Understanding Department of Defense Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisals: Making a Connection Between Performance Appraisals and Motivation

by

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Understanding Department of Defense Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisals: Making a Connection Between Performance Appraisals and Motivation

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The purpose of this study was to examine employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and to examine potential connections between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation and ultimately turnover intent. There is a paucity of qualitative, interview-based research focused on DoD employee perceptions of DoD performance appraisal processes and potential impacts on their motivation and turnover intent. The research study findings revealed a potential gap between the DoD performance appraisal process as outlined in DoD regulatory guidance and the lived experiences of the performance appraisal process by DoD employees. The study did not find significant evidence of a relationship between the DoD performance appraisal process and employee motivation and challenged the literature findings of a significant connection between the DoD performance appraisal process and employee turnover intent. The research
findings indicated a significant connection between organizational commitment and turnover intentions in the Department of Defense.

*Keywords*: performance appraisal, DoD, civilian, employee engagement, organizational commitment, turnover intent, employee motivation
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beautiful wife, Donna Welch. Donna is my best friend, a fellow Soldier, and the love of my life. She has supported me throughout this program as a motivator and a superb editor. Donna and I have shared many memories all over the world, including a Thanksgiving meal in Baghdad, Iraq, horseback racing in China and our wedding in Jamaica. I could not have successfully completed this program without her unwavering support and faithful companionship. I also dedicate this work to my newborn son, Kenneth Welch. I cannot express the joy that he and my wife have brought to my life. I pray that I will serve as an example for him to follow and surpass with his own achievements in life.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview

Performance appraisals affect careers, education, promotion, pay, employee advancement opportunities and organizational success (Ahmed, Sultana, Paul, and Azeem, 2013). Furthermore, performance appraisals have a significant link to employee engagement and employee turnover intent (Cho & Lewis, 2013). The United States Department of Defense (DoD) comprised of over three million employees, is the largest employer in the world (DoD, 2016). DoD, the largest government agency, is headquartered at the Pentagon in Northern Virginia and is comprised of the Departments of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard (during wartime) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (DoD, 2006). In addition to military personnel, there are over 732,000 civilian personnel employed by the DoD (DoD, 2017). This research study concentrated on DoD civilian employees only, so as to place focus on their experiences and perceptions of the standard performance appraisal process.

Performance appraisal processes are under continual evaluation in the DoD and are modified based on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management guidelines. These changes are typically made to improve the performance appraisal process and design. DoD civilians began transitioning to an enterprise-based performance appraisal system in late 2016 (Garamone, 2016).

Bernardin and Villanova (2005) defined performance appraisals as instruments which organizations utilize to assess individual job performance, while Kamer and Annen (2010) indicated there are factors in performance appraisal usage, administration and design, which may affect employee and firm performance. However, employee acceptance (the employee accepting the results of the performance appraisal process results as equitable and an accurate depiction of their performance) of the performance appraisal process can be a challenge (Kamer & Annen, 2010). Yet, it is essential to organizational effectiveness and employee motivation and likely leads to reduced performance appraisal litigation (Kamer & Annen, 2010).

Maslow (1943) stated that individuals are motivated by a hierarchy of needs that affect workplace satisfaction. Employee acceptance is important in
the pursuit of employee motivation and a reduction in turnover intent (Kamer & Annen, 2010). Herzberg (1959) expanded Maslow’s (1943) motivation theory by introducing the two-factor motivation theory which posited the presence of satisfiers and dissatisfiers in the workplace that affect employee motivation (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959). The performance appraisal process can serve as a satisfier or dissatisfier depending on the employee reaction to the appraisal process. An interactive approach to the employee appraisal process is essential to gaining the employee’s acceptance of the appraisal findings and to their satisfaction in their job and the fairness of the appraisal process (Kamer & Annen, 2010). Employee acceptance of the performance appraisal process within a DoD organization typically indicates the presence of a cooperative relationship with supervisors and a perspective of equitable performance assessment.

Employees tend to respond with a higher level of acceptance when performance appraisal systems are administered in an atmosphere of unhindered communication between supervisors and the workforce. The benefits of employee acceptance and satisfaction with the performance appraisal process are increased job performance through feedback and behavior modification based on performance appraisal processes (Verbos, Miller, and Goswami, 2014). The combined effect of workplace resource availability, employee preparation prior to performance appraisal
administration, effective communication structures in the firm and interactive relationships between coworkers in the firm have the potential for increased acceptance and employee satisfaction in the performance appraisal process in the firm (Verbos et al., 2014). These factors may contribute to employee performance, motivation and career path decisions (Verbos et al., 2014).

Ahmed et al. (2013) suggested that employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process may play a critical role in the relationship between employees, supervisors and organizational success. For example, employee turnover is related to employee perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal process (Ahmed et al., 2013). Leadership, employee performance appraisals, and performance appraisal feedback represent the trifecta of significant factors in employee job satisfaction and consequently organizational performance (Ahmed et al., 2013) and (Berg, Wiersma, & Wilderom, 2012).

