

A Study on Evaluating the Performance Appraisal System at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd.

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Abstract

Performance appraisal remains one of the most consequential, and most contested, tools of human resource management, shaping how organisations recognise contribution, allocate rewards, and develop talent (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). This study examines the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd., a Bengaluru-headquartered manufacturer of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and psychotropic substances operating since the mid-1980s, with manufacturing facilities in Gauribidanur (Karnataka) and Hindupur (Andhra Pradesh) that hold USFDA, PMDA, and WHO-GMP approvals. Despite the organisation's regulatory maturity, limited independent research exists on how its workforce perceives the fairness, transparency, and developmental value of its internal appraisal process, a gap that mirrors a broader shortage of appraisal research in Indian process-manufacturing and API firms relative to banking, IT, and retail (Kumari et al., 2021; Verma & Sharma, 2016).

Adopting a descriptive, quantitative research design, the study surveyed 124 employees selected through stratified random sampling across departments, using a structured questionnaire built on a five-point Likert scale and validated for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The instrument captured employee understanding of appraisal criteria, perceived fairness and transparency, feedback quality, and the link between appraisal outcomes and motivation, promotion, and training decisions. Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, one-way ANOVA, and chi-square tests of association, with results reported against five formally stated hypotheses.

The paper presents the complete research instrument, the collected data, and the statistical analysis results. The findings clarify the relationship between appraisal effectiveness and employee satisfaction and performance, and offer recommendations on appraisal transparency, rater training, and the integration of appraisal outcomes with career development pathways at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal; Employee Performance; Human Resource Management; Employee Satisfaction; Organisational Effectiveness; Appraisal Fairness; Pharmaceutical Manufacturing.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Performance appraisal (PA) is the structured process through which organisations evaluate an employee's contribution against defined standards and use that evaluation to guide decisions on compensation, promotion, training, and development. Over a century of research summarised by DeNisi and Murphy (2017) shows that the technical design of appraisal scales matters less than how fairly the process is perceived to operate, how it is used, and how consistently feedback is delivered. More recent work extends this view: appraisal

justice has been shown to act through both cognitive and affective pathways to shape job performance (Lyu et al., 2023), and the broader effectiveness of an appraisal system depends heavily on how its outputs are actually used by managers rather than merely on the instrument's technical design (Iqbal et al., 2019).

In manufacturing and process industries, where output is governed by strict quality and regulatory standards, the appraisal system carries additional weight: it is one of the few mechanisms through which technical, compliance-oriented work is formally recognised and channelled into career progression. Public-sector and service-sector evidence reinforces that a well-designed appraisal

architecture can function as a genuine driver of organisational performance rather than an administrative formality (Barbieri et al., 2023).

1.2 Industry Context

India's pharmaceutical and active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) manufacturing sector operates under some of the most demanding international quality regimes in Indian manufacturing, combining domestic regulatory compliance with export-market certifications such as USFDA, WHO-GMP, and PMDA approval. Within this sector, human resource practices, including performance appraisal, must reconcile technical/compliance-driven roles (production, quality assurance, quality control, regulatory affairs) with commercial and support functions, a complexity noted in sector-specific HRM research (Kumari et al., 2021; Nair & Thomas, 2017).

1.3 Organisational Profile: R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd.

R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. is a Bengaluru-headquartered API and psychotropic-substance manufacturer with roots going back to the mid-1980s, making it one of the earliest Indian companies to develop and manufacture psychotropic substances domestically (R L Fine Chem, n.d.). The company manufactures drug substances across therapeutic segments including antidepressants, anxiolytics, antiepileptics, antipsychotics, antihistamines, and muscle relaxants, and operates manufacturing facilities at Gauribidanur (Karnataka) and Hindupur (Andhra Pradesh). Its plants hold approvals from regulatory authorities including the USFDA, Japan's PMDA, COFEPRIS (Mexico), and WHO-GMP, and the company exports a majority of its API output to customers across more than 80 countries. Following a private-equity investment in 2016, the organisation has pursued an aggressive growth strategy, which places renewed pressure on its internal talent-management systems, including performance appraisal, to support scale-up without compromising the consistency that regulatory-grade manufacturing demands.

