically, the extrinsic motivator was said to have a crowding-out effect when people perceived the external reward as controlling; in contrast, if the reward was believed to support their efforts, the individuals’ intrinsic motivation was likely to crowd in rather than crowd out (Kim & Bak, 2020).

**Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory**

Lazarus’s (1999) cognitive-motivational-relational theory states that emotions develop due to specific primary and secondary task evaluations (Osborne & McPherson, 2019). In the primary assessment of tasks, individuals evaluate their performance goals regarding how relevant and essential the objectives are to the intensity of emotions associated with the anticipation of completing the task (Osborne & McPherson, 2019). In secondary evaluations, individuals evaluate whether they have the necessary skills to meet performance demands and achieve a successful outcome (Osborne & McPherson, 2019). A more in-depth evaluation follows this initial assessment. The circumstances (e.g., the type of threat present and potential coping options) determine the emotional response (Welsh et al., 2020), the goal-setting scenario illustrated in Figure 2 is a good example. Together, the evaluations determine an individual’s
sense of potential loss or gain concerning the upcoming task through judgments of threat (high importance and low coping prospects) and challenge (anticipated gain) (Osborne & McPherson, 2019).

**Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory explains how high-performance work systems affect employee performance via social exchange (Zhang et al., 2019). The employer-employee association is a type of social exchange defined as the voluntary actions of individuals motivated by the returns they are expected to bring (Sungu et al., 2019). Employees perceive human resource management (HRM) practices to demonstrate the organization’s intentions and commitment to employees are reciprocated with positive attitudes and behaviors (Sungu et al., 2019). Organizations with functional, high-performance work systems tend to have employees who enjoy a high level of social interaction with the organization and are likely to reciprocate the beneficial treatment by engaging in behaviors that the organization values (Zhang et al., 2019). Human resource practices such as performance appraisal systems, including compensation, show organizations’ trust and recognition for employees’ efforts (Zhang et al., 2019).

**Goal-Setting Theory**

According to goal-setting theory, goal clarity is essential to foster employee motivation because setting clear goals enables employees to anticipate and apply reasonable effort (Audenaert et al., 2019). Performance management in performance appraisals involves goal setting, support, and feedback by frequently monitoring, assessing, and rewarding employees’ progress as they meet expectations (Audenaert et al., 2019). A term often used in goal appraisals is S.M.A.R.T. The acronym stands for goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound (Lartey, 2021). More recent studies have identified the benefits of
setting SMARTer goals by adding two additional components to the initial SMART goals: Evaluative/Ethical and Rewarding (Lartey, 2021). Goal orientation further influences how employees approach, interpret, and respond to situations and challenges, specifically in individuals with a strong learning goal orientation (Wang & Guan, 2018). Additionally, goal orientation is positively related to variables involving effective self-regulation strategies and increased task attention (Wang & Guan, 2018).

**Constructs**

Constructs can be used to validate data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pulled from the theoretical framework and expected research outcomes, the abstract constructs for this study include employees' perceptions of bias and performance appraisals, bias influence on motivation, and how perceptions of bias impact human resource efforts. Individually these constructs contribute to understanding research outcomes. Many of the constructs focus on how biases impact self-efficacy and intrinsic interest, as biases can alter how individuals view their ability to accomplish a task. A lack of confidence in achieving a goal can decrease intrinsic motivation over time (Cabanas et al., 2020).

**Employees' Perceptions of Bias and Performance Appraisals**

Biases result in discrimination claims amidst the appraisal process, leading to negative perceptions of appraisals. (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). Su (2020) conducted a study that examined the quality of performance appraisals through the lens of trust, clarity, communication, and fairness concerning employee motivation and performance empowerment. The study found that employees who perceived the performance appraisal process as trustworthy, transparent, a forum for open communication, and fair were more receptive to feedback and satisfied with review outcomes despite financial associations (Su, 2020). Another study confirmed that employees
were more receptive to performance appraisals when conducted by more than one source, suggesting that having multiple sources involved helped increase trust and fairness in the appraisal process (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). Employees felt that having only managers conduct performance appraisals increased the probability of error since managers might have preconceived or inaccurate opinions about employees' performance. At the same time, those who believed they were being evaluated were more likely to be motivated to make changes to strengthen their performance (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018).

**How Bias Influences Performance Motivation**

Performance appraisal systems have improved job performance by regularly assessing employees’ efforts and providing constructive feedback (Dangol, 2021). Evidence has shown that employees may be motivated to perform well if they feel the appraisal process is fair, accurate, and based on current information; if employees think these evaluations are inaccurate, the result could be a lack of motivation (Dangol, 2021). Research claims that employees’ motivation for performance improvement after receiving feedback largely depends on their attitude toward the performance appraisal system (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Feedback interventions hurt performance when the receiver negatively perceives the feedback intervention process (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). However, negative feedback can improve performance (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Scholars have noticed that the acceptance of performance appraisals concerning motivation is influenced by perceived fairness. (Bulto & Markos, 2017).

**How Perceptions of Bias Impact Human Resource Efforts**

Organizations can build a positive work environment that sustains employees' development and encourages communication, innovation, and proactive attitudes and behaviors (Ciobanu et al., 2019). However, human resources practices and decision-making are bounded by
their ability and the availability of information for making that decision; hence, organizations should make a conscious effort to use information systems that facilitate unbiased decision-making (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Employee perception strongly influences the relationship between HR practices and individual outcomes, and implementing high-performance HR practices may not always be perceived positively (Ciobanu et al., 2019). When there is a high commitment to HR practice, employees may feel a stronger sense of well-being and feel viewed as a valuable resource (Ciobanu et al., 2019). Similar to what is seen in effort models, if employees feel the organization does not reciprocate their effort, they may experience negative feelings toward the organization.

**The Foucauldian Critique.** The neutrality of appraisal systems is often questioned and considered an issue of managerial control as managers exercise their power within organizations (Evans & Tourish, 2017). In theory, power is not joined to a particular institution but manifests in practices, techniques, and procedures that managers execute, including performance appraisals (Evans & Tourish, 2017). The Foucauldian perspective emphasizes that, ultimately, appraisals occupy a social context in which a person with more power than another makes judgments about that person’s work and perhaps their potential to develop (Evans & Tourish, 2017). The worker/manager dichotomy assigns workers positions of power within organizational hierarchies. The notion implies that workers should act according to explicit and implicit corporate norms, or the organization has the right to exercise disciplinary action (Tweedie et al., 2019).

**Related Studies**

Related studies can contribute to expectations of the current case study by acting as a rough blueprint for outcomes that have surfaced in the past. The following studies are related to
the research in this case study in various ways, but each contributes to the current study's overall objective. Based on the information observed in these studies, new assumptions were made and are discussed in another portion of this text. While the related studies echoed the discovered themes found throughout the literature, all did not apply to the results of this study.

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Concerning Pay for Performance Systems**

A study by Wilhelm et al. (2019) consulted 40 undergraduate introductory psychology students to collect data on performance expectancy based on a social comparison to enhance intrinsic motivation. Results revealed that manipulating intrinsic motivation by providing individuals with the expectancy of a difficult vs. easy task narrowed attentional scope, enhanced preparation, and increased acceptance of feedback (Wilhelm et al., 2019). Results also indicated that enhancing intrinsic motivation by forming performance expectancies based on social comparisons had a similar cognitive effect as enhancing extrinsic motivation. Wilhelm et al.’s work are related to the framework used in this current study because the case study was framed by performance expectancy. Related studies revealed some of the same anticipated outcomes as this study, but in most cases, the assumption was that extrinsic motivators are not effective motivators. The results from this study contradicted that idea, as most participants said they were motivated by monetary rewards.

**Impact of Performance Appraisal Systems on Motivation and Productivity**

A study by Aydin and Tiryaki (2018) investigated the influence of performance appraisal on employee motivation and productivity using a structural equation model. Similar to the current study, Aydin and Tiryaki used questionnaires to determine the relationship between performance appraisal and employee motivation and productivity. The results indicated that five hypotheses were accepted, four were rejected, and they showed that performance appraisals were
significant for employee motivation and productivity (Aydin & Tiryaki, 2018). Interestingly, the study found that the criteria used to evaluate a participant positively affected employee motivation, but there was no significant impact on employee productivity (Aydin & Tiryaki, 2018). The current study explores whether participants' perceptions of bias affect their motivation to perform well in the future if Aydin and Tiryaki's study confirms that one will not necessarily impact the other.

**Influence of Intrinsic Motivation on Pay Satisfaction Among Caregivers**

This study explores the relationship between intrinsic motivation and pay satisfaction among caregivers employed in residential nursing homes for the elderly. The study by Wang et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the relationship between intrinsic motivation and turnover among geriatric nurses employed in nursing homes by analyzing the role of job burnout and pay satisfaction. The study used a random sampling approach to distribute questionnaires to 1212 geriatric nurses. The results revealed that intrinsic motivation was negatively related to turnover intention. Job burnout and pay satisfaction played a significant role in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and turnover intention (Wang et al., 2020). Such findings indicate that intrinsic motivation, pay satisfaction, and job burnout strongly predicts turnover intention. This study is related to the current case study because of the participant focus. Differences to be noted include the sociodemographic characteristics of caregivers in China that differ from Western countries (Wang et al., 2020).

**Employee Perceptions of Fairness in Performance Appraisals**

A study by Ryu and Hong (2020) addressed two main research questions: 1) Is constructive performance feedback positively related to the perceived fairness of performance appraisal? and 2) Does trust in supervisors mediate the relationship between constructive
performance feedback and the perception of a performance appraisal as fair? The findings revealed that “(a) constructive performance feedback was positively and significantly related to the perceived fairness of performance appraisal, and (b) trust in supervisors partially mediated the relationship between constructive performance feedback and perceived fairness of performance appraisal” (Ryu & Hong, 2020, p.882). The findings support prior research, reflecting that constructive feedback is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment if there is a perception of respect (Avgoustaki & Frankort, 2019). In addition, the level of trust between supervisors and their subordinates is the most critical predictor of acceptance of the performance appraisal system (Araujo et al., 2020). Ryu and Hong’s study is related to the current case study by construct. Ryu and Hong’s study evaluates perceptions of fairness during the performance appraisal process, similar to the present study.

**Anticipated and Discovered Themes**

Anticipated and discovered themes throughout the literature helped fill in the blanks for where the current study was expected to go. There were prominent themes that surfaced on multiple occasions, which demanded that they be considered protentional outcomes. When referencing other studies, they should be considered resources to help guide research, but the study question is not guaranteed to have the same results. These themes are outlined below:

**Presence of Intrinsic Motivation**

Although the current study focuses on the effects of extrinsic motivators in monetary rewards, research has anticipated that intrinsic motivation may have a more significant influence (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). Unlike external motivators, intrinsic motivation stems from within. The building blocks for this internal force are competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Zhang et al., 2019). Research has suggested that these intrinsic
motivators concerning performance expectancy can enhance motivation (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Looking at competence in the physical sense, an individual's perception of their ability to change their performance with practice can affect their motivation to practice and influence performance and learning (Wulf & Lewithwaite, 2016). Wulf and Lewaithe's (2016) study found that, in general, people who believe that (motor) abilities are relatively fixed tend to be more concerned with proving their ability. They perceive negative feedback as a threat to themselves because they reveal a lack of ability (Wulf & Lewithwaite, 2016).

In contrast, people who assume that abilities can be changed or improved tend to focus on learning and improving their performance on a given task (Wulf & Lewithwaite, 2016). With the current study, those who feel that their abilities are fixed may be unaffected by review outcomes because they do not believe they can improve regardless of the feedback provided. However, those who seek to improve may take feedback and constructively apply remarks to future efforts, regardless of receiving a poor review rating and reward, because they believe they can improve (Wulf & Lewithwaite, 2016).

Autonomy can bring happiness and satisfaction to life by fulfilling the need to execute tasks independently (Zhang et al., 2019). Kuvaas et al. (2017) conducted a study that examined the relationship between performance expectancy and intrinsic motivation when the parameters of performance expectancy were manipulated. The results revealed that perceived difficulty enhanced intrinsic motivation because participants found more value in accomplishing a problematic task independently (Kuvaas et al., 2017). With the current study, there is an anticipation that if employees perceive bias during the appraisal process, they will be less motivated to perform well. However, if the employees feel their work is challenging and find
fulfillment in accomplishing complex tasks daily, the outcome of their review may not impact their future performance.