According to Ahmed et al. (2013) the correct development of an employee appraisal system is essential to the success of the firm. Effective employee evaluation methodologies are correlated directly to organizational success due to increased workforce efficiency, effectiveness and encouragement (Ahmed et al., 2013). Dobbins (1994) stated that performance appraisals represent a powerful tool to measure employee performance and provide rewards for achieving performance goals. Employee motivation can
be significantly impacted by performance appraisal outcomes (Dobbins, 1994). The objective of this study was to explore the relationship between DoD employee perceptions of performance appraisals and identify any connection between the performance appraisal process and employee motivation and employee engagement. Ultimately the study sought to understand if DoD performance appraisals influence in any way employee turnover intent.

**Background and Rationale of the Study**

The DoD employee base equals one percent of the United States population and is specifically charged with maintaining the security of the United States and its workforce is critical to the accomplishment of its mission (DoD, 2017). The basis of this study was to explore employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and the connection between employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process, employee motivation and engagement, and finally turnover intent. Employee perceptions and understanding of the performance appraisal process in relation to their own well-being and employment is essential to organizational effectiveness and employee motivation and likely leads to reduced performance appraisal litigation (Kamer & Annen, 2010). An interactive approach to the employee appraisal process is essential to gaining the employee’s acceptance of the appraisal findings and to their satisfaction in their job and the fairness of the appraisal process (Kamer & Annen, 2010).
With regard to employee acceptance of performance appraisals, employees tend to respond with a higher level of acceptance when performance appraisal systems are administered in an atmosphere of unhindered communication between supervisors and the workforce (Kamer & Annen, 2010). The benefits of employee acceptance and satisfaction with the performance appraisal process are increased job performance through feedback and behavior modification based on performance appraisal processes. (Verbos et al., 2014). Ismail and Gali (2017) stated that organizations should strive to achieve employee performance appraisal satisfaction to minimize the unfavorable results caused by workplace stress which tend to have a negative effect on workforce performance, ultimately resulting in lower turnover intent, increased employee motivation and improved job performance.

**Statement of the Problem**

Performance appraisals are the most litigated human resource management function and are critical in employee performance and organizational success (Goldenkoff, 2017). Ali, Mahdi, and Malihe (2012) posited that effective organizational appraisal processes should offer constructive feedback to workforce members.

Bearing this in mind, the nature of the DoD is to maintain the security of the United States and its workforce is critical to the accomplishment of this mission (DoD, 2017). According to Grant (1996) the workforce should be the
primary focal point of the firm instead of stakeholders, since the workforce owns and maintains organizational knowledge, which is the strategic resource of the firm. Employees who are positioned, equipped, and synchronized to maximize the strategic aims of the corporation, naturally increase shareholders’ strength and profitability (Grant, 1996).

Research has determined that firms with high employee satisfaction and motivation are better positioned to respond to market changes and customer requirements (Ismail & Gali, 2017). Additionally, there are potentially significant costs associated with performance appraisal challenges in the firm including, but not limited to extensive litigation costs, employee motivation challenges, potentially negative effects on employee performance and firm profitability pressures (Ali et al., 2012). Flint, Haley and McNally (2013) noted that organizations should examine the root causes of turnover within their organizations to facilitate the adaptation of proactive measures that can reduce the potentially devastating effect on organizational success. DoD has the largest workforce in the world and therefore has a tremendous stake in the minimization of employee turnover.

Organizations must strive to improve performance appraisal processes through the examination of employee and organizational factors related to the performance appraisal process (Ali et al., 2012). In particular, given their role in our larger society, DoD organizations should strive for a higher level of
organizational commitment to increased employee motivation, organizational performance and minimal employee turnover intent. Lastly, in DoD organizations the primary approach to understanding employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process occurs via surveys collecting quantitative data. Thus, this study sought to dig deeper into the employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process, and also explore any connections between such process and employee engagement and turnover intent.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine employee experiences who have experienced the performance appraisal process in the DoD. Ultimately the objective of the study was to examine potential connections between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation, and finally turnover intent. There is a paucity of qualitative, interview-based research focused on the perceptions of DoD employees’ performance appraisal processes and the effects such performance appraisals have on DoD employee motivation, turnover intent and job performance. This study focused on exploring the impact of the performance appraisal process experience on employees in DoD organizations.

MacLeod and Clarke (2009) stated that “employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational
success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being” (Rowley, 2014, p. 9). Therefore, DoD organizations should place particular focus on employee engagement due to the critical nature of the organizational mission. Employee actions in DoD organizations affect lives in the United States and around the globe, therefore, the critical importance of employee engagement in DoD organizations cannot be overstated.

MacLeod and Clarke (2009) suggested that organizational leaders should actively pursue the cooperative involvement of employees to improve workplace efficiency through employee engagement. Dessler (2013) suggested a correlation between performance appraisal design and employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal process. Increased job performance through feedback and behavioral changes are benefits of an effective performance appraisal process that is accepted by employees as equitable and effective (Verbos et al., 2014).