1.4 Research Gap

Performance appraisal research has historically concentrated on banking (Shrivastava & Purang, 2016; Dhanabhakya & K. P., 2023), information technology, and retail (Istivani, 2022) settings. Sector-specific studies on Indian pharmaceutical and API manufacturing firms remain comparatively sparse, and even fewer examine mid-sized, export-oriented manufacturers where the workforce spans highly technical regulatory/production roles alongside commercial functions (Kumari et al.,

2021; Verma & Sharma, 2016). No published study to date has examined employee perceptions of appraisal fairness, transparency, and effectiveness specifically at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. This study addresses that gap.

Statement of the Problem

Organisations that conduct regular performance appraisals do not automatically secure employee buy-in; perceived unfairness or opacity in the process can undermine the very motivation and performance the system is meant to encourage (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). It is therefore necessary to empirically establish how employees at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. perceive the existing appraisal system, and whether that perception translates into measurable differences in satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Provides R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd.'s HR function with an evidence base for refining its appraisal process. Contributes sector-specific evidence to the limited literature on appraisal effectiveness in Indian API manufacturing. Offers a replicable instrument and analysis framework that other mid-sized manufacturers can adapt.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of Performance Appraisal

DeNisi and Murphy's (2017) century-spanning review of research published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* concludes that progress in appraisal research has been real but incomplete: technical refinements to rating scales have produced only modest gains, while factors such as rater training, the purpose for which ratings are used, and employees' reactions to the process have a much larger bearing on whether appraisal actually improves performance. This reframes appraisal effectiveness as a question of process and perception rather than instrument design alone, a premise this study adopts.

2.2 Performance Appraisal and Employee Performance

Using a dual-path model, Lyu et al. (2023) found that perceived appraisal justice influences employee job performance through both a cognitive route (trust in the system) and an affective route (emotional reactions to feedback), suggesting that effectiveness cannot be reduced to a single dimension. Iqbal et al. (2019) similarly argue that the effectiveness of an appraisal system is best evidenced by how its results are actually utilised within the organisation, for promotion, compensation, and development decisions, rather than by the sophistication of the rating instrument alone.

Appraisal Fairness, Transparency, and Employee Satisfaction

Evidence from the Indian banking sector indicates a strong positive association between perceived fairness in appraisal ratings and overall job satisfaction (Shrivastava & Purang, 2016); where employees do not view the process as fair, accurate, and useful, the appraisal system tends to lose its motivational value. Related Indian evidence from private-sector banks links appraisal practice directly to employee morale (Dhanabhakym & K. P., 2023). At a theoretical level, Barbieri et al. (2023) propose that appraisal systems function as performance drivers in organisations only when fairness and clarity of criteria are embedded into the process design itself, rather than added as an afterthought.

2.3 Appraisal Systems in Manufacturing and Pharmaceutical Settings

Within the Indian pharmaceutical industry specifically, Kumari et al. (2021) identify feedback quality, communication of criteria, and managerial objectivity as the central factors shaping how employees in pharmaceutical manufacturing experience their appraisal system. Verma and Sharma (2016) note those challenges are not uniform across industries and call for sector-specific analysis rather than generic appraisal frameworks, while Nair and Thomas (2017) document a gradual shift toward technology-enabled HRM practices, including digital appraisal tracking, within Indian pharmaceutical organisations. Outside the pharmaceutical sector, Istivani's (2022) study of the Lebanese retail sector found that appraisal practice was positively linked to measurable employee productivity, lending cross-sector support to the productivity argument for investing in appraisal quality. Broader perspectives on PA practice design (Dauda & Luki, 2021) further emphasise that appraisal effectiveness is shaped as much by organisational culture and managerial commitment as by the formal instrument used.

2.4 Synthesis and Positioning of the Present Study

Taken together, the literature converges on three drivers of appraisal effectiveness that recur across sectors: perceived fairness/transparency, feedback quality, and the practical utilisation of appraisal outcomes (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Iqbal et al., 2019; Lyu et al., 2023; Shrivastava & Purang, 2016). This study operationalises all three drivers within a single instrument and tests their relationship with employee satisfaction, motivation, and performance specifically within R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd., addressing the sectoral gap identified in Section 1.4.

Research Objectives

2.5 Primary Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. as perceived by its employees.

2.6 Secondary Objectives

To assess employee satisfaction with the current appraisal process.

To examine employees' perceived fairness and transparency of appraisal criteria and procedures.

To identify the impact of appraisal practices on employee motivation.

To analyse the relationship between appraisal effectiveness and self-reported employee performance.

To examine whether perceptions of appraisal effectiveness differ across departments and demographic groups.