Finally, relatedness is the desire for positive relationships and interactions, feeling reasonably treated, respected, and valued by clients, the community, colleagues, and direct superiors (Lohmann et al., 2018). In light of performance reviews, individuals may feel that evaluators are unfair in their evaluations because their results do not reflect actual performance, and the received reward amounts are below what they think is appropriate (Lohmann et al., 2018), resulting in employees feeling unseen and not contributing to the team. Steinbauer et al. (2018) conducted a study that contributed to the research on ostracism’s effect on performance motivation. The results indicated that ostracism might promote effective self-regulation when individuals engage in intrinsically motivating tasks. Individuals who do not enjoy their tasks and experience social rejection have little motivation to put forth an effort to escape the psychological and physical pain of being ostracized (Steinbauer et al., 2018). With the current study, this phenomenon can be understood as an employee who feels excluded or unseen expressing a lack of motivation to perform well because they do not think their efforts increase their chances of being included or acknowledged. However, the employee who feels seen and whose performance efforts are acknowledged will be motivated to continue to perform well to avoid losing their current inclusive status. The results from this study identified intrinsic value as being a prominent theme.

Mistrust of the Performance Review Process

One of the primary issues associated with performance management systems is the displeasure related to performance ratings amidst performance appraisal systems (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). Supervisors can distribute performance ratings that inform decisions on critical
personnel issues, including promotion, training, retention, demotion, dismissal, reassignment, and reinstatement (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). Supervisor training in performance appraisal is often neglected and viewed as a relatively low managerial priority, disadvantaging employees. In addition, employees and managers feel obligated to participate in this process due to company policy. Typically, managers do not have the skill or training to execute these reviews effectively (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). Untrained managers may choose not to address performance issues as they arise, leading to a more aggressive review process. Lin and Kellough (2019) emphasized that supervisors must be trained in the performance appraisal process so they can make fair assessments and avoid the kinds of common errors in judgment (for example, the halo effect, first impression errors, the similar-to-me effect, comparison or contrast effects, and the central tendency error.

The concept of fairness has also been called into question, as subordinates often perceive their performance appraisal as unfair. The frustration that employees experience when they believe they are maltreated can have negative consequences for themselves and their organizations (De Clercq et al., 2019). The literature reports perceptions of unfair performance appraisals positively related to low commitment to the organization, psychological anxiety, and withdrawal from organizational culture (Ryu & Hong, 2020). Various factors contributing to these feelings of unfairness include a lack of compensation uniformity, unfulfilled psychological needs, or poor-quality relationships with organizational leaders (De Clercq et al., 2019). Trusted leaders generally boost their subordinates’ acceptance of performance appraisal results (Ryu & Hong, 2020).

Discussions in the literature on discrimination in performance management can be divided into two groups, biases and discrimination based on demographics and personal
characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnicity, physical appearance, and perceived similarity to the appraiser (Nadeem et al., 2018). Claims of discrimination in the appraisal process are a vital contributor to negative perceptions of the appraisal process and signal to an employee that their appraisal was negatively impacted because of gender, race, age, disability status, or other biases (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). In addition, some research has suggested that evaluation systems created for the average worker may be unfair for workers with disabilities if supervisors do not consider adaptation or particular needs and evaluation indicators (Pagan & Malo, 2021). A survey conducted with over 30,000 employees across 14 United States companies revealed that workers with disabilities received lower wages, had less job security, lower levels of participation in job and department decisions, were more closely supervised, and were less likely to receive company-sponsored training and potential promotions when compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Pagan & Malo, 2021). These factors contribute to a mistrust in the appraisal process and leave individuals feeling they have little control over review outcomes. A mistrust was identified, but the results found a lack of confidence in overall supervisor training (Pagan & Malo, 2021). Ultimately, these two themes are very closely related.

**Performance Appraisals Are Not an Effective Tool for Managing Performance**

Many organizations devote significant resources to performance appraisal and management systems, but unfortunately, measuring the benefits of these investments is not always clear and straightforward (Murphy, 2020). Despite widespread dissatisfaction with appraisal processes, most organizations are reluctant to abandon performance appraisal. Instead, they make periodic attempts to improve their systems and move towards performance management systems involving more frequent and informal performance evaluations and feedback (Murphy, 2020). Schleicher et al. (2018) examined the value chains of employees and
managers in relation to the effectiveness of performance appraisals. They found that appraisals are ineffective because participants do not value the current process (Schleicher et al., 2018). The significance of appraisal lies in the ability to be used as an accurate measurement tool that motivates employees to voluntarily change their behavior (Kakkar et al., 2020). The literature has also indicated that appraisals alone do not improve performance (André et al., 2019). These systems serve as input based on which other practices (such as goal setting, feedback, and rewards) can be altered to change employee behavior (Kakkar et al., 2020). Based on the results from this study, performance reviews have been identified as an effective motivator. However, more research should be done to determine which influences motivation more— intrinsic value or external motivators.

**Summary of the Literature Review.**

Over the past five years, an extensive literature review on performance appraisals uncovered themes that could explain result outcomes. A diverse group of organizations uses performance appraisals to manage individual and organizational performance. The problem lies in the perception of bias that results in mistrust and a lack of motivation. The concepts, theories, and constructs work together to form a comprehensive understanding of the problem and purpose of this study. Previous studies confirm the need for a study of this nature (Appelbaum et al., 2018; Baird et al., 2020). The studies touched on various aspects of this study's specific problem but revealed a research gap related to certified nursing assistants in skilled nursing facilities. Based on the information gathered from the literature, the anticipated and discovered themes include intrinsic motivation overpowering extrinsic reward, the observation of mistrust in the performance review process, and performance reviews failing as an effective tool for performance management. The results from this present study related to the discovered themes
very closely. More research should be conducted to isolate the variables in question further to
determine which motivators are more impactful than others.

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

Section one covered the discussion of the problem with subjective incentive-based
performance reviews within skilled nursing facilities. Based on the outlined literature, there
appears to be a gap in the research on how perceptions of bias influence performance motivation
within skilled nursing facilities (Lee, 2019; Belle et al., 2017). This study aims to help fill that
gap by exploring the specific phenomenon of perceived bias during subjective incentive-based
performance reviews. The research questions and methodology were presented to justify the use
and execution of the case study design. In the next section, more specifics of the project will be
discussed.

Section 2: The Project

The research paradigm, design, and methods selected for a research project helped
establish the study's reliability and validity (Spiers et al., 2018). The primary research paradigm
for the current research was constructivism. However, the study also consulted critical realism,
as this paradigm takes an epistemologically comparative approach to viewing reality (Armstrong,
2019). Constructivism considers knowledge as a social construct resulting from exchanges and
interactions between individuals and the settings within which they are formed to identify world
views, subjective meanings, and perspectives within social contexts dependent on the beliefs and
opinions of those being researched (Bogna et al., 2020). The constructivist paradigm assumes a
relativist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology, and a naturalistic set of methodological
procedures dependent on the social constructs of people existing in their natural environment
(Bogna et al., 2020). Critical realism views one’s knowledge of reality as separate from reality
itself, thus allowing a study to take shape as new information is revealed (Armstrong, 2019).
Flexible, qualitative approaches make any subsequent discovery or correction of theory tentative. They do not assume that all findings will be equally valid or invalid, but rather that some explanations will provide better approximations of reality than others (Armstrong, 2019). Researchers who identify their beliefs and detail their preconceived notions through the bracketing process help make the study less susceptible to various biases. The following is a discussion on the role of the researcher in relation to the research methodology.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this flexible design single case study was to explore if perceptions of bias during subjective incentive-based performance reviews impact the future motivation of CNAs across three Promedica skilled nursing facilities. The research determined that CNAs perceived that nurse supervisors used bias during the review process but did not let that influence their performance. Participants felt that everyone received the same merit increase regardless of their effort, so rewards were considered a moot point. The larger purpose of this study was to determine if performance reviews are an effective motivator for positive performance outcomes in skilled nursing facilities.

**Role of the Researcher**

Errors during research can threaten the validity, reliability, and utility of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research can present challenges when identifying methods that protect against errors. Qualitative research demands that the researcher relies on competence, openness, and honesty instead of systematic practices that can be traced (Spiers et al., 2018). The researcher's ideas about the study, prior knowledge about the topic from the literature review, and anticipated research outcomes can influence the interpretation of
information gathered throughout the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative researchers, who seek to find meaning in everything, may encounter confirmation bias in interactions with participants and data (Costabile & Madon, 2019). The role of the researcher in this study was to act as a primary instrument for data collection, coding, and analysis of information collected from interviews, participant journals, and questionnaires. Because the researcher has such an integral role in the study, there is the potential for researcher bias, which could impact the outcome of the findings.

The objective was to execute and discuss the project without bias by conducting interviews properly, making appropriate field observations, exhausting the literature, and collecting and analyzing the data ethically. Self-assessing past experiences as a human resource (HR) professional in a skilled nursing facility may have contributed to bias throughout the study. For example, seeing performance review ratings firsthand concerning the observed performance of employees may lead to altered judgment on the effectiveness of the review process.

Another area susceptible to researcher error and bias is the data gathering process during interviews. Not having proper training in conducting interviews can affect the study's outcome concerning the information gathered (Costabile & Madon, 2019). Due to the pandemic, many skilled nursing facilities are closed to the public, making access to participants more difficult. Conducting interviews virtually can hinder the study by preventing the researcher from fully observing the participants in their natural work environment. Still, there is a possibility that participants will be more willing to share information if they are not concerned with their responses influencing whether or not they keep their job. Liberty University offers tools on proper interview techniques reviewed and practiced in previous courses to combat this limitation, which should help mitigate errors.
Finally, the literature has identified various outcomes relating to the effect of performance appraisals on motivation. It is imperative to acknowledge the literature but not let findings from other studies influence the interpretation of the results within the current research. Documenting conclusions during the information-gathering process can act as a paper trail for the researcher to check themselves and ensure data collection and analysis are performed ethically (Hurst et al., 2019).

**Research Methodology**

The methodology of a study can be seen as the recipe or process of abstraction that guides a study to a conclusion (Frederiksen & Kringelum, 2021). The current research consulted a flexible design that allows new information to determine what is taking place in the unfolding of the study. Flexibility in research is essential when working in social science, and rigid flexibility allows for participant needs and unpredictable events (Cohen-Miller et al., 2020). Furthermore, rigid flexibility in research provides a means to picture research in new ways and move from the idea that a selected approach not working is a failure to the notion that the evolution of a new direction in research can be an opportunity to expand understanding (Cohen-Miller et al., 2020). The research method of the case study aligns with the select paradigm and provides the fluidity necessary for rigid flexibility. The following section will discuss the flexible design, case study, and triangulation methods.

**Discussion of Flexible Design**

Flexible or qualitative research design focuses on the social aspect of research by using open-ended and semi-structured interview questions to explore poorly understood problems (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). This design aims to understand the research subjects better rather than make predictions on outcomes, as seen in quantitative methods (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).
Qualitative research methods are best suited for studying the human perspective as lived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary qualitative approaches include case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study seeks to capture the human perceptions of bias during the performance review process. Qualitative research provides a means to understand experiences, circumstances, and the underlying meanings that shape perspectives (Phoenix et al., 2018). Aligned with critical realism, qualitative research accepts that an individual's world experience is subjective and may differ from another’s (Phoenix et al., 2018). Critical realism rejects the reductionist approach by viewing higher-order levels as the development of interrelating components at a lower level (Armstrong, 2019). Conducting an exhaustive qualitative study acknowledges more than one reality and can identify if the perception of bias is a widespread issue or simply an isolated incident. For these reasons, qualitative research appears to be the best choice for this research study.

**Discussion of Case Study**

Five qualitative research methods include case study, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods include observation in interviews, surveys, or historical analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), a case study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific case. Ethnography examines the learned practices of a group of people or culture; narrative recounts the stories people tell about their lived experiences, and phenomenology describes a meaningful event from the perspective of those who lived through the experience (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This section will include an in-depth discussion of the selected method of a case study.

**Case Study**
Case studies investigate real-life experiences in-depth and address a research problem's full complexity by incorporating multiple sources and types of evidence (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). According to Yin (2018), three approaches to case studies are used for research purposes: explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. The approach provides a direction for the research and is typically chosen based on the research questions and control over the observed events. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), case study research is a qualitative approach. The investigator explores real-life evolution through detailed, in-depth data collection, which uncovers comprehensive descriptions of the event and overarching themes.