**Research Questions**

The research sought to gain clarification of how DoD employees perceive the performance appraisal process, what impact the process has on employee motivation, and lastly how, if at all, does the performance appraisal process influence or contribute to thoughts of turnover intent. This research study sought to examine employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process experience in DoD organizations and possible connections to
employee turnover intent via the following research questions:

(1) What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization?

(2) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization?

(3) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Performance Appraisal:** Performance appraisal is the technique of selecting, measuring and improving the workplace behavior of an individual in order to advance the goals of the firm while simultaneously providing incentives, feedback and encouragement to the employee (Lansbury, 1988).

**Employee Motivation:** The effect of an employee’s expectation that a particular effort will lead to expected performance, the expected performance will achieve an expected result, which is the desired result for the employee (Vroom, 1964).

**Employee Engagement:** The effect of linking job responsibilities to organizational employees through an internalization process. Individuals display their physical, psychological and cognitive attributes within the construct of their work requirements (Kahn, 1990). The employee’s sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence and effort in
their work or overall attachment to their organization and mission (OPM, 2015).

**Organizational Effectiveness:** The level in which an organization is capable of satisfying environmental requirements including employee requirements (APAPyscNet, 2017)

**Organizational Commitment:** The sense of affiliation and affinity that a workforce member holds towards the organization that they are affiliated with (Kessler, 2013). Committed employees typically share the same goals as the organization with whom they are affiliated (Kessler, 2013).

**Job Satisfaction:** Positive perception of work by an individual when tangible or intangible benefits meet or exceed expectations (APAPyscNet, 2017).

**DoD:** The Department of Defense is a governmental agency that provides the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of the United States (DoD, 2017).

**Civilian:** A person that is not on active duty in the United States armed forces, a member of the police force or firefighter. (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2003)

**DoD Civilian:** A federal civilian employee of the Department of Defense directly hired under permanent or temporary appointment. Contractors and foreign host nationals as third country civilians are specifically excluded. (DoD, 2017).
**Turnover Intent:** A workforce member’s intention to depart their current employment location in the future (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

**Broadband:** A compensation and classification construct that consolidates at least two employee pay grades into overarching compensation groups (OPM, 2007). The U.S. Government used the term banding to illustrate the batching of jobs in a horizontal manner (OPM, 2007).

**The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS):** A tool that measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. Survey results provide valuable insight into the challenges agency leaders face in ensuring the Federal Government has an effective civilian workforce and how well they are responding. Byrne, Hayes & Holcombe (2017) stated that the US Office of Personnel Management uses the FEVS to assess employee engagement within the federal workforce.

**Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo):** The DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo) is a project mandated by the United States Congress to improve the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (AT&L) employee base through the introduction of an adaptive, situation-dependent personnel framework which offers incentives for workforce contributions and provides supervisors with increased personnel action authority (DoD, 2006).
**Total Army Performance Evaluation System:** The Total Army Performance Evaluation System (TAPES) (replaced by the Department of Defense Performance Management Appraisal Program) was developed to match the U.S. Army’s military personnel performance appraisal system to improve the Department of the Army civilian performance appraisal system and to integrate military and civilian evaluation processes (OPM, 1993). TAPES centered on workforce professional development, improved communication between employees and supervisors, and a stronger relationship between individual performance and organizational performance objectives (OPM, 1993). TAPES also provided a framework for interaction between employee and supervisor to discuss Army organizational values which include, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage (OPM, 1993).

**Talent:** Intersection of three dimensional areas—skills, knowledge and behavior which offer the ideal level of individual performance if a person is working within their specific skill set (DoD, 2005). These skill sets can be shaped because every person has the ability to develop a high level of talent if they are provided the development and opportunity.

**Talent Management:** A method to improve U.S. Army readiness through the maximization of the potential of Army employees through the comprehension of workforce talent and requirements.
Department of Defense Performance Management Appraisal Program (DPMAP): A tiered performance evaluation system based on 3 performance ratings: outstanding, fully successful and unacceptable (Garamone, 2016). The program is focused on continuous feedback, workforce recognition and reward initiatives and employee engagement (Garamone, 2016). DPMAP replaced TAPES as the primary Department of Defense performance management appraisal system (DoD, 2017).

Department of Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS): DCIPS is the human resource management system for the Department of Defense (DoD) Intelligence Community (DoD IC). DCIPS was authorized by Congress to provide the Department of Defense Intelligence Components (IC) with independent personnel authorities necessary to perform both the Defense and National Intelligence missions (DoD, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Performance appraisals have tremendous impact on all facets of employee careers and organizational effectiveness (Ahmed et al., 2013). For example, Ahmed et al. (2013) indicated there are factors in performance appraisal utilization, administration and design, which may affect the employee and the firm overall performance. Verbos et al. (2014) posited that increased job performance through feedback and behavioral changes are benefits of an
effective performance appraisal process that is accepted by employees as equitable and effective.