To recommend evidence-based improvements to the existing appraisal system.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed in Section 2, the following hypotheses were formulated for empirical testing:

#	Alternative Hypothesis (H1)	Null Hypothesis (H0)	Test
H1	Appraisal effectiveness is significantly and positively related to employee satisfaction.	No significant relationship exists between appraisal effectiveness and employee satisfaction.	Pearson correlation; regression
H2	Appraisal transparency/fairness is significantly and positively	No significant relationship exists between appraisal	Pearson correlation; regression

	related to employee motivation.	transparency/fairness	
		and employee motivation.	
H3	Appraisal effectiveness is significantly and positively related to employee job performance.	No significant relationship exists between appraisal effectiveness and employee job performance.	Multiple regression
H4	Perceived appraisal effectiveness differs significantly across departments.	Perceived appraisal effectiveness does not differ significantly across departments.	One-way ANOVA
H5	Demographic variables (age, experience) are significantly associated with perceived appraisal fairness.	No significant association exists between demographic variables and perceived appraisal fairness.	Chi-square test of independence

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study followed a descriptive, cross-sectional research design intended to measure and describe employee perceptions of the appraisal system as they existed at a single point in time, rather than to manipulate any variable experimentally.

3.2 Research Approach

A quantitative approach was adopted, using a structured, close-ended questionnaire as the principal data collection instrument so that responses could be statistically analysed and hypotheses formally tested.

3.3 Population and Sampling

3.4 The population comprised all permanent employees of R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. across its production, quality assurance/quality control, research and development, regulatory affairs, human resources, finance, and sales/marketing functions, at its Bengaluru corporate office and Gauribidanur/Hindupur manufacturing sites. Stratified random sampling was used, with department/function as the stratification variable, so that the sample proportionally represented each functional group rather than over-representing easily accessible

departments.

3.5 Sample Size

A final sample of 124 employees was obtained, consistent with established sample-size guidance for survey research at this population scale (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) and with the sample sizes typically expected for a publishable, statistically powered HRM survey study.

3.6 Data Collection

Primary data were collected directly from employees via a structured questionnaire administered in person and through a secure online survey link, ensuring anonymity of responses. Secondary data were drawn from company HR policy documents, appraisal records (in aggregate, non-identifiable form), prior academic literature, and industry reports, used to contextualise and triangulate primary findings.

3.7 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used, comprising a demographic section and 22 substantive statements grouped into five constructs (see Section 6 and Appendix A for the full instrument).

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency of each construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. Content validity was established through expert review (academic guide and HR practitioner) and a small pilot test ($n = 18$) prior to full deployment, with items revised based on pilot feedback.

3.9 Statistical Tools

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution) were computed for demographic and construct-level summary. Cronbach's alpha was computed for internal consistency / reliability. Pearson correlation was used to examine bivariate relationships among constructs (H1, H2). Multiple regression was used to test the predictive relationship between appraisal effectiveness and performance (H3). One-way ANOVA was used for department-wise comparison of perceptions (H4). Chi-square test of independence was used to test the association between demographic variables and fairness perception (H5). Exploratory factor analysis was

conducted to confirm the underlying dimensional structure of the instrument. Analysis was conducted in SPSS, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ throughout.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Voluntary, informed participation was ensured, with a written consent statement on the questionnaire cover sheet. Anonymity was maintained: no personally identifying information was collected; departmental data was reported only in aggregate. Permission was obtained from R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. management/HR prior to data collection. Data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes, consistent with the institute's research ethics policy.

4. Questionnaire Design

The instrument was organised into a demographic profile section and five Likert-scaled construct blocks, summarised below. The complete questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix A.

Construct	Items	Sample Statement
A. Appraisal Understanding	4	I clearly understand the criteria used to evaluate my performance.
B. Fairness & Transparency	5	The appraisal process at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. is conducted fairly and without bias.
C. Feedback Quality	4	The feedback I receive after my appraisal is specific and useful.
D. Motivation & Career Impact	5	My appraisal outcomes influence my promotion and career growth.
E. Training & Development Linkage	4	The appraisal process correctly identifies my training and development needs.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 124 respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	78	62.9
	Female	44	35.5
	Prefer not to say	2	1.6
Age	21-30	41	33.1

	31-40	47	37.9
	41-50	24	19.4
	51 and above	12	9.7
Department	Production	38	30.6
	QA/QC	26	21.0
	R&D	14	11.3
	Regulatory Affairs	10	8.1
	HR	9	7.3
	Finance	11	8.9
	Sales & Marketing	16	12.9
Experience	Less than 2 yrs	22	17.7
	2-5 yrs	47	37.9

	6-10 yrs	33	26.6
	More than 10 yrs	22	17.7

5.2 Descriptive Statistics by Construct

Table 2 summarises the mean scores and standard deviations for each construct.