The overarching themes can be used as evidence to explain or elaborate on current knowledge. Mohajan (2018) cited several types of single and multiple case studies. The various kinds of single case studies cited are as follows: a retrospective case study examines past experiences, a snapshot study examines a specific space in time, and a diachronic study examines changes over time. The types of multiple case studies cited are as follows: nested studies, which compare elements within one case to another; parallel studies, which happen and are studied concurrently; sequential studies, which occur consecutively with the assumption that one point impacts the following; theoretical idiographic case studies, which illustrate an idea without a theoretical framework, disciplined configurative case studies, which establish theories to explain the case; heuristic case studies, which identify new, unexpected paths; theory-testing case studies, which assess the validity and scope conditions of single or competing theories; which plausibility probes determine whether further examination is warranted; and building block studies, which contribute to a more comprehensive view (Mohajan, 2018).

Although case studies are one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods, authors have noted the need for a more uniform approach to ensuring effectiveness (Rashid et al.,
Rashid et al. (2019) offered a step-by-step guide to conducting a successful case study, including foundation, pre-field, field, and reporting. The foundation phase requires the researcher to examine the project design's ontology, epistemology, and paradigms (Rashid et al., 2019). Bracketing within each step ensures that the researcher's norms, values, culture, and society do not color research outcomes. Hancock and Algozzine (2017) noted that case studies are best used in instances when 1) the focus is on an individual representative group, an organization, or a phenomenon; 2) the research is bounded by space and time, or 3) the case allows the researcher to gather a rich descriptive that is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. The information gathered is obtained using how and why questions that can be analyzed against the current literature to confirm a reoccurring problem (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). The three forms of triangulation used in the current case study are the data, the theory, and the investigator.

Based on the analysis above, the appropriate method for this research project is a single-case study because the objective is to explore a current system that has been identified to have an issue. Comprehensive interviews from CNAs about bias perceptions during the performance review process should render overarching themes that illustrate the problem rather than mapping the stories across time or culture as a narrative or ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because CNAs will recall previous review experiences, this single case study will have a retrospective tone. Still, the investigation is interested in how that retrospective perception influences present and future performance. Phenomenology is not the best-suited approach for this study because the research will expand beyond a simple description of an event. A case study allows for inductive, deductive, or abductive analysis when testing or refining a theory (Farquhar, Michels, & Robson, 2020). This study will build on the theoretical framework of expectancy-value theory, thus ruling out grounded theory as a viable method. All methods have similarities, but the
objectives set them apart, making one method better suited for a particular study than another (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Discussion of Method for Triangulation**

Triangulation is a strategy that uses multiple data sources, researchers, theories, or research methods to ensure that a research study's data, analysis, and conclusions are comprehensive and accurate (Moon, 2019). "Triangulation is described in the literature as an approach where the researcher uses either multiple methods, several theories, different data sources (in time and space) or different independent researchers to strengthen the study's credibility" (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019, p. 181). According to Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, and Gonzalez (2018), four types of triangulations have been identified in the literature: 1) data triangulation, 2) theoretical triangulation, 3) researcher triangulation, and 4) methodological triangulation.

"The purpose of content analysis is to discover the underlying meaning of text through quantifying the meaning of spoken or written language" (Renz et al., 2018, p. 825). The current study utilized conventional content analysis and natural language processing (NLP) as a method of data analysis triangulation because of their potential to uncover hidden concepts from the data and enhance research conclusions based on the words and responses of participants (Renz et al., 2018). Numerous steps are required to support valid and reliable results derived from the data. These steps include: 1) preparing the data by transcribing interviews, 2) reading transcripts repeatedly to achieve immersion, 3) making notes on the transcripts, 4) defining the unit of analysis using themes, and 5) developing a coding scheme to organize data in a comprehensible way (Renz et al., 2018). The word counting software LIWC© shall calculate how people use different categories of words across a text to assist with coding.
Theoretical triangulation approaches the data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses (Flick, 2018). Theoretical triangulation consults numerous theories to interpret data (Abdalla et al., 2018). The current study is based on expectancy-value theory but allows other emergent ideas to explain the results. Some literature emerged from Vroom's expectancy theory, self-determination theory, agency theory, motivation crowding theory, cognitive-motivational-relational theory, social exchange theory, and goal-setting theory. The theory that most accurately describes the phenomenon within the current study may change from the expectancy-value theory to one of those identified in the literature.

Methodology triangulation applies more than one data-gathering method to one issue to obtain a complete picture of the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). The premise is that if multiple and independent measures lead to the same conclusions, they can provide validation of the findings (Abdalla et al., 2018). Two subgroups have been identified within methodological triangulation, including the intra, and inter-methods (Abdalla et al., 2018). In the current study, the intra-model shall be used to apply information from interviews and questionnaires to uncover if CNAs perceived bias during the performance review process. Interviews allowed the transfer of information that captured how participants felt about reviews. At the same time, questionnaires focused on the structural aspect of the review process and helped identify where CNAs felt there was a breakdown in the current system. Triangulation of different methods should start from different perspectives or at different levels, meaning choosing at least one method specifically suited to explore the structural aspects of the problem and at least one that can capture the essential elements of meaning to those involved (Flick, 2018).
**Summary of Research Methodology**

To summarize, the design and method selected for this research study shall be a qualitative single case study because the objective is to gather the perspectives of bias from individuals subjected to a current process, otherwise known as subjective incentive-based performance reviews. The primary paradigm that shaped this study was constructivism, as the study was meant to report on empirical research that explained a social problem or informed policy. The triangulation of data, theory, and methodology created the validity and reliability of results while allowing enough flexibility for adjustments as information is gathered and analyzed throughout the study.

**Participants**

Eligible participants had to be active certified nursing assistants (CNAs) working within a skilled nursing facility in the greater Pittsburgh area. The responsibility of a CNA is to care for adult patients by providing support with activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, and ambulating (Walton & Rogers, 2017). This study focuses on the perception of CNAs in skilled nursing facilities because there has been an influx of older adults seeking nursing home care in the United States, thus making the quality of care provided within these homes a point of interest. CNAs are essential to the immediate care needs of nursing home patients, but generally, these individuals are classified as underpaid service workers and treated as such (Travers et al., 2020). In addition, most CNAs express feelings of being undervalued, undertrained, and subjected to conditions of heavy workload and verbal and physical abuse (Walton & Rogers, 2017). Performance reviews act as a platform to evaluate past performance and allow these individuals to voice their opinions on factors influencing their ability to perform. If the review
process is flawed or ineffective, CNAs may not have the opportunity to express concerns that can improve their performance in the future (Kamphorst & Swank, 2018).

**Population and Sampling**

The population used for a study is defined as the total number of participants from which a sample can be drawn (van Rijnsoever, 2017). The general population is the largest group of potential participants of a qualitative study who share at least a single attribute of interest, making them eligible as population members (Asiamah et al., 2017). Sampling is when researchers select a portion of the population impacted by their studies (Khan, 2020). Two main types of selection are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling consists of simple random, systematic, stratified, and cluster sampling. In non-probability sampling, examples include quota sampling, purposive sampling, self-selection sampling, and snowball sampling (Sharma, 2017). The current study used self-selection and snowball sampling to build a participating population.

**Discussion of Population.**

The population of a study acted as the primary source of data; therefore, the population influenced research credibility based on a researcher's understanding, definition, and selection of individuals that make up said population (Asiamah et al., 2017). The ability to define a population within a study has been determined as a critical aspect of the research process because it guides others in appraising the credibility of the sample, sampling technique(s), and research outcomes (Asiamah et al., 2017). The focus group of individuals for the current study were selected from the employee rosters of the three skilled nursing facilities within a healthcare organization. Between the three locations, there are a total of 275 CNAs. To be considered a CNA, one must complete a one-time training course of a minimum of 75-hours and be
responsible for the day-to-day care of nursing home residents (Travers et al., 2020). These
individuals are appropriate for this study because the objective is to focus on the perceptions of
CNAs during the performance review process.

**Discussion of Sampling**

A sampling plan is a formal plan specifying a sampling method, sample size, and
procedure for recruiting participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Qualitative research sampling
plans describe how many observations, interviews, focus-group discussions, and cases are
needed to ensure that the findings will contribute rich data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Self-
selection sampling allows individuals to participate in the research study, which reduces the time
required for a participant search and may increase participants' willingness to express their
perceptions during the data collection phase (Sharma, 2017). Snowball sampling considers the
referrals of willing participants (Sharma, 2017). These methods appeared ideal because CNAs
within the same facility may have been willing to refer other CNAs in their building or at another
facility where they work. In addition to being an active CNA, the most prominent criterion is that
the participants are exposed to the same phenomenon being studied but still have varying
characteristics and individual experiences. (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The sampling frame can be defined as a list of all the subjects in the population from
which the research sample will be selected (Rahi, 2017). The sample frame for this study
comprised a list of CNAs from three Promedica skilled nursing facilities within the greater
Pittsburgh area. Using a frame spanning multiple locations increased volunteer participation in
the study by generating referrals (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). All sites were within the same
major organization to ensure consistency in the performance review process. The various
locations provided a broader range of perspectives, each with a unique set of employees. A list of
the active CNAs from each site served as the studied population for the self-selection process. Snowball sampling defies the need for a frame since it relies upon word of mouth (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Based on the current climate of the pandemic, CNAs could be considered a hard-to-reach population, which is ideal for the snowball method (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018).

This study aimed to include five participants from each site, comprised of 15 subjects. To achieve data saturation within that sample using the snowball method. Twelve participants were interviewed, and sixteen were issued questionnaires. Interviews and questionnaires were distributed until data saturation to ensure no new themes or concepts emerged from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data saturation was evaluated, and no more participants were sought out. Per Braun and Clarke (2021), several qualitative studies have shown data saturation is achieved within 12 to 16 interviews. Fifteen were selected as the sample size for the current research so that an equal number of participants could be evaluated from each location. The results uncovered an issue with the administration of performance reviews. The willing participants were accessed via virtual interviews and electronic questionnaires.

**Summary of Population and Sampling**

The population and sample size used within a study determine how much viable data can be collected. Often, qualitative researchers select the most appropriate or the most eligible and convenient sample or participant group (Asiamah et al., 2017). The current study focused on CNAs and their perceived bias in the performance review process. With this in mind, the focus was on the active CNA population within the greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area, employed explicitly by Promedica health services. To ensure consistency, the performance review experience of CNAs from various locations within the same organization were allowed to share their perspective on the organization's current performance review process. The self-selection
and snowball methods help avoid researcher bias within the selection process until data saturation was achieved.

**Data Collection and Organization**

The data collection and organization methodology must be precise and lead to data analysis that can be replicated (Williams & Moser, 2019). Data collection and organization methods that lack rigor can minimize the value of research outcomes (Williams & Moser, 2019). According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), the most frequently used data collection methods in qualitative research are participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. The data collection plan for the current study included interviews and questionnaires. Interviews are typically used to collect more descriptive data, such as opinions, motivations, interests, and feelings (Jain, 2021). Surveys or questionnaires have become popular because they appear to be a straightforward approach to accessing many people’s perspectives without meeting face-to-face (Jain, 2021). Data organization plans provide a systematic approach to revealing interdependent relationships among data and facilitate deeper meaning (Williams & Moser, 2019).

**Data Collection Plan**

Interviews are a data collection method in which an interviewer asks the respondents face-to-face, via telephone, or online to uncover prominent themes within the participant's world (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The interviewer and respondent(s) conducted virtual interviews based on interview questions outlined in Appendix A. The first few minutes of an interview focused on building a relationship and making the participant feel at ease before sharing their experiences (McGrath et al., 2019). The interviews within the current case study were semi-structured. They used open questions related to the topic to encourage participants to tell their personal experiences, including feelings and emotions associated with the performance review
process. Follow-up questions were included in the interview guide to prompt more detailed responses. Follow-up interviews were not conducted.

As a secondary data collection method, surveys are meant to engage respondents and verify data gathered during the interview process. For this research study, the terms survey and questionnaire were used interchangeably. "A survey may be recommended as a data collection tool after a first analysis using interviews is completed in case of exploratory research" (Jain, 2021, p. 552). The main advantage of surveys is the quantity of data they can collect from many people in a relatively short period while using limited resources (Braun et al., 2020). A survey served as a verification method for information gathered during the interview process in this study. Researchers have highlighted the limitations of online surveys, including limited flexibility related to information gathering, the risk of low response rates, and the inability to clarify or elaborate on questions (Braun et al., 2020).

Interviews are preferable when the researcher wants to understand the participants’ perspectives of a phenomenon rather than generate a generalized understanding of them (McGrath et al., 2019). The current study sought to gain insight into the perception of a specific population in relation to the performance review process. Some individuals did not feel comfortable expressing their feelings during a virtual interview. Hence, a survey provided an alternative method and means to collect data from participants unwilling to participate in more identifying methods (Braun et al., 2020), such as a recorded interview.