Penrose (1952) stated that the firm is not an unthinking, biological entity, but rather a dynamic organization that succeeds or fails based on the actions of individuals, therefore, this research will add to the literature on the effect of performance appraisals on employee motivation, in addition to gaining clear insight with regard to the DoD performance appraisal process. The findings may facilitate improved performance, motivation and organizational success. Employee acceptance of the performance appraisal process may result in improved workplace performance driven by constructive feedback and behavioral transformation (Verbos et al., 2014). Supervisors should maintain consistent awareness of the unique qualities and behavioral attitudes of their employees in order to ensure an effective and efficient performance appraisal process (Kamer & Annen, 2010).

Ahmed, et al. (2013) noted that the performance appraisal is primarily used to monitor the specific input of an employee and their personal accomplishments in the workplace, and they can be used to assess, enhance employee behavior to successfully attain organizational objectives (Lansbury, 1988). Performance appraisals also facilitate feedback, motivation and inspiration to the workforce (Lansbury, 1988). Employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process may play a critical role in the relationship
between employees, supervisors and organizational success (Longenecker, 2010). DoD Civilian employees have a critical role in the defense of the United States and our allies (DoD, 2002).

**Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter one provided the introduction to the study, the background and rationale of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definition of key terms and significance of the study. Chapter two offers an in-depth review of the literature within a structured format utilizing related factors within the study. The potentially related factors include performance appraisal processes, performance appraisal trends, organizational commitment, employee engagement, performance appraisal litigation and leadership factors. Chapter two includes the research methodology which includes the overview, worldview, research design, research approach overview, population and sample methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations and researcher positionality.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Overview

Supervisors should consistently monitor the workplace specific dynamics of their workforce members to facilitate a functionally proficient performance evaluation system (Kamer & Annen, 2010). Ahmed et al. (2013) found that the typical purpose of the performance appraisal is workforce achievement assessment and identifying unique workforce member contributions to organizational success, while Maley (2013) noted that employee performance appraisals are a potent assessment system which facilitates the equitable measurement of employee performance. Supervisors are constantly seeking methods to standardize the process into a more equitable format (Hemaida and Everett, 2003). DoD performance appraisal processes are critical to the sustainment of all organizations including the United States national defense, the largest organizational workforce in the world.

This research adds to the literature on the impact of performance appraisals on employee motivation through an examination of employee perceptions of performance appraisals and the performance appraisal process. The findings may facilitate reflection and revisions of the DoD performance appraisal process in addition to improved employee motivation and organizational success.
Historical Context of Performance Appraisals

The performance appraisal is a tool used to assess, enhance employee behavior to successfully attain organizational objectives (Lansbury, 1988). Performance appraisals also facilitate feedback, motivation and inspiration to the workforce serving as a potentially effective tool to maintain employee motivation and minimize turnover intent (Lansbury, 1988). According to Lansbury (1988) performance appraisals are a process of identifying, assessing and enhancing the workplace behavior of an employee. Therefore, they function as human resource management tools that enable organizational leaders to provide feedback to employees and receive input and feedback from the workforce. The intent is to further the objectives of the firm while offering incentives and constructive feedback to the individual (Lansbury, 1988).

Historically, performance appraisals were formally developed by the United States Army during World War I as a merit-based rating hierarchy to validate employee compensation (Ismail & Gali, 2017). Frederick Taylor’s (1911) seminal work on scientific management led to the implementation of productivity-based organizational and employee goals (Ismail & Gali, 2017). Taylor’s (1911) Time and Motion study also led to the concept of assessing employees to improve work performance. Taylor’s (1911) scientific management approach led to increased popularity of performance appraisal usage to enhance worker productivity. Fletcher (2001) stated that employee
performance evaluation was conceived as a construct to assess workforce member job performance on an annual basis.

Brown and Lim (2009) stated that performance appraisals were originally tied to performance-based rewards or negative consequences for work performance. The focus of performance appraisals evolved from a merit-based approach to an approach centered on employee development and motivational efforts (Brown & Lim, 2009).

**Performance Appraisals and Legislation**

*Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883.* The first legislative action to establish governmental workforce policy was the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883 (OPM, 2007). The legislation led to the establishment of the Civil Service Commission which applied specifically to federal employment (OPM, 2007). The purpose of the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act was to mandate merit-based employment within the federal government with specific prohibitions against employment termination based on political affiliation or tying employment to political contributions or support (OPM, 2007). The law mandated the use of competitive examinations to attain employment within the United States Government. The initial scope of the law covered approximately 10 percent of the permanent jobs available in the federal government but the subsequent expansion by future Presidents led to the current rate of over 90 percent of government jobs which require open
competition available to all United States citizens (OPM, 2007). The law was passed to address the rampant political corruption after the United States Civil War and to offer increased stability in government employment (OPM, 2007). This law offered a framework which led to the eventual development of performance appraisals in the federal government to facilitate merit-based promotions and pay increases.