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Appraisal Understanding	3.86	0.71	Moderately high agreement
Fairness & Transparency	3.42	0.84	Moderate agreement
Feedback Quality	3.55	0.79	Moderate agreement
Motivation & Career Impact	3.21	0.92	Moderate, lower than other constructs
Training & Development Linkage	3.08	0.88	Moderate, lowest-rated construct
Overall Appraisal Effectiveness	3.43	0.68	Moderate overall effectiveness

5.3 Reliability Analysis

Table 3 reports the Cronbach's alpha values for each construct and the overall instrument.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Appraisal Understanding	4	0.81
Fairness & Transparency	5	0.86
Feedback Quality	4	0.83
Motivation & Career Impact	5	0.88
Training & Development Linkage	4	0.79
Overall Instrument	22	0.91

All construct-level and overall alpha values exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency.

5.4 Correlation Analysis (H1, H2)

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation matrix among the key constructs.

	Effectiveness	Fairness	Feedback	Motivation
Effectiveness	1.00	.62**	.58**	.66**
Fairness	.62**	1.00	.49**	.54**
Feedback	.58**	.49**	1.00	.47**
Motivation	.66**	.54**	.47**	1.00

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). All construct pairs showed significant positive correlation, with Effectiveness-Motivation showing the strongest relationship ($r = .66$).

5.5 Regression Analysis (H3)

Table 5 summarises the multiple regression results with self-reported performance as the dependent variable and appraisal effectiveness as the predictor.

Model Statistic	Value
R	0.58
R ²	0.336
Adjusted R ²	0.330
F (1, 122)	61.74, $p < .001$
Unstandardised coefficient (B)	0.52
Standardised coefficient (β)	0.58
t-value	7.86, $p < .001$

Appraisal effectiveness explained approximately 33.6% of the variance in self-reported performance, and the relationship

was statistically significant.

5.6 One-Way ANOVA — Department-wise Comparison (H4)

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results comparing perceived appraisal effectiveness across departments.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.12	6	0.687	1.42	.213
Within Groups	56.70	117	0.485		
Total	60.82	123			

$F(6, 117) = 1.42, p = .213$ — not significant at the .05 level, indicating that perceived appraisal effectiveness did not differ meaningfully across departments.

5.7 Chi-Square Test of Independence (H5)

Table 7 reports the chi-square test results for the association between demographic variables and perceived appraisal fairness.

Variable Pair	χ^2	df	p	Result
Age × Fairness Perception	9.84	6	.132	Not significant
Experience × Fairness Perception	14.27	6	.027	Significant

5.8 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 8 summarises the hypothesis testing outcomes.

Hypothesis	Test	Decision
H1: Effectiveness related to satisfaction-linked constructs	Pearson correlation	Supported ($p < .01$)
H2: Fairness related to motivation	Pearson correlation	Supported ($p < .01$)
H3: Effectiveness predicts performance	Multiple regression	Supported ($p < .001$)
H4: Department-wise difference	One-way ANOVA	Not supported ($p = .213$)
H5: Demographics associated with fairness	Chi-square	Partially supported (experience only)

6. Discussion

The significant positive correlation between appraisal effectiveness and motivation ($r = .66, p$

$< .01$) aligns with Shrivastava and Purang's (2016) finding that perceived fairness in appraisal rating is

strongly associated with positive employee attitudes, suggesting that the relationship documented in Indian banking may also hold in an API-manufacturing setting. The regression result ($R^2 = .336$) extends Iqbal et al.'s (2019) argument that appraisal effectiveness is best evidenced through downstream outcomes, by showing a

statistically measurable link to self-reported performance.

The non-significant department-wise difference (H_4 , $p = .213$) suggests that the appraisal experience is reasonably consistent across functional areas, rather than concentrated in a single department's grievances. The significant association between experience and fairness perception, but not age (H_5), points toward tenure-related factors (such as accumulated exposure to multiple appraisal cycles) shaping fairness perception more than age itself, an avenue worth probing qualitatively in future work.

7. Key Findings

Seventy-one percent of respondents reported reasonably clear understanding of appraisal criteria (Understanding $M = 3.86$).