**Member Checking**

Member checking is defined as the process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the recorded account as a way for the researcher to ensure that the participant's account is accurately portrayed (Iivari, 2018). This
process allows participants to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretations of data, thus adding credibility to the qualitative study and serving as a collaboration opportunity (Iivari, 2018). Research has shown that member checking may not help a study's validity. Participants may agree with the analysis because they believe the researcher has power and do not want to disagree with the findings or hinder the relationship built during the information-gathering process (Candela, 2019). This study attempted to conduct an informal variation of member checking to avoid the negative connotations of the method. Recording interviews and asking clarifying questions, such as, "What do you mean by that?" and "Can you elaborate so I understand what you mean by…?" acted as a member check during the information gathering process.

Follow-Up Interviews

Based on the information gathered during the initial interview process, follow-up questions could have been generated and added to each participant's account. Keeping in mind that a study's objective is to remain fluid and open to the random, interview questions may change as more information is received (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the transcription process, more detail was not needed to close gaps in the data. Adjusting the questions after the initial interviews allows enough flexibility to counteract potential misunderstood or irrelevant research questions (McGrath et al., 2019), but this was unnecessary. When conducting follow-up interviews Roulston (2018) recommended using the participant's own words rather than summarizing the interviewer's understanding; for example:

You mentioned ______. What was that like for you?

You mentioned ______. Could you tell me more about it?
Interviewers are encouraged to use the participants rather than their own words in posing questions because the data quality is more authentic when free of the interviewer's influence (Roulston, 2018).

**Instruments**

Instruments are the tools used to gather data during the field research process. These items may include a study protocol, an interview template, material to document thoughts and observations, an interview list, and so on (Mohamad & Khalifah, 2017). The data collection tools used for this study were interview guides and surveys. The general interview guide guided the discussion and kept the researcher on track based on the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A copy of the interview guide for this study can be found in Appendix A. Surveys acted as a second layer of data collection to capture those who were uncomfortable participating in a virtual interview. A copy of the survey distributed can be found in Appendix B.

**Interviewer**

The interviewer can act as an instrument to build rapport during the qualitative interview process (McGrath et al., 2019). Rapport is crucial during the interview to enable the respondent to provide a detailed account of the experiences related to the study (McGrath et al., 2019). One way of building rapport is to approach interviewees with an open and curious attitude, stating specifically why their specific points of view are of interest (McGrath et al., 2019). The researcher is also an instrument for collecting data and analysis, which means that details of the data collection and analysis process need to be provided to avoid superficial interpretation and presentation of results (Twining et al., 2017). "The interviewer needs to be reflexive, conscious, and aware about how his or her role might impact the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee" (McGrath et al., 2019, p. 1004). In addition, the interviewer should not take a
passive stance in the interview but use their abilities, experiences, and competencies to contribute to interview outcomes (McGrath et al., 2019).

**Interview Guides**

An unstructured or semi-structured interview guide includes only a few predetermined questions allowing the interviewer to explore issues brought forward by the interviewee (McGrath et al., 2019). The interview guide for the current study in Appendix A contains several interview questions that attempt to answer each of the three research questions presented in this study. Interview questions under RQ1 attempted to find if supervisor bias influenced an employee's motivation to perform well or if perceived biases led to a lack of motivation to perform well because the CNA feels their efforts are in vain. Interview question #1 looks to understand how the participant defines bias. The probing questions sought to uncover if CNAs observed their defined biases during the review process. Interview question # 2 and probing questions sought to determine if participants viewed the process as fair and effective. Interview question # 3 gave insight into the perceived validity of the review process and if CNAs believe supervisor reviews are consistent with their view of their performance.

The literature revealed that in some cases, there was a positive correlation between incentive motivators and performance; however, the researchers noted that financial incentives also could have less of an effect on motivation if employees perceive them as a controlling means of evaluation and surveillance (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017). Interview questions under RQ2 aimed to identify if employees felt current financial incentive amounts were high enough to motivate high performance. Question # 4 established a baseline for whether participants valued the monetary incentives associated with performance reviews. The follow-up questions encouraged the participant to explain how incentive amounts affected their motivation to perform
well. Interview question #5 revealed if participants believed their performance efforts would increase or decrease their incentive amount. Finally, the interview question RQ3 was meant to identify if employees would be more motivated to perform better in the future if they knew their review outcomes would be affected. The final interview questions determined if the participant had an emotional connection to performance review outcomes.

**Surveys**

Data can be collected using questionnaires and surveys, becoming part of the more extensive interview process (Twining et al., 2017). For this research, the words questionnaire and survey were used interchangeably. The online survey for this study was created using Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a free online service that provides participants with a link to an online survey form via email. Individuals willing to complete the survey were asked to provide their email addresses. Participants could complete the survey form themselves. The questions were framed on a Lickert scale, including the following responses: Strongly Agree; Somewhat Agree; Neutral; Somewhat Disagree; and Strongly Disagree, as seen in Appendix B. In a few questions, the survey is structured to capture the individual's overall perception of the performance review process. Per Braun et al. (2020), surveys that focus on lived experience should be comprised of no more than 16 questions. Longer surveys can disengage or fatigue the participant resulting in incomplete responses (Braun et al., 2021). Survey questions 3, 5, and 10 attempted to answer RQ1. Survey questions 4, 6, 7 and 8 were intended to answer RQ2. Survey questions 1, 5 and 9 answered RQ3.

**Archive Data**

Data from qualitative studies are stored in digital archives and made available for reuse at an increasing rate (Davidson et al., 2019). Pooling data across projects can generate generalized
data increasing the diversity of samples, and the total number of research participants the researcher can access (Davidson et al., 2019). This study did not consult any archival data because data specific to the current study could not be found.

**Data Organization Plan**

The organization plan for this study mimicked the data analysis spiral presented by Creswell and Poth (2018). The spiral model begins with data collection, managing and organizing data, reading and documenting emergent ideas, describing and classifying codes into themes, developing and accessing interpretations, representing and visualizing data, and reporting findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As mentioned above, the data collection plan was to conduct interviews and questionnaires. Excel spreadsheets were used to document each data collection segment; for example, each participant was assigned a number corresponding to an interview transcript or survey to preserve their identity. This process kept data gathered attached to the participant who provided it. Field notes provided a narrative of the progression of thought throughout the data-gathering process to read and document emergent ideas. Field notes "aid in constructing detailed descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, focus group, and document's valuable contextual data" (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018, p.318). The study deferred to the open, axial, selective method to classify codes and themes. The three-pronged approach allowed immersion in the data to reveal conclusions that may not have been obvious on the surface (Williams & Moser, 2019). Developing and accessing interpretations requires the researcher to look at the data and arrive at overarching patterns, themes, and categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, representing and visualizing data is when everything comes together, and what has been discovered can be presented to others; this can be done via text or visual aid.
The current study included both to provide the most comprehensive results displayed.

**Summary of Data Collection and Organization**

Collecting data in an organized and systematic way helps the researcher track findings and arrive at conclusions based on the information gathered. Creswell and Poth (2018) provide a step-by-step method to extract meaning from the vast amount of data collected in the field. The current study used Creswell and Poth's (2018) spiral model to achieve a systematic order that breeds meaningful insight into data.

**Data Analysis**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), how a researcher interprets and communicates data is a dual-layered process established by the steps outlined in the spiral method and is affirmed in an approach-specific way in the second layer. A detailed description of the case and setting must be established early in the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data storage software such as NVivo can assist in data analysis by providing an organized platform to recall data quickly (Maher et al., 2018). The current study used a version of NVivo to work through discovering emergent ideas, coding, interpretations, and the presentation of data.

**Emergent Ideas**

During the data gathering process, memos and field notes are the first reflections of a researcher's thoughts (Jain, 2021). These notes may be a few words too long texts or pictures that are best recorded immediately and built upon over time (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Memos are documentation of the thinking and reasoning process of the researcher once the field notes are recorded (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes were taken during the interview process for the current research. During the survey responses review, memos were generated based on
the initial thoughts documented in the field and information gathered from the literature. This information was used to conclude the completion of the study.

**Coding Themes**

Converting all data in the written text into a working code that simplifies material into major underlying concepts or themes is essential for the analysis process (Jain, 2021). According to Skjott et al. (2019), the significant benefits of coding include gaining a deep, comprehensive insight into data and making data easily accessible. Coding acts as a method of sorting and structuring data, ensuring transparency and validity and helping the researcher understand the participant's voice. Coding involves recognizing the interdependent relationship between data organization, categorization, and theory development (Williams & Moser, 2019). The open, axial, and selective coding strategy facilitates a flexible data loop that can evolve as the researcher interacts with the data through reduction and consolidation techniques (Williams & Moser, 2019). Open coding is the first level of organization where broad concepts and classifications are established (Williams & Moser, 2019). Axil coding is the second layer of coding, which contrasts the first by refining and aligning categories and themes identified in the first step (Williams & Moser, 2019). Finally, the third level of coding is selective, which develops the conclusions from the previous actions into meaningful expressions (Williams & Moser, 2019). The current study used the above steps to organize and discover the theory concerning performance review bias in skilled nursing facilities.

**Interpretations**

Interpretations are socially constructed arguments that can take many forms that are notably better than others (Cho & Trent, 2020). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), several forms of interpretation exist, such as hunches, insights, and intuition. Methods of interpretation
techniques outlined in Creswell and Poth's (2018) text include audiovisual equipment, questions, and peer feedback. The current study will use the following questions to develop and assess interpretations: "What surprising information did you not expect to find? What information is conceptually interesting or unusual to participants and audiences? What are the dominant interpretations, and what are the alternate notions?" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.195). Interpretations designed to generate theory, or general rules, are better for quantitative research questions, whereas interpretations designed to construct meaning from social interactions or develop multiple participants' perspectives are better for creating contextually rich descriptions, stories, or narratives (Cho & Trent, 2020). The objective of this study is to represent the perspectives of participants.

**Data Representation**

Data representation in a case study is contingent on the objectives of the case; for example, if the study takes place over a period of time, the finding should be represented in chronological order (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The current study will not focus on change over time but rather on how perceptions affect the will to perform well. The findings will show the relationships between participant data and the overall conclusions.

**Analysis for Triangulation**

"The purpose of content analysis is to discover the underlying meaning of the text through quantifying the meaning of spoken or written language" (Renz et al., 2018, p. 825). The current study utilized conventional content analysis and natural language processing (NLP) as a method of data analysis triangulation that has the potential to uncover hidden concepts from the data and enhance research conclusions based on the words and responses of the participants during the interview process (Renz et al., 2018). Numerous steps are required to support valid
and reliable results derived from the data. These steps include: 1) Preparing the data by transcribing interviews, 2) Reading transcripts repeatedly to achieve immersion, 3) Making notes on the transcripts, 4) Defining the unit of analysis using themes, and 5) Developing a coding scheme to organize data in a comprehensible way (Renz et al., 2018). The word counting software LIWC© shall calculate how people use different categories of words across a text to assist with coding.

Theoretical triangulation refers to approaching the data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses by consulting numerous theories to interpret data (Abdalla et al., 2018). The current study was based on the expectancy-value theory but allowed other emergent theories to explain the results. The theories surrounding this subject matter that surfaced from the literature include Vroom’s expectancy theory, self-determination theory, agency theory, motivation crowding theory, cognitive-motivational-relational theory, social exchange theory, and goal-setting theory. After conducting the study, the theory that most accurately depicted the phenomenon observed would be the self-determination theory. The data revealed a strong pull towards intrinsic motivation. Still, there was also a lot of mention that monetary reward also played a significant role in how one would perform in the future. After analyzing the data, the information points to the idea that individuals oscillate on the motivation continuum. In some instances, intrinsic motivation may be a more potent driver, while external rewards outweigh internal drivers. This idea also aligns with motivation crowding theory, which states that one form of motivation will always overshadow another; two can not be equally present simultaneously (Putra et al., 2017; Kim & Bak, 2020).

As previously discussed, methodology triangulation applies more than one data gathering method to one issue to obtain a complete picture of the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). The
premise is that if multiple and independent measures lead to the same conclusions, they can validate findings (Abdalla et al., 2018). The current study used intra-model to apply information from interviews and questionnaires to uncover if CNAs perceived bias during the performance review process. The responses from the anonymous surveys confirmed the results of the interviews. While the surveys presented rudimentary information from which themes could be identified, the interviews provided additional details that could later be transcribed and broken down into themes. The same themes were uncovered separately from both the interview and survey results.

**Summary of Data Analysis**

The functions and methods of the data analysis process used in the current study were discussed in detail. The following section will provide a detailed review of the reliability and validity techniques used in the current study. Relevant ideas, patterns, and theories will be pulled from the data and displayed as credibility through a systematic coding process.