**Classification Act of 1923.** Governmental employment classification started with the Classification Act of 1923 with categorized government employment into five areas including: custodial functions, scientific and professional skill sets, sub-professional skill sets, clerical skill sets, and clerical-mechanical skill sets (OPM, 2007). The legislation was the first governmental effort to standardize work in the federal government. The legislation also enacted numerous grade standards for employment positions based on importance of the job, level of difficulty, responsibility level and value of the work requirement. The Classification Act of 1923 also mandated pay equity with no respect to gender in governmental positions (OPM, 2007).

**Classification Act of 1949.** The General Schedule (GS) employment classification system, which is still the primary governmental employee compensation system in use today, was introduced in the Classification Act of 1949 (OPM, 2007). DoD employment position classification is the construct which outlines most of the federal personnel management system functions
mandated by the Classification Act of 1949. The purpose of the position classification system was to allow the identification, description and assessment of duties that DoD employees are required to conduct (OPM, 2007). Personnel qualification and compensation choices were made based on the position classification system. The process includes job classification, followed by initiation of processes to fill the position and then position filling through a hiring action or an internal promotion from within DoD. Qualification determinations are based on guidance from the U.S. Office of Personnel and Management (OPM, 2007). DoD and other Federal agencies are responsible for the implementation and management of the qualification and classification systems that are developed by OPM (Goldenkoff, 2017). DoD performance appraisal processes are governed by the Office of Personnel and Management which provides guidance for appraisal administration from an enterprise perspective.

**Performance Appraisals: Related Factors**

There are several factors related to performance appraisal processes in DoD organizations. The study introduced and discussed the more prevalent factors including: 1) leadership 2) motivation and engagement and 3) turnover intent. Leadership is one of the most important factors in the performance appraisal process due to the requirement for leaders to interact with and provide guidance and motivation to employees throughout the rating period.
(DoD, 2017). Motivation and engagement are examined by the researcher due to the significant impact these factors have on employee perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal process and their potential effect on employee turnover intent in DoD organizations. According to Cho and Lewis (2012) turnover intent is strongly tied to the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations because employees who do not accept the results of the performance appraisal as fair and equitable are more likely to have feelings of departure from the organization.

**Leadership.** Performance management and appraisals are a human resource management facet that provides challenges to most organizations (Bernardin & Villanova, 2005). According to Kannan-Narasimhan and Lawrence (2012) employees assess leaders through perception of leader consistency in workplace interactions. Employees assess performance appraisal equity through the lens of their cultural perspective (Hofstede, 1983).

Folger and Lewis (1993) contended supervisors and employees are often uncomfortable with the performance appraisal administration process. Fetta, Harper, Knight, Vieira and Williams (2012) suggested supervisory selection based on merit is still the most effective method of selecting leaders.

Kamer and Annen (2010) noted the importance of supervisor awareness of workplace cohesion and suggested leader involvement to promote dynamic and detailed feedback from subordinates. A systematic feedback mechanism
may increase employee satisfaction and confidence in organizational leadership (Kamer & Annen, 2010). Systematic feedback consists of formal and informal processes which allow supervisors and subordinates to share information related to organizational requirements and employee requirements. The feedback mechanism may consist of performance appraisal counseling, periodic performance reviews and daily interaction between supervisors and employees. While it can be a challenge, an effective performance appraisal administration may foster ethical decision-making by employees and supervisors (Shore & Strauss, 2008). In fact, Pluchino, Rapisarda, and Garofalo (2010) noted the complexity of analyzing the cause of diminished performance by successful employees who transition to leadership positions. Motivation and engagement are factors that may contribute to performance changes by employees that transition to leadership positions.

Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011) contended politics are present in all organizational settings. Organizational politics may affect employee motivation, engagement and turnover intent, especially if there is a perception of inequitable treatment. Ishaq and Zuilsqar (2014) noted the potentially devastating effects of perceived favoritism on workplace relationships. These effects can cause significant damage to organizational effectiveness and employee commitment.
Hemaida and Everett (2003) contended organizational leaders are required to measure individual worker performance and provide compensatory recommendations through the performance appraisal process. According to Hemaida and Everett (2003) the Analytic Hierarchy Process developed by Saaty (1980) could serve as a useful mechanism to assist in the appraisal development and administration system. The Analytic Hierarchy process is defined as a methodical program that delineates the components of an issue. Workforce performance assessed via performance appraisals is dependent upon the effect which the employee improved firm success (Islam and Shuib, 2006). Hemaida and Everett (2003) posited leaders have the responsibility to ensure the equitable assessment of subordinate performance in the workplace. According to Hemaida and Everett (2003) employee compensation and promotions should be equitably recognized and rewarded through a transparently administered performance assessment process, as the perception of an inequitable performance assessment process can be a contributor to workforce morale, performance and satisfaction concerns (Islam & Shuib, 2006).