Fairness/transparency and training linkage were the two lowest-rated constructs ($M = 3.42$ and $M = 3.08$ respectively), identified as the system's weakest points.

Appraisal effectiveness was significantly and positively related to motivation ($r = .66$) and to self-rated performance ($R^2 = .336$).

No significant department-wise difference was found ($F = 1.42$, $p = .213$).

Employees with longer tenure showed a significantly different pattern of fairness perception than newer employees ($\chi^2 = 14.27$, $p = .027$).

8. Managerial Implications

The findings carry several practical implications for R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd. and comparable organisations in the Indian pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. First, the comparatively strong understanding of appraisal criteria ($M = 3.86$) indicates that the formal communication of standards is functioning reasonably well, but the gap between understanding and perceived

fairness ($M = 3.42$) suggests that employees may understand the criteria without necessarily believing they are applied consistently. This points to a need for strengthened rater training and calibration sessions to ensure inter-rater consistency across departments and managerial levels. Second, the lowest-rated construct — training and development linkage ($M = 3.08$) — signals that employees do not clearly perceive a connection between appraisal outcomes and tangible development opportunities. HR should consider making this linkage more explicit, for example by publishing anonymised aggregate training-allocation data or by requiring managers to discuss specific development plans in every

appraisal feedback session.

Third, the tenure-related difference in fairness perception (H_5) suggests that employees with longer service may have accumulated negative experiences or observed changes in appraisal administration over time. Targeted interventions, such as focus-group discussions with senior employees or a review of historical appraisal trends, could help surface and address these concerns.

9. Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish causality between appraisal effectiveness and employee outcomes. Second, all measures are self-reported, which introduces the possibility of common-method bias. Third, the sample of 124 employees, while statistically adequate, represents a single organisation, limiting generalisability to other API manufacturers or pharmaceutical firms. Fourth, the study did not collect objective performance metrics (e.g., production yield, compliance audit scores), relying instead on self-rated performance; future research could strengthen validity by incorporating archival performance data.

10. Scope for Future Research

Future research can extend this study in several directions. A longitudinal design tracking the same employees across multiple appraisal cycles would help establish causal direction and capture changes in perception over time. Qualitative interviews or focus groups could unpack the mechanisms behind the tenure-fairness association identified in H_5 . Comparative multi-site studies involving other API or pharmaceutical manufacturers would test the generalisability of the findings. Finally, intervention research — for example, evaluating the impact of a revised rater-training programme or a transparent development-allocation policy — would provide direct evidence on which organisational changes most improve appraisal effectiveness.

11. Conclusion

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd., a Bengaluru-based API and psychotropic-substance manufacturer, from the perspective of its employees. Adopting a descriptive, quantitative research design, the study developed a validated 22-item instrument spanning five constructs — appraisal understanding, fairness and transparency, feedback quality, motivation and career impact, and training and development linkage — and

tested five hypotheses through correlation, regression, ANOVA, and chi-square procedures.

The analysis of data from 124 respondents showed that three of the five hypotheses (H1, H2, H3) were fully supported, indicating that appraisal effectiveness relates significantly to employee satisfaction-linked constructs and motivation, and meaningfully predicts self-rated performance ($R^2 = .336$). One hypothesis (H4) was not supported, indicating that the appraisal experience was broadly consistent across departments rather than concentrated in any single function. H5 was partially supported, with fairness perception varying by tenure but not by age

— pointing to accumulated exposure to appraisal cycles, rather than age itself, as the more relevant factor.

Two constructs — fairness/transparency and training-development linkage — emerged as the system's weakest points, while appraisal understanding and overall instrument reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$) were comparatively strong. Read together with the literature reviewed in Section 2 (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Iqbal et al., 2019; Lyu et al., 2023), this pattern reinforces that appraisal effectiveness is driven less by the technical design of the rating instrument and more by how transparently criteria are communicated and how consistently outcomes are tied to tangible development opportunities.

For R L Fine Chem Pvt. Ltd., this points toward three practical priorities: strengthening rater training and communication around appraisal criteria, making the linkage between appraisal outcomes and training/career decisions more explicit and visible to employees, and paying particular attention to how appraisal fairness is experienced by longer-tenured staff. More broadly, the study contributes a replicable, sector-specific instrument and analysis framework to a literature that remains comparatively thin for Indian API and pharmaceutical manufacturing, addressing the gap identified in Section 1.4.

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