**Reliability and Validity**

According to McGrath et al. (2019), there are three main approaches to validating qualitative research, 1. applying traditional concepts, tailoring existing concepts to find new meaning, and generating new forms of validation for qualitative research. The current study seeks to consult existing concepts and potentially find new meanings. The literature has argued that qualitative studies should not function within quantitative restraints such as reliability and validity but instead focus on proving if the account is accurate and by whose standards (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Alternative terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been used to describe rigor in qualitative research and separate qualitative
from quantitative methods (Cypress, 2017). The following section will cover how this study attempted to justify the findings from field research.

**Reliability.**

Unlike quantitative results that can be replicated over periods, the human behaviors and interactions observed in qualitative studies are never static or the same (Cypress, 2017). A study that consults the constructivist paradigm takes a naturalistic stance on an inquiry that seeks to understand phenomena in naturally occurring settings (Cypress, 2017). To establish credibility, triangulation techniques are used to solidify data, theory, and method. The research process must be well documented and auditable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following triangulation techniques utilized in the current study were conventional content analysis and natural language processing (NLP) as a data analysis triangulation, theoretical triangulation based on expectancy-value theory and other emergent theories, and methodological triangulation by obtaining data from two different methods. Field notes and memos documented and expanded findings to prove dependability, transferability, and confirmability when possible.

**Validity.**

According to Cypress (2017), "[V]alidity is broadly defined as the state of being well-grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, [and] logical, conforming to accepted principles or the quality of being sound, just, and well-founded" (p. 256). Validity is a pliable concept present throughout the entire research process to gauge how trustworthy the researcher's actions are (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During testing, trustworthiness is essential to prove valid and credible results. "In qualitative research, the validity of the findings is related to the careful recording and continual verification of the data" (Cypress, 2017, p. 259). The flexibility the qualitative research allows gives way to the possibility of researcher bias. According to Cypress (2017), researcher
bias is one of the biggest threats to the validity of a study. Bracketing is a method of critical self-reflection that can help identify the researcher's thoughts and motives that may get applied to research outcomes during field research or data analysis. The two triangulation methods discussed above contributed to the credibility of this study by showing how data, theory, and approach confirm the other method's findings.

**Bracketing.**

The qualitative inquiry depends on the researcher's ability to engage in reflexive practices, which requires them to become aware of what internal factors alter their views on the outside world (Roger et al., 2018). Personal identity can influence a study's outcome by fostering positive and negative feelings of belonging, connectedness, and self-confidence. Bracketing to acknowledge the influence of personal identity is one way to avoid personal bias during the research process (Roger et al., 2018). The ability to reflect on self in terms of biography brings a clear perception of weaknesses, strengths, emotions, motivations, thoughts, and beliefs, which can assist in understanding other people and gauging how they perceive the attitudes, actions, and responses of oneself and others (Nilson, 2017). This action should not be a one-time occurrence but a process of self-discovery that can enrich data collection, research findings, and interpretation to the extent that the researcher acts as an instrument (Roger et al., 2018).

Bracketing does not mean having the ability to stop things from happening or eliminating believing in something; instead, the process makes the researcher's beliefs known to consider how those beliefs may affect understanding (Dörfler & Stierand, 2020). There is no way to eradicate one's opinions and values, but the researcher can attempt to refrain from judgments and use them as sources of insight. (Dörfler & Stierand, 2020). A standard bracketing method is writing memos throughout data collection and analysis to examine and reflect upon the
researcher's engagement with the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Memos can take theoretical notes that explain a cognitive process for conducting research, methodological notes that explain the procedural aspects of research, and observational comments that allow the researcher to explore feelings about the study (Roger et al., 2018). In the current study, memos will increase clarity and engagement with the participants' experiences during the interview process.

**Summary of Reliability and Validity.**

Reliability and validity are two functional components that should be operational in any qualitative study to ensure the researcher's actions and findings are true and correct (Cypress, 2017). A relatively systematic approach to data collection, organization, and analysis allows observers to evaluate and replicate the study. This verification ensures that scientific findings are not lost on the researcher's subjectivity or bias (Hayashi et al., 2019).

**Summary of Section 2 and Transition**

The data collection and organization processes used in the current study were discussed. The data collection plan will consist of follow-up interviews, interview guides, and surveys. The organization plan consults the spiral model presented by Creswell and Poth (2018). Finally, the data analysis process, in addition to the reliability and validity techniques, will act as the guide to prove the actions and findings of the researcher are true and correct. The following section will be a presentation of the entire research proposal.

**Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

Professional business application of performance reviews can improve leadership, individual performance, and more effective compensation management. Section three covers the inner workings of the study, followed by the presentation of findings and potential business applications of the study. The presentation of findings combines the survey results and interview
questions. Each question is discussed in detail and related to the significant components of the study, for example, the research questions and conceptual framework. The last portion of this section has been reserved for how this study relates to a biblical worldview and reflections on the process.

**Overview of the Study**

This study was a flexible, single-case study to assess how the perception of supervisor bias influences employee performance. The focus was on CNAs within three skilled nursing facilities within the greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area. The research sought to determine if CNAs perceived that nursing supervisors’ used bias during reviews and how that influenced their merit increases during the performance review process. The general problem is that CNAs are often not motivated to perform above-standard requirements because of perceived bias from nursing supervisors during subjective incentive-based performance reviews within skilled nursing facilities. The specific problem to be addressed in this study is that subjective incentive-based performance appraisals may leave too much room for nursing supervisor bias in skilled nursing facilities within the United States, potentially resulting in CNAs' having a poor perception of the review process and leading to a lack in ability to retain productive and satisfying talent. The larger purpose of this study is to highlight that performance reviews are not an effective motivator for positive performance outcomes in skilled nursing facilities.

The data collection method included focused interviews that allowed participants to speak freely about their personal views and values. In addition, a self-administered survey was issued to willing participants to 'test' or corroborate the perceptions identified from the interview process. The questions were framed on a Lickert scale, including the following responses: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
Performance management practices can create a productive and sustainable work environment where employees develop and contribute to organizational success. This study contributes to research concerning how perceptions can shape an individual's reality to the extent that they impact future actions, specifically performance. The findings of this study will directly benefit human resource professionals who are considering an effective performance management system to implement within their organization by helping them understand how external factors such as bias can render the process completely ineffective. In addition, if incentive-based performance reviews are already being practiced, this study highlights areas where HR professionals can focus training efforts to minimize risks associated with rater bias. More effective performance management practices will provide a more accurate depiction of the current workforce and create a clear framework for focusing on future organizational efforts.

**Presentation of the Findings**

The application to professional practice is centered around the effectiveness of performance appraisals concerning employee motivation and organizational outcomes. The topic has had a prominent presence in research due to concerns about how failed appraisal processes hinder performance improvement, human resource functions, and corporate objectives (Loon et al., 2019). How employees perceive the review process plays a significant role in whether or not the method will deliver the intended motivators, such as feedback and job satisfaction (Loon et al., 2019). Human resource (HR) practices such as pay-for-performance systems have increased motivation but can have adverse effects (Loon et al., 2019). Human resource management (HRM) scholars largely agree that employee perceptions of HR practices play a crucial role in influencing the effectiveness of these practices at the individual and organizational levels (Wang et al., 2020). Across the globe, organizations attempt to address performance gaps by
administering management systems like performance appraisals (de Menezes & Escrig, 2019). In this context, efficiently managing performance remains at the forefront of discussions surrounding change management in the workplace and employee perceptions of HR practices (Wang et al., 2020).

Skilled nursing facilities provide care for some of the most vulnerable populations in society, including older adults and those with chronic medical conditions (Davidson & Szanton, 2020). The importance of care in skilled nursing facilities has become more critical than ever in the wake of the coronavirus-19 (COVID) pandemic. In July of 2021, over 185 million confirmed cases of COVID and four million COVID-related deaths worldwide were reported (Verdoorn et al., 2021). Residence in skilled nursing facilities (SNF) experienced an increased mortality risk due to increased transmission in confined living environments. (Verdoorn et al., 2021).

The result led to staffing shortages and frequent staff turnover, high resident-to-staff ratios, supply shortages, inadequate infection prevention control measures, and increased documentation (Davidson & Szanton, 2020). Skilled nursing facilities need their HR functions to retain talent and ensure the quality of care. Performance reviews are the standard tool used to monitor the productivity of staff. This study contributes to HRM by looking at the effects of perception on performance motivation.

This qualitative case study will focus on how perceptions of bias influence an employee's drive to perform in the future among Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) within three Promedica skilled nursing facilities in the greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area. The literature covered individual aspects of the study separately, such as performance and motivation (Lee, 2019) and bias in performance appraisals (Belle et al., 2017). There is limited information on how one influences the other and even less on this topic within skilled nursing. The number of
older adults (65 years or older) has rapidly increased, reaching more than two billion worldwide
(Lee, 2022). As a result, the number of older adults losing their ability to care for themselves in
their homes increases. High turnover rates in nursing facilities make assessing residents difficult,
reducing the familiarity between staff and residents and making detecting complications
challenging, which leads to increased hospital admission rates (Lee, 2022). From an
organizational standpoint, high turnover in these facilities leads to substantial costs, such as
recruitment and training for new staff (Lee, 2022). Performance management systems should be
closely monitored in these environments to ensure adequate care. HR functions such as
performance reviews can enhance the quality of care (Weech-Maldonado et al., 2019) and
organizational outcomes (Kim et al., 2018).

At the time of data collection, the total number of CNAs employed across the three
Promedica skilled nursing facilities was reduced from 271 to 142 due to turnover. The 52%
turnover rate in skilled nursing facilities can be directly attributed to the pandemic. COVID
devastated nursing homes globally and in the US (McGarry et al., 2020). Many staff members
contracted the disease because of inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e.,
masks, gowns, goggles, gloves, and hand sanitizer), which led to staffing shortages (McGarry et
al., 2020). For these reasons, the total population available and willing to provide care in SNF
was drastically reduced. Sixteen individuals from the total population participated in some
portion of this study. Those 16 individuals make up a sample size of 11% of the total population.
Table 2 shows how many surveys and interviews were conducted, followed by the survey results,
and identifies themes from the interviews.

Table 1

*Population and Sample Size*
### Themes Discovered

The themes discovered during the data collection phase include intrinsic motivation, lack of trust in supervisor training, motivation from increased compensation, and effort not equal to ratings. A common thread throughout the interview responses was the concept of performing well because the participants felt a sense of satisfaction from doing what they believed to be the 'right thing.' During the interview process, Participant 1 said, “I am always my worst critic, so I try to be the best for myself regardless of my review.” This internal driver was identified as intrinsic motivation. The literature expands on this idea by stating that intrinsically motivated people will look for more effective ways to do their job and find satisfaction in doing well (Husnatarina & Elia, 2022). The internal motivators contributing to intrinsic motivation are autonomy or self-determination, capability, and a sense of affiliation with the group being served (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). In skilled-nursing facilities, many caregivers get a sense of satisfaction from helping those who don't have anyone else to care for them. Participant 3 said, “I do a good job because I care about the residents. Some of them don’t have anyone.” According to the literature, intrinsic motivators are differentiated between two types of motive systems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Size Pre-study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Size Time of Study</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Surveys Received</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interviews Conducted</td>
<td>16</td>
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</table>
implicit and explicit motives (Bakaç et al., 2022). Implicit motives refer to actions driven by one’s unconscious ideas of self, while explicit motives are driven by self-attributed needs (Bakaç et al., 2022). When an individual’s implicit motives and behavior are aligned, and their explicit motives or goals are not competing, intrinsic motivation is likely to increase. The old saying, “Find a job you enjoy, and you will never have to work a day in your life,” advocates for the value of intrinsic motivation (i.e., doing an activity out of inherent interest or pleasure). Based on the responses from the participants, most felt a desire to perform well despite the external rewards they could receive because they enjoyed what they were doing and felt a sense of morality by helping those in need (Van den Broeck et al., 2021).

Figure 5. Theme 1-Intrinsic Motivation

Note. This figure illustrates how the individual components of intrinsic motivation lead to better performance.