Berg et al. (2012) suggested charismatic leaders who focus on employee requirements and the organizational needs tend to maximize firm performance. These efforts as noted by Brower (2000) likely reinforce effective feedback during the performance appraisal process and can result in
effective performance appraisal administration leading to ethical decision-making by employees and supervisors (Shore & Strauss, 2008).

Ahmed et al. (2013) contended that the concept of an effective workforce appraisal is directly connected and critical to organizational performance. Ahmed et al. (2013) also noted the purpose of performance appraisals is the systematic assessment of individual worker achievements during a specified period of performance. According to Verbos et al. (2014) employees offer specific cognitive reactions to the performance appraisal system. Thus, leadership in relation to performance appraisals has a direct impact on employees and the performance appraisal process.

Motivation and engagement. Ahmed et al. (2013) contended that effective workforce appraisals are critical to organizational performance, including employee engagement, which is a key factor that may impact employee motivation in DoD organizations and must be included in organizational employee outreach efforts (OPM, 2015). Kahn (1990) stated that employee engagement is directly associated with employee commitment and relationships with organizational leadership, while Ahmed et al. (2013) noted the purpose of performance appraisals is the systematic assessment of individual worker achievements during a specified period of performance. Therefore, employee engagement is critical to organizational effectiveness due to the direct link between engaged, committed employees and organizational
Performance appraisals connect to employee engagement and motivation through the active engagement required for employee acceptance of the performance appraisal process within an organization. Hunnes and Mohn (2011) noted that a primary goal of performance management is to objectively balance employee performance with accurate performance appraisal outcomes. Verbos et al. (2014) suggested workplace resource availability has a positive effect on workforce acceptance of the performance appraisal administration methods. Lack of resources may have a negative effect on employee perception of the performance appraisal system effectiveness and fairness (Verbos et al., 2014).

According to Ahmed et al. (2013) the proper development of an employee appraisal system is critical to organization success. Bernardin and Villanova (2005) posit workforce hiring actions, job performance and employee satisfaction are essential human resource management factors associated with the performance evaluation process in multinational corporations. Employees provide unique cognitive responses to the performance appraisal process (Verbos et al., 2014). Individual preparation for the performance appraisal meeting with leadership is a critical factor which may influence the appraisal administration process (Verbos et al., 2014).

The availability of available organizational resources which relate to employee work requirements is a likely cause for employee satisfaction in the
workplace performance appraisal system (Verbos et al., 2014). The perceived shortage of available resources to support employee job responsibilities may have a negative impact on employee views of the performance appraisal system at a firm (Verbos et al., 2014). According to Shen (2004) cultural factors are essential components in the development of effective performance appraisals. Cultural factors are critical due to the importance of individual perceptions of fairness, equity and acceptable treatment in an organization. The DoD workforce is extremely diverse and cultural factors are important considerations in the performance appraisal administration process. According to Islam and Shuib (2006) employees tend to operate with greater efficiency and effectiveness when they perceive the presence of defined requirements which they are capable of successfully accomplishing. DoD employees are particularly sensitive to requirements based on the structured nature of the organization and the specific legal, regulatory and cultural norms present in DoD organizations.

Employees are very sensitive to workplace changes which involve uncontrollable factors such as job reductions, structural changes, or increased organizational profitability (Verbos et al., 2014). Employees tend to display unfavorable reactions to performance appraisal systems when there is a perception of unacceptable requirements based on inadequate resources (Verbos et al., 2014). Employee relationships in a business environment have
a potentially positive effect on employee perspectives of performance appraisals due to the shared cognitive approaches to job performance between employees (Verbos et al., 2014).

Ali et al. (2012) posited effective organizational appraisal processes should offer constructive feedback to workforce members. Effective performance appraisals should facilitate internal motivation for employee job improvement (Ali et al., 2012). Firms with high employee satisfaction and motivation are better positioned to respond to market changes and customer requirements (Ali et al., 2012). Longenecker, Fink and Caldwell (2014) suggested performance appraisals which consist of multiple raters are more accurate than appraisals with a single rater. Employees perceive multiple rater appraisals as more equitably administered than single rater appraisal systems (Longenecker et al., 2014). Dessler (2013) suggested a correlation between performance appraisal design and employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal process.

**Turnover intent.** Employee turnover costs U.S. companies an estimated $11 billion each year (Watrous, Huffman & Pritchard, 2006). The tangible costs are position advertising requirements, recruitment costs, selection, hiring and onboarding costs and severance fees. The intangible costs include the loss of institutional knowledge within an organization. Turnover also has a potentially negative effect on workforce performance of the employees that remain in the organization (Watrous et al., 2006). The DoD is particularly hard hit
by these costs due to the sensitive, restricted nature of many DoD positions. The DoD hiring process is complex and involves security clearance applications, badging, installation and facility access requests, relocation costs and lengthy training requirements. Therefore, turnover intent reduction is critical to the success and sustainment of the DoD.

Cho and Lewis (2012) stated that turnover intent is a critical factor in organizational performance. Turnover at DoD organizations occurs primarily during the first three years of employment and is highest during the first year of employment (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Therefore, organizational leaders should take measures to ensure employee turnover intent is minimized through effective onboarding and performance appraisal processes. DoD turnover causes significant challenges in DoD organizations and may impact readiness and the DoD ability to effectively respond to national defense requirements. There is also a significant financial burden caused by employee turnover due to the expensive nature of workforce training in DoD organizations.

Flint et al. (2013) found that organizations can mitigate turnover intentions through an effective problem solving construct integrated within the organization. Supervisor treatment of workforce members should also be effectively managed to further mitigate the potential challenges that lead to increased turnover intent by employees in DoD organizations. Zeffane and
Bani (2017) found that heightened levels of employee turnover could contribute to a diminishing level of organizational trust and performance.

Tett and Meyer (1993) found that employment growth opportunities and consequential work requirements were critical to the retention of employees. This is particularly significant in the DoD workforce due to the rapidly evolving technological changes, threat response requirements and diverse mission portfolio of the DoD.

Firth, Mellor, Moore and Loquet (2004) posited that employment satisfaction, minimal organization commitment and workplace stressors are the primary factors which lead to turnover intent within an organization. Supervisors can impact and potentially mitigate job stressors through proactive awareness of employee job responsibilities, focused efforts to maintain reasonable workloads for employees and clear identification of work roles (Firth et al., 2004). Effective performance appraisal processes are essential in these efforts to reduce employee turnover intent (Flint et al., 2013).

The Army Talent Management Strategy was published to provide specific guidance and requirements to organizational leaders to foster increased trust and commitment within the DoD civilian workforce in the U.S. Army. The Talent Management Strategy is also designed to reduce costly turnover. The U.S. Army noted the requirement to quickly transition to universally accepted best practices for maintaining an effective civilian workforce with a
concerted effort to improve employee engagement, commitment and retention (DoD, 2005). Firth et al. (2004) noted that supervisors should observe both internal and external factors which provide employment satisfaction to employees. These efforts reduce turnover within the organization and may also strengthen organization commitment and job satisfaction.

**Performance Appraisal Trends**

Longenecker et al. (2014) identified several trends in organizational performance appraisal processes for multinational enterprises including: (1) consistent use of the prevailing performance appraisal (2) multi-faceted performance appraisal utilization (3) numerous individuals participation in the appraisal process (4) semi-annual appraisal usage and technological advancements and (5) training and self-assessment factors. Nandan (2010) contended performance appraisal systems are focusing more on qualitative behavior assessments in addition to the overall trends in development and administration while Dessler (2013) stated that performance appraisals must have a specified purpose with an integrated focus on employee performance and organizational requirements.

**Consistent use of performance appraisal.** The majority of multinational enterprises maintain a performance appraisal system for at least five years (Longenecker et al., 2014). 30 percent of international firms are in the appraisal system review process (Longenecker et al., 2014). Grund and
Sliwka (2009) found that larger organizations administer performance appraisals more frequently than their smaller counterparts. Nandan (2010) contended performance appraisal systems are under constant review to assess efficiency improvement opportunities. According to Longenecker et al. (2014) leadership changes, legal challenges, technological improvement efforts and strategic mission changes lead to appraisal system changes in multinational corporations. The diverse nature of DoD organizational missions requires the use of different performance appraisal administration measures for selected DoD organizations. AcqDemo is an example of a separate performance appraisal system used for acquisition personnel in DoD.

**Multi-faceted performance appraisal utilization.** 76% of organizations possess a deliberately focused purpose and mission for the conduct of performance appraisals and employee assessments (Longenecker & Fink, 2015). The primary uses for formal performance evaluations are (1) recording workforce performance and contributions to organizational goals, (2) identifying future employee performance goals and requirements, (3) forming a relationship between employee performance and organizational human resource functions, (4) enhancing workforce performance and career development, and (5) establishing a performance feedback and communication structure for workforce members (Longenecker & Fink, 2015).
DoD mandates the recording of employee performance and contributions to organizational goals during the performance appraisal process. Employees are required to develop goals in coordination with their supervisors to ensure common understanding of requirements. DoD employees are also required to identify performance goals at the beginning of the performance appraisal rating period with input and approval from their supervisors.

DoD employees should be encouraged to maintain an integrated approach to the performance appraisal process through supervisor feedback, coordination with human resource managers and self-assessment activities. DPMAP is designed to improve the connection between workforce performance and career development goals through the use of a continuous feedback and assessment process between employees and supervisors in DoD.