The literature has acknowledged a continuum of motives, ranging from more controlled to more autonomous types of motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Incentive-based
performance appraisals have effectively enhanced employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when executed without biased perceptions. Incentives have been found to generate positive outcomes when employees feel they are trustworthy and fair (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). When employees do not trust the review process due to unfairness related to bias or incentive amounts, there is a potential for adverse outcomes, such as a lack of motivation for future performance (Choi & Whitford, 2017). The second identified theme from the interviews and surveys was a lack of trust in supervisor training. Eight of 16 survey responses confirmed that participants did not feel supervisors had adequate training to conduct performance reviews. Interview responses produced phrases like “They don't know what they are doing" (Participant 5) and "I think if they had more training, I would feel better about the results." (Participant 7). According to a study by Span (2021), 45% of people said lack of trust in leadership was the most significant issue impacting performance. That lack of trust reduces transparency and communication. Employees who view their leaders as trustworthy believe that their leaders are competent and their actions are meant to benefit them rather than harm the organization's interests and employees (Belsito & Reutzel, 2020). The interpersonal communication often displayed during the performance appraisal process allows leaders and staff to carry out conversations about an organization's primary functions, increase motivation and emotional disclosure, and share information (Susilawati & Supartha, 2020).
Figure 6. Theme 2-Lack of Trust in Supervisor Training

Note. The above illustrates how a lack of trust in supervisor training can lead to a lack of trust in the performance review process, leading to the perception of bias during the review process.

A third identified theme was that participants admitted they were motivated by compensation. Six out of 16, or 37.50%, reported that merit increases and promotions were enough to motivate them to perform well. Interviewed participants said they would work harder for more money. Specifically, Participant 5 alluded to annual raises working in one’s favor. Recent research has suggested that more than 90% of employers have designed pay-for-performance systems that link employees' pay levels with their prior or future job performance to improve employee performance (He et al., 2021). A positive correlation between incentive motivators and performance mimics results that have been found throughout the literature; however, researchers have noted that financial incentives might also have less of an effect on motivation if employees perceive them as a controlling means of motivation evaluation and surveillance (Thibault-Landry et al., 2017). Monetary
Figure 7. Theme 3-Extrinsic Motivation

Note. This figure illustrates that monetary rewards and the promise of advancement are extrinsic motivators.

Finally, the last theme identified in the study was effort is not equal to ratings. Participants felt that reviewers gave everyone the same rating regardless of their effort. Participant 7 said, “I don't think the scores match my actual performance,” Participant 2 said, “They don’t spend enough time working with us to know how we do.” These responses indicate that there may be biases, stereotypes, and assumptions about certain groups that would be reflected in the results of the performance review process. This bias negates objectivity and judges a person's performance on the group's perception instead of how the individual performs (Dalton & Villagran, 2018). Such biases can leave reviewed individuals feeling that their performance is not being considered at face value but rather that other influences impact the outcome of their reviews (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). The overall consensus was that CNAs felt their rates were not aligned with their efforts.
Interpretation of the Themes

The results from this study include both interview responses and survey results. There were a total of 16 participants in this study. All 16 participants took part in the online survey portion of the study, and 12 took part in the interview portion. The discovered themes from the results include intrinsic motivation, lack of trust in supervisor training, motivation from increased compensation, and uniformity in ratings regardless of effort. Interview responses such as "I'm still going to perform how I usually do" (Participant 3) and "I won't change my performance regardless of what they put on paper" (Participant 14) were interpreted as participants being intrinsically motivated.

Regarding the survey results from the specific statement, I am self-motivated to perform above and beyond my job expectations. Findings confirmed that 43.75% of participants agreed with the statement. Lack of trust in supervisor training was also a reoccurring theme in survey and interview results, based on responses such as "[T]hey don't know what they are doing" (Participant 11), and eight of 16 participants disagreed with the statement "[S]upervisors are trained in performance review execution." The survey and interview results showed a higher level of motivation from increased compensation. The survey directly addressed the effort not aligned with ratings, “[E]veryone gets the same pay increase regardless of their efforts.' Survey results showed that most participants disagreed with that statement but spoke to that statement being confirmed in the interviews.
Figure 8. Survey Question 1

The benefits (i.e., merit increases, promotions) I could receive are worth performing well.

- **Strongly Disagree**: 0 participants
- **Disagree**: 4 participants
- **Neither Agree or Disagree**: 1 participant
- **Agree**: 6 participants
- **Strongly Agree**: 3 participants

Based on the results from this question, most participants felt that the benefits of performance reviews are worth the effort. Figure 8 depicts that six out of 16 participants agreed that the benefits of performance reviews were worth performing well. Four out of 16 disagreed. Three out of 16 strongly agreed, two strongly disagreed, and one was neutral.
Figure 9. Survey Question 2

The results from this survey question are somewhat contradictory to those from other survey questions. Figure 9 shows that seven out of 16 participants agreed that performance reviews are fair and accurate. Four out of 16 participants were indifferent, two strongly agreed, and three strongly disagreed. Other results pointed to participants lacking confidence in the review process. Here, the majority believe that reviews are correctly executed, meaning that perception of bias is not present.
This survey question reveals a lack of confidence in the execution process of performance reviews. In Figure 10, half of the participants responded that supervisors are not trained in performance review execution. Six out of 16 participants agreed that supervisors are adequately trained, one was indifferent, and one strongly disagreed. If participants do not believe supervisors can properly execute reviews, the perception of accuracy should be skewed; however, based on the results from the previous question, that is not the case.
With the information gathered so far, the majority of the participants’ narratives would be that the benefits of performance reviews are worth the effort, that reviews are fair and accurate, that supervisors are not trained in review execution, and that everyone does not receive the same pay regardless of effort. Figure 11 shows most participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that everyone receives the same pay regardless of effort. The difference between agreeing or strongly agreeing that everyone gets the same pay regardless of effort was one person.
Figure 12. Survey Question 5

Figure 12 shows an equal number of people agreeing and disagreeing that supervisors do not notice when they go the extra mile. Two people strongly agreed, making the majority agree that supervisors do not notice performance. Zero of the participants strongly disagreed with survey statement five. Four of the participants were indifferent. Compared to the other survey question related directly to supervisor effectiveness concerning performance reviews, most participants lacked confidence in supervisor training. Still, they felt that supervisors did observe their efforts.
Figure 13. Survey Question 6

As seen in Figure 13, survey question six asks the participant directly if they feel supervisors use bias during the performance review process. Eight out of 16 participants felt that supervisors used bias during the review process. Three felt supervisors did not use bias, three were indifferent, and two strongly felt that bias was present during the review process. This information contradicts the previous results shown in Figure 9. Figure 9 illustrates that most participants felt that reviews were conducted fairly and accurately, but bias is used during the review process. These responses contradict each other.
Survey question 14 provides insight into what motivates the participants to perform well. Participants performed well in the context of internal and external drivers. The results show that 14 out of 16 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they would perform above their job expectations if they were compensated appropriately for their efforts. Two participants disagreed. Zero participants were indifferent, and zero strongly disagreed. Thus, most participants were motivated by external rewards, such as compensation in incentive pay.
Finally, question eight asked participants if they were self-motivated to perform above their job expectations. Thirteen out of 16 participants strongly agreed or agreed that they were self-motivated to perform well. Three were indifferent, and one strongly disagreed. Zero disagreed. Intrinsic motivation often appeared in the interview process. In the next section, the interview question responses will be analyzed.

**Table 2**

*Interview Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Themes</th>
<th>Repeated Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Not Accurate</em></td>
<td>• I know that my rating is not correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They don't work closely enough with us to know how to rate us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They are not accurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>Lack of Trust in Supervisor Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't think the scores match my actual performance.</td>
<td>Performance should be based on what you do, not who you like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are not accurate.</td>
<td>Attendance should not count.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don't even know what we do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don't know us or see us every day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think they are accurate sometimes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone can write anything on paper, but it's not always accurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews are not accurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm still going to perform how I usually do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won't change my performance regardless of what they put on paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am always my worst critic, so I try to be the best for myself regardless of my review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My motivation is the same. They don't change what I do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I care about the residents. Some of them don’t have anyone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Rating Not Reflective of Efforts | • Supervisors don't have the proper training for the reviews.  
• They need to know enough about me as a worker.  
• Some supervisors know what they are doing, and others don't. They don't seem to care.  
• They don't rate you the way they should rate you. I feel that my performance is excellent, and they tell you that they can't rate you that high.  
• If I felt my performance review would actually make a difference in my yearly increase, I would perform better. |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Review Benefits Are Worth the Effort | • They can work in a person's favor as far as yearly raises.  
• They show where I grew and where I need more growth. |
| Supervisors Are Only Concerned About Their Best Interest | • The rules are one way, but people do what is best for them and not what's best for the building.  
• Some supervisors are here just to collect a paycheck as easily as possible. |
Ratings Match My Performance

- I feel like my reviews match my performance.
- The supervisors that have done my reviews know what they are doing.

**Representation and Visualization of the Data**

The following section shall visually display the results from this case study. Interview results are displayed as prominent themes and verbatim phrases from the interview transcripts, leading to data saturation. The results from the survey have been broken down into bar graphs and percentages based on the responses across a Likert scale. The collection of data was used to identify correlations and reoccurring themes. As anticipated, the interview and survey results revealed similar findings.

**Relationship of the Findings**

This section will discuss how the findings from the case study interviews and surveys related to the study's research questions, conceptual framework, anticipated themes, the literature, and the problem. The research questions and conceptual framework guide a study systematically to make explicit connections that lead to sound conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The anticipated themes are developed based on the findings from studies focused on similar problems throughout the research. How these individual components relate to the findings may lead to recommended solutions to the problem.

**Research Questions**

Research question 1 asked, “What forms of bias do you feel supervisors used when conducting performance reviews?” and “How does a supervisor's use of bias influence an
employee's performance motivation?” The questions attempted to address the forms of bias present during performance reviews and how that perception impacted the motivation of those being reviewed. The survey revealed that half the participants felt that biases were used during the review process, with 8 out of 16 or 50% responding in favor of biased observations—the results from the interviews detailed how participants unequivocally felt that supervisors used bias during the review process. Interviewed participants spoke about how the supervisors who executed performance reviews did not typically work with them; those supervisors were deemed inadequate judges of performance. If reviewers do not observe first-hand, performance biases such as affinity bias, halo effect, perception bias, confirmation bias, and groupthink are possible (Dalton & Villagran, 2018).

Research question 2 looks at how monetary incentives influence performance efforts. The results from the survey indicated that higher incentive amounts would motivate participants to perform above their standard job duties. However, a percentage also felt that supervisors did not notice when they performed above expectations. The results from the interviews revealed similar findings. Participants expressed that they felt underpaid and overworked, so additional compensation would motivate them to continue to work through burnout. Interviewers stated that they typically work overtime because the compensation is much higher than their base rate. Based on the results, one can conclude that participants are motivated by monetary incentives and will continue to exert effort even when burned out because the reward is worth the additional effort.

Finally, RQ3 asked how an incentive-based performance review motivates future performance? The responses revealed that participants were slightly motivated to perform better in the future if they received a negative performance review as a way to redeem themselves.
Interviewed participants stated they would feel upset if they received a poor performance review if they worked hard. At the same time, survey responses showed that participants felt that performance reviews were critical. Conflicting results indicated that 6 out of 16, or 37.50%, felt that everyone received that same wage increase regardless of their effort.

**The Conceptual Framework**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the conceptual framework is a theory about what is taking place, why, the various aspects or features involved, and how they might relate. The following diagram illustrates the framework elements and how they were expected to flow together. The researcher’s findings conflicted with the two outlined pathways and did not account for intrinsic motivation. The framework outlined in Figure 16 focuses on external motivators such as incentive pay. Extrinsicly motivated behavior provides a feeling of satisfaction as a physical reward (Thomas & Gupta, 2022). The results from this study may be better captured in a framework that includes the components of intrinsic motivation. Basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) assumes that "psychological well-being" and "optimal human functioning" are rooted in three universal psychological requirements. These are autonomy, competence, and relatedness or affiliation, identical to the components of intrinsic motivation, as seen in Figure 2 (Thomas & Gupta, 2022).
Figure 16. *Expectancy-Value Theory*

*Note.* This figure shows how the perception of a valuable reward and the perception that positive effort will be rewarded can lead to a motivation to exert positive effort in the future to obtain the valued reward.

Figure 17 illustrates the hypothesis pathways based on expectancy-value theory if employees perceive bias during the review process. Expectancy value theory states that motivation to perform is influenced by three factors: the perceived value of the reward, the perceived likelihood that the desired performance will be rewarded, and the perceived likelihood that effort will result in the expected reward (Shoaib et al., 2019). If employees believe their endeavors reflect incentives appropriately, they will exert more effort into better performance. However, if merit or bonus pay is not accurately reflected in performance, future employee efforts will be lower (Shoaib et al., 2019). The results from the surveys provided some conflicting remarks. Many individuals acknowledged the presence of bias during the review process. Fifty percent or eight of 16 individuals felt that supervisors used bias during a review.
Only 18.75% strongly agreed, or three out of 16, and 37.50%, or six out of 16 participants, agreed they were motivated by review benefits (e.g., merit increases). In addition, only 12.5%, or two out of 16, indicated that they would perform beyond their job expectations if they were compensated more. These results show that participants felt they would still perform well despite review outcomes.