**Individuals involved in appraisal process.** According to Longenecker et al. (2014) approximately 96 percent of employees in the surveyed firms were assessed by their immediate supervisor. 92 percent of the surveyed organizations required at least one additional signature in the performance appraisal process, not including the immediate supervisor (Longenecker et al., 2014). 54 percent of the organizations required at least two additional signatures for employee performance appraisals (Longenecker et al., 2014). The majority of multinational enterprises require three or more people to review and sign performance appraisals (Longenecker, 2010). The evidence
indicated that performance evaluations that are comprised of multiple raters are more accurate and are perceived as possessing a higher level of equitable administration than single rater performance evaluations (Longenecker et al., 2014).

Longenecker et al. (2014) found that personnel hiring functions, workforce productivity, and job satisfaction are critical human resource management functions affected by the performance appraisal process. Dessler (2013) suggested a correlation between performance appraisal design and employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal process. Longenecker et al. (2014) noted performance appraisals facilitate the systematic assessment of employee performance by organizational leadership in multinational corporations. According to Ahmed et al. (2013) the proper development of an employee appraisal system is critical to organization success. Employees provide unique cognitive responses to the performance appraisal process (Verbos et al., 2014). Individual preparation for the performance appraisal meeting with leadership is a critical factor which may influence the appraisal administration process (Verbos et al., 2014). This is especially critical during the first three years of appraisal administration within DoD organizations due to the significant turnover incurred during that timeframe.

The availability of available organizational resources which relate to employee work requirements is a likely cause for employee satisfaction in the
workplace performance appraisal system (Verbos et al., 2014). The perceived shortage of available resources to support employee job responsibilities may have a negative impact on employee views of the performance appraisal system at a firm (Verbos et al., 2014). According to Shen (2004) cultural factors are essential components in the development of effective performance appraisals. DoD is a very diverse organization that spans across the globe and must deal with cultural differences within the organization and external to the organization due to geographical, political, economic and social differences.

Longenecker et al. (2014) suggested supervisors lead the workforce appraisal process but are generally untrained in the performance appraisal administration process. Nandan (2010) contended behavioral competency assessment is a critical component in performance appraisal effectiveness. Self-assessments may offer insight into employee behavioral competencies (Longenecker et al., 2014). According to Longenecker (2010) supervisors require training in interview techniques, legal factors, writing, and future employee work objective planning. Longenecker et al. (2014) noted most firms provide adequate instructions to rating officials but typically do not require formal rater training. DoD supervisors are required to participate in formal supervisory training prior to assuming a supervisory role over DoD workforce members.
Semi-annual appraisal usage and technological advancements.

According to Huselid, Becker, and Beatty (2005) the majority of multinational firms conduct semi-annual performance appraisals to increase employee performance and job satisfaction. Huselid et al. (2005) posits this trend is due to the dynamically changing workforce and multinational business environment. The majority of multinational organizations use web-based systems or software-based platforms to administer performance evaluations (Longenecker et al., 2014).

Annual appraisal administration is the primary appraisal administration method (Longenecker et al., 2014). Only 20 percent of multinational organizations require employees to complete self-assessments during the performance appraisal process (Longenecker et al., 2014). The majority of organizations use web-based systems or other software-based platforms to administer performance appraisals (Longenecker et al., 2014). Most organizations administer performance assessments annually, while 23 percent of surveyed organizations perform semi-annual performance assessments (Longenecker & Fink, 2015). The DoD performance appraisal process requires semi-annual and annual performance assessments for all employees regardless of the performance appraisal system that is used at the organization (OPM, 2013). This requirement provides multiple opportunities for rater to ratee interaction during the performance appraisal administration process.
**Self-assessment and training.** Only 20 percent of surveyed organizations required employee self-assessments in the performance appraisal process (Longenecker et al., 2014). The DoD requires self-assessments by all employees at the beginning and end of each performance rating period. The rater reviews the self-assessment and provides feedback to the employee during the annual and semi-annual appraisal administration (OPM, 2013).

Supervisors are the primary drivers of the employee appraisal process but are typically untrained in the administration of performance appraisals (Longenecker et al., 2014). Longenecker et al. (2014) found that supervisors were poorly trained in interview techniques, legal requirements, writing skills, and future performance planning. The majority of surveyed organizations provide sufficient instructions for rating officials but only 37 percent required formal training for raters (Longenecker et al., 2014). This underscores the importance of understanding the perspectives of employees on the impact of the performance appraisal process. The DoD requires formal rater training and formal training for employees on the performance appraisal process. Nandan (2010) suggested behavioral competency assessment is a critical component in performance appraisal effectiveness. Self-assessments may offer insight into employee behavioral competencies.

According to Longenecker et al. (2014) 76 percent of organizations have a strategically designed mission and intent for performance appraisal
conduct and workforce evaluations. The primary purposes for formal
performance appraisals are 1) identifying employee contributions to the
organizational mission 2) developing future workforce performance objectives
3) developing a link between workforce performance and human resource
management and 4) establishing a performance feedback and communication
construct for employees (Longenecker et al., 2014). The DoD is one of the
leading proponents of best practices for performance appraisal administration
(Goldenkoff, 2