**Anticipated Themes**

The results of this study confirmed the anticipated themes discovered throughout the literature. The most prominent one is the presence of intrinsic motivation. Survey results indicated that 43.75%, or seven out of 16 people, were self-motivated to perform above and beyond their job expectations. Although the current study focuses on the effects of extrinsic motivators in monetary rewards, research has led to the anticipation of intrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2019). Unlike external motivators, intrinsic motivation stems from within. The building blocks for this internal force are competence, autonomy, and affiliation (Zhang et al., 2019). Participants used phrases such as "I come to work every day to take care of the residents" (Participant 1) and "I take pride in my work regardless of who sees it" (Participant 7).

A second theme is mistrust of the performance review process because of poor supervisor training. One of the primary issues associated with performance management systems is the displeasure related to performance ratings amidst performance appraisal systems (Quinones & Sosa-Fey, 2018). Specifically, untrained managers may choose not to address performance issues as they arise, leading to a more aggressive review process. Lin and Kellough (2019) emphasize the need for supervisors to be trained in the performance appraisal process to make fair and accurate assessments. However, supervisor training in performance appraisal is often neglected and viewed as a relatively low priority (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). The survey results illustrated
that six out of 16 participants felt that supervisors were adequately trained to conduct performance reviews, while eight out of 16 did not. Those interviewed felt that most supervisors did not know what they were doing and were just "going through the motions (Participant 9)." A few acknowledged that at least one of two supervisors consistently observed performance and conducted reviews fairly and accurately.

The last anticipated theme was that performance appraisals are ineffective in managing performance. The significance of appraisal lies in the ability to be used as an accurate measurement tool that motivates employees to voluntarily change their behavior (Kakkar et al., 2020). Many organizations devote significant resources to performance appraisal and performance management systems, but unfortunately, measuring the benefits of these investments is not always clear and straightforward (Murphy, 2020). The literature has also illustrated that appraisals alone do not improve performance. These systems serve as input based on which other practices, such as goal setting, feedback, and rewards, can be altered to change employee behavior (Kakkar et al., 2020).

**The Literature**

Concerning the results of this case study, how individuals determine the value of hard work and what motivates them to perform above-standard job duties becomes evident. The literature is extensive on how performance appraisals improve organizational outcomes and individual performance (De Clercq et al., 2019; Kennedy et al., 2019; Lee, 2019; Morandi et al., 2019; Schjoedt & Shaver, 2020). The most cited theory used to explain the relationship between performance and motivation found in the literature is the self-determination theory (Perkins, 2018). Social exchange and agency theory was also identified as prominent explanations of how performance appraisals can be used to align an organization's interests with
the interests of the employees (Evans & Tourish, 2017). Based on the results, agency theory seems to be at play. Agency theory assumes that people are motivated by self-interest in the form of monetary value unless overridden by intangible forces such as trust, loyalty, and friendship networks (Evans & Tourish, 2017). The results from both the interviews and surveys spoke to how participants were motivated by monetary rewards and intangible forces that intrinsically motivated them to perform well despite review outcomes.

The literature revealed that many employees feel the annual performance review process does not add value to the organization because reviews tend to be untimely and ineffective (Kennedy et al., 2019). This study confirmed those findings and found that most participants were either indifferent to the value of reviews or felt that they were not of much importance. The literature attempted to connect the concept of organizational commitment with performance. Organizational commitment has been used to describe the relationship between staff and the organization (Hoeve et al., 2018). The three-part model driving the discussion surrounding organizational commitment in the literature includes (1) a desire or affective commitment, (2) a need or continuance commitment, and (3) an obligation or a normative commitment (Hoeve et al., 2018). Affective commitment alludes to an individual's sense of belonging, thus fostering a desire to maintain affiliation with the organization. Continuance and normative commitments refer to the need to remain out of obligation, whether that obligation is financially or morally charged.

Research has found that organizational commitment is the primary facilitator between human resource management and work performance (Sepahvand et al., 2020). In healthcare, a solid organizational commitment decreases turnover and improves job productivity and the quality of patient care (Sepahvand et al., 2020). Organizational commitment in terms of
manager-employee communication can be enhanced through an effective performance appraisal process by allowing an exchange of leadership skills, respect/recognition, autonomy and empowerment, and orientation and collaboration (Sepahvand et al., 2020). Organizational commitment is also referred to in the literature as behavior congruent with values, a culture of integrity, and a willingness to devote physical and mental effort to participate in various company activities (Na-Nan et al., 2020). The fairness of work procedures and appraisals positively affected organizational outcomes (Na-Nan et al., 2020). The results from this study indicated participants were committed to their jobs, but they did not appear to have much faith in management as a whole. Interview and survey results pointed to a lack of trust in the supervisor's ability to execute appraisals properly due to inadequate training and not noticing when participants go the extra mile.

The literature also identified a link between performance appraisals and job satisfaction (Bakaç et al., 2022). Studies have shown that job satisfaction strongly correlates with employee performance levels because of the increased morale and passion necessary to execute tasks in the organization's best interest (Zain & Setiawati, 2019). In other words, a satisfied employee will improve their performance in quantity and quality more than an unsatisfied employee (Zain & Setiawati, 2019). Organizations attempt to achieve employee satisfaction through performance-related pay, which requires a formal monitoring process based on managers' judgments, opinions, and evaluations; this process is otherwise known as a performance appraisal system (Pagan & Malo, 2021). However, the literature also noted that performance appraisal systems could lead to unfair treatment, procedural inequalities, and biased evaluations because of supervisor misperceptions and a lack of objectivity during the evaluation process (Pagan & Malo, 2021). This study's results eluded the fact that participants felt more fulfilled when
appropriately compensated and recognized for their efforts. However, more questions explicitly related to this point should have been asked to determine if performance appraisals directly influenced the participants' job satisfaction.

The last relevant concept from the literature was the impact performance appraisals have on individual performance. The literature stated that performance reviews are often used to improve employee performance by providing employees with feedback (Toong, 2019), setting expectations (Baird et al., 2020), and developing goals in line with organizational outcomes (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). A performance appraisal clarifies roles and expectations, allows communication between employees and supervisors, and evokes feelings of trust and fairness regarding evaluating performance (Baird et al., 2020). Reviews also afford the opportunity to implement training and development interventions that teach, instill, and modify competencies, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and behavior through new learning experiences (Mehale et al., 2021). Performance appraisal processes help identify gaps in understanding and execution to implement appropriate training (Mehale et al., 2021). This study did not include discovery questions to prove whether the participants felt that reviews were effectively used as a training tool or to provide constructive feedback.

**Summary of the findings.**

This qualitative study investigates bias's effects on skilled nursing facilities' incentive-based performance review process. A random and anonymous sampling technique surveyed certified nursing assistants (CNAs) across three skilled nursing facilities. Out of the total population (142), 16 people participated in the survey portion of the study, and 12 participated in the interview portion. Performance reviews are significant to human resource management and overall organizational success (Son et al., 2020). Specifically, with the elderly population rising,
the quality of care provided in skill-nursing facilities is more relevant than ever (Ouslander & Grabowski, 2020).

The interviews and surveys were interpreted as four reoccurring themes, intrinsic motivation, lack of trust in supervisor training, motivation from increased compensation, and uniformity in ratings regardless of effort. The themes relate directly to the research questions, conceptual framework, literature, and problem by addressing the perception CNAs have about the performance review process and how that perception influences their motivation to perform well in the future. The results indicate that most participants were motivated to perform well by internal forces (i.e., intrinsic motivation). A lack of trust in supervisor training concluded that participants had little faith in being rated accurately and fairly. However, most responses spoke to participants being motivated by increased compensation.

**Application to Professional Practice**

Organizations are under increased pressure to deliver results transparently and rapidly. The professional practice application for performance appraisals is to provide employees feedback so they can develop and positively contribute to organizational success. Providing regular feedback is a widely accepted management and coaching practice that supports employee engagement, retention, and performance (Rivera et al., 2021). Employee performance appraisal systems also serve as a vital tool for holding individual employees accountable for their actions and act as documentation and justification for future personnel actions or to motivate employees to participate in professional development opportunities (Rubin & Edwards, 2020). The following sections will discuss how performance appraisals can improve general business practice, followed by potential application strategies.
Improving General Business Practice

Organizations often use performance management systems to confront output, efficiency, and effectiveness (Audenaert et al., 2021). From an operations management perspective, performance management systems translate organizational strategy into reality by facilitating target setting, monitoring, and encouraging continuous improvement (de Menezes & Escrig, 2019). Performance management practices impact organizational success by managing employees' effectiveness within their job functions (de Menezes & Escrig, 2019). Using these systems to facilitate the interaction between management and employees may positively influence employee perceptions of work conditions (Meijerink et al., 2021). In addition, these systems also clarify expectations at different levels in the organization and provide feedback from actual records (de Menezes & Escrig, 2019). Performance appraisals are a form of a performance management system that organizations use for three primary reasons: to increase individual employee performance, develop employee abilities, and compensation management (Neher & Maley, 2020).

To improve performance management systems within the organization, a holistic approach that includes formal written processes, monitoring managerial capability, and reviewing a more comprehensive range of performance issues would allow for a more transparent and accurate review process (Hill & Plimmer, 2021). A well-documented review process creates a tangible representation of where an employee is currently performing and how they can better contribute to organizational values (Neher & Maley, 2020). Managers need to be evaluated on a formal and social level. On a formal level, management can be regulated through tracking and reviewing behavior patterns, developing evaluation skills, and holding management accountable for performance outcomes (Hill & Plimmer, 2021). Informal aspects include
monitoring a manager's values and opinion on career development or feedback impact review outcomes and adhering to the changing and fluid nature of the organization's goals (Neher & Maley, 2020). The topics covered during the review process and the relationship fostered play a significant role in employee satisfaction (Neher & Maley, 2020). According to Atatsi et al. (2019), the supervisor and employee's positive connections can promote employee performance, flexibility, devotion, and responsibility. These positive connections are defined by trust, open communication, and sharing of job responsibilities (Atatsi et al., 2019).

The authentic leader's leader-member exchange (LMX) has surfaced multiple times throughout recent literature (Duarte et al., 2021; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Strom, 2020). LMX focuses on the quality of the relationship between leader and their followers. The manager is not considered different than an employee. Authentic leaders are hopeful, optimistic, confident, and ethical and prioritize their subordinate's career development (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). Authentic leaders promote self-awareness, balanced processing, moral perspective, and transparency, resulting in many positive outcomes, such as organizational trust and competent performance at work (Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). Thus, improved work performance is contingent upon organizations paying closer attention to system design and managerial capability. Social exchange theory was used at the individual performance level to explain why individuals who perceive authentic leadership develop a feeling of obligation to reciprocate with improved performance (Asad et al., 2021). Social exchange theory is discussed in more detail in the anticipated themes section.

**Potential Application Strategies**

Generally, two interlinked mediators drive organizational performance: leadership quality and individual employee performance (Lappalainen et al., 2019). If this is true, organizations
should be able to enhance their performance by investing in ways to improve leadership improving individual performance (Zheng et al., 2020). Elaborating on that thought, if the organization can improve individual performance, they should also be able to manage their resources more effectively (i.e., compensation structures). This study highlights an area for improvement among leaders during the performance management process and in general. This study also shows how individual performance can be affected by the perception of leadership abilities. The potential application strategies of this study include ways to improve leadership, manage individual performance, and the importance of compensation management.

**Improving Leadership**

First and foremost, leaders must act with integrity. Perceived integrity in leadership is positively associated with organizational performance for three main reasons. First, it positively impacts employees' trust in their leaders (Wei et al., 2019). Trust in leadership directly affects individual employee work engagement and job satisfaction and commitment, which may increase employee performance (Wei et al., 2019). Second, leaders perceived as fair, objective, and incorruptible are more likely to attract, retain, and promote capable and talented employees (Wei et al., 2019). Third, leaders who use fair and objective methods for decision-making do not seem corrupt or self-serving, while leaders who are biased, corrupted, or unfair lead individuals to feel a sense of inequity and discrimination (Zheng et al., 2020). In addition, research has argued that leaders with higher expertise and skills are more likely to earn credit with followers and motivate them to engage with high service standards (Zheng et al., 2020). Thus, organizations can improve leadership by investing in leaders with integrity and equipping them with the tools to provide higher skills and guidance.

**Managing Individual Employee Performance**
Research has established that employee performance management can increase organizational success if appropriately executed by aligning individual performance with desired outcomes (Blackman et al., 2019). Regarding application, organizations have been using pay-for-performance systems to manage the efforts of their staff. Previous research has shown that clarity and alignment of organizational goals and individual roles are essential for developing high performance (Blackman et al., 2019). The objective of this study was not to abolish performance appraisals but rather to make them more effective. This starts with leadership. Various leadership styles have been proposed as a way for leaders to view employees as human beings (Lappalainen et al., 2019). In addition to the authentic leader, transformational leadership has been advocated as a leadership style based on the consideration that employees are unique and respond to different types of stimuli (Lappalainen et al., 2019).

**Compensation Management**

Compensation systems play a substantial role in upholding an organization's strategic goals (Ashraf, 2020). Compensation is usually managed in two ways, staff management and function management (CCP, 2021). How leaders execute essential functions like hiring, firing, assessing performance, making staff pay decisions, assigning work, training and developing, and ensuring that employees get their work done correctly makes a difference in how adequate monetary resources are extended. The more effective leaders manage those functional areas, the more influential the organizational resources (CCP, 2021). Compensation management can be approached from three directions pay for position, pay for a person, and pay for performance (Ashraf, 2020).

The traditional or job-based approach to compensation management employs the following steps to develop structure: 1. Provide job analysis for all the jobs or positions within an
organization; 2. develop the job description (JD) for all positions; 3. carry out job evaluation for
these positions by following a systematic method; 4. derive a hierarchy of positions as per job
evaluations; and 5. prepare a compensation structure based on the resulting hierarchy (Ashraf,
2020). Pay for a person is otherwise known as skill-based compensation. Under this approach to
pay, an individual's compensation is determined by the skills possessed; salary is determined by
job-related knowledge, skill, and abilities acquired by an employee (Ashraf, 2020). The pay-for-
performance approach to compensation management is fairly fixed, focusing on incentives, merit
pay, and merit bonus (Ponta & Cainarca, 2020). Performance appraisals are the most common
means of establishing validation for these forms of compensation.

**Summary of Application to Professional Practice**

In summary, the professional application of this study is to improve performance
management systems. Organizations can use this study to improve leadership and manage
individual performance and compensation. Ethical and virtuous leaders demonstrate appropriate
conduct through personal actions, interpersonal relationships, and two-way communication
(Nassif et al., 2020). This type of leadership fosters an environment where performance
management is continuous and effective. These leaders successfully manage individual
performance, which inevitably helps regulate compensation based on effort. Hence, they
effectively provide constructive feedback to employees to help them grow in a direction that
leads to organizational success.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the results of this study, further research should be done to determine why the
results from the interviews somewhat conflicted with the results from the survey—specifically
concerning internal and external motivators. The literature spoke to the motivation continuum;
however, more research should be done to determine how placement on that continuum impacts future performance. In addition, more research should be done on the participants' future performance to determine if their assertions are true. Many spoke about not letting performance reviews dictate their performance, but due to the limitations of this study, those statements could not be verified.

**Reflections**

As with any vast undertaking, reflection on the experience to identify what can be learned from the event should occur. The Gibbs model of reflection is based on a continuum that begins with explaining what happened, covers one's thoughts and feelings, and evaluates the positives and negatives of the experience (Markkanen et al., 2020). The model tries to make sense of the situation and forms conclusions that lead to a plan of action based on what was learned (Markkanen et al., 2020). Reflecting on the experience of completing a Doctorate of Business Administration at Liberty University calls for me to follow these steps personally and professionally.

**Personal and Professional Growth**

On a personal level, completing this study and program has allowed me to give a voice to those who often go unheard, which is a tremendous honor. This research project has provided personal growth for me because I was able to fulfill the personal goal of obtaining my doctorate so that one day I might use the degree to advance my career in higher education. Reaching this point feels like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders and that I am one step closer to fulfilling God's plan for my life. I feel that God has called me to lead others by example, both inside and outside the workplace. This experience has brought to light how harmful ineffective HR practices can be, but I have also observed some astounding resilience that rises above the
evils of this world. I have witnessed how the Holy Spirit moves people to excel at what they do despite external rewards or the views of others. That observation has made me want to be a better performer for God.

On a professional level as a Human resources administrator, this program has enhanced my abilities to advise supervisors on how to execute performance appraisals more effectively. The performance management system within my current organization leads to rewards; however, the system does not allow for the continuous feedback that has been identified as the most impactful method of managing performance (Rivera et al., 2021). This study has revealed the significance of trust in performance management systems' success. Performance appraisals should be a time of reflection, not surprises (Rivera et al., 2021). The ability to coach supervisors on the importance of communication and see the resulting transformation in the staff makes me an invaluable asset to my organization. A Christ-based program such as the one offered by Liberty University adds a component to my approach to work that cannot be learned on the job.

**Biblical Perspective**

Human resources can profoundly influence the functionality of a business, specifically how the employees within an organization view and respond to their work environment. A Christian worldview should profoundly influence how we interact and operate in the world. Organizations that focus on integrity align with what God meant for work, which is for our work to reflect His grace and mercy. Consider the following verse concerning work, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (John McArthur Study Bible, 2013, Colossians 3:23-24). This verse speaks to our reward in heaven and not on Earth. We receive temporary gratification from our work here on
Earth, and if that becomes our sole driver for performing well, we will always be chasing that fleeting feeling. We are instructed to do what we do not for human matters but for the inheritance we will receive from the Lord in heaven.

God created each of us uniquely so that we may use our gifts to serve Him and fulfill the purpose for which He created us. No human being is the same, and through those differences, we can make individual and distinct impacts on this earth. Just as the church can be seen as a working body that has a purpose for which we are each apart, we can see our jobs as a piece of a corporate body that would not be able to function correctly without our contribution. Human resource managers take on the responsibility of cultivating individual talents within an organization so that those individuals can perform at their highest potential. "Who will harm you if you are eager to do good?" (John McArthur Study Bible, 2013, 1 Peter 3:13). When we embody this truth, we can begin to achieve our purpose in life and bring God glory. God sees work as a pleasing and necessary aspect of creation, and He calls us to be cultivators of His creation. Even God's first creation of man was called to the duty of cultivating the garden, "to work it and take care of it" (John McArthur Study Bible, 2013, Genesis 2:15). God has called us to serve from wherever we are. We should not wait for optimal circumstances before we start serving others because God has already provided all that we need to execute His purpose for our lives. We can use our tools to serve others by building them up despite our strengths or weaknesses.

**Summary of Reflections**

In conclusion, this study examined how the perception of bias during performance reviews influenced the performance of CNAs in three Promedica skilled nursing facilities in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area. The results from this study can help HR professionals identify
areas needing development within their current performance management systems. Specifically, HR professionals can apply the concepts from this study to enhance the functionality of their leaders so that their administration of reviews benefits the employee-supervisor relationship and organizational outcomes. Some additional areas can be studied to further understand bias's long-term impact during the performance review process. Reflecting on this undertaking has led the researcher to a place of accomplishment and expertise that others can share to evoke lasting change.

**Summary of Section 3**

The problems found throughout the literature regarding performance appraisal systems tended to focus on the basis and impact of performance and motivation. The personal bias of supervisors directly deteriorates employees' performance, leading to job dissatisfaction, and ultimately affecting organizational performance (Wei et al., 2019). Generally, employees feel unfairly treated when considering how these biases influence their promotions and career path progressions. Supervisors who treat annual performance appraisals as an extra workload do not give justice to employees' efforts throughout the year (Wei et al., 2019). This case study revealed that participants identified unfair treatment during the performance reviews within three Promedic skilled-nursing facilities. Although that perception did not directly influence the motivation to perform well, participants were aware of biases and did not trust supervisors' abilities during execution.

Pay-for-performance models assume that goals are associated with positive effects when met with success or positively reinforced behaviors (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). However, pay for performance reviews fail as a motivator if unfairness is perceived during the research phase of this study, and the anticipation of such perceptions will lead to a lack of motivation;
however, the results from the current study contradicted the findings in the literature by reflecting intrinsic motivation as a significant driving force for performance. Participants said that their performance would not change regardless of review outcomes because they perform well for inner satisfaction and a sense of pride.

Reflecting on this study, the results did not follow the natural progression outlined in the conceptual framework found in Figure 11. Based on that model, when CNAs perceive bias, they should feel that their efforts do not match the reward and become less motivated to perform well. The results indicated that even though CNAs perceived bias and felt that their rewards did not match their efforts, their motivation for future performance was unchanged due to stronger intrinsic motivators. The time constraints of this study leave room for further research. Monitoring the participants long-term would determine if their statements from the interviews and surveys were factual. If their statements are accurate additional results should reveal positive review outcomes in the future; however, if supervisor bias is still present, those results may be skewed.

**Summary and Study Conclusions**

Qualitative research has the potential to reveal why people behave the way they do (Abdalla et al., 2018). This study attempted to explain how the behavior of CNAs changed based on the perception that bias was present during the performance review process. Section one discussed the foundation of the study, which included the background to the problem, a discussion of the research paradigm selected, a conceptual framework, and an extensive literature review that revealed the prominent themes found in previous research. After conducting this study, some of the discovered themes were identified in the results; however, more research
should be done to determine whether statements were truthful and how future performance is altered over time.

Section two included a detailed discussion about the role of the researcher, the research methodology used, and how the participants and analysis were conducted. This section provided the reader with an explanation for why the research was done, including how and why specific actions were taken to rule out researcher bias. The information from this section provides the reader with the systematic process used to increase the reliability and validity of the research. Sound research is essential to advance the information going out into the field and ensure that research is conducted ethically, preserving the integrity of the participants and researcher (Farquhar et al., 2020). Without reliability and validity tactics that can be proven, the research conducted cannot be defended.

Section three comprised the information gathered during the research process and how those results related to every component before field research. The results from both the interviews and the surveys were visually presented and discussed in detail. Some of the themes discovered from the results were identified in the literature before the research. For example, intrinsic motivation was found countless times throughout the literature and was one of the interview and survey results' reoccurring themes. In addition, there was a lack of trust in supervisor training, which was closely related to the literature that identified a lack of trust in the performance review execution. What can be taken away from this study is that organizations can improve their current incentive-based performance reviews by applying the information presented in this study. First, organizations can use this information to improve their leadership. Most actions in the workplace are initiated and monitored by supervisors; thus, they should have the resources and training to be effective employees and have elements of servant leadership.
present in their character. Second, an organization can improve individual employee performance by ensuring that performance is accurately documented. Lastly, organizations can improve their compensation management structure because rewards will be given more effectively and only to those deserving.
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Appendix A: Interview Guide

RQ1: What forms of bias do supervisors use when conducting performance reviews?

RQ1a: How does a supervisor’s use of bias influence an employee’s performance motivation?

1. What does the term bias mean to you?
   a. What types of biases do you feel are present?
   b. Why do you think supervisors are using bias?
   c. If not, why do you think supervisors do not use bias?

2. How do you feel about the current performance review process?
   a. What makes you feel reviews are fair or unfair?
   b. What makes you feel your performance review results are accurate or inaccurate?
   c. How does feeling you are rated with bias affect your willingness to perform well?
   d. What motivates you to perform well?

3. How well do you feel that supervisors conducting reviews understand your performance?
   a. How would you rate your performance?
   b. How did your supervisor rate your performance on your most recent review?
   c. How does your rating affect your willingness to show supervisors you perform well?

RQ2: How do monetary incentive amounts reflect performance efforts?
1. How do incentive amounts affect your anticipation of performance reviews?
   a. What incentive amount would make performing well worth the effort?
      i. Why?
   b. Would you be less likely to perform well if you knew your efforts would not affect your incentive amount?
      i. Why?
   c. Do you think everyone gets the same pay increase regardless of their effort?
      i. What makes you think that?

RQ3: How does an incentive-based performance review motivate future performance?

1. How would a negative review make you feel about your performance?
2. How does a positive review make you feel about your performance?
Appendix B: Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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Please circle the number that correlates with your response to each statement. Answer the following questions based on your experiences with the current performance review process.

1. Performance reviews are fair and accurate.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Supervisors are trained in performance review execution.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. I don’t feel supervisors use bias during the performance review process.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. The benefits (i.e., merit increases, promotions) I could receive are worth performing well.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. Supervisors don’t notice when I go the extra mile.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. I would perform above and beyond my job expectations if I were compensated.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. I am self-motivated to perform above and beyond my job expectations.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Performance reviews motivate me to perform better.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Performance reviews don’t mean much.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Everyone gets the same pay increase regardless of their performance.
    1 2 3 4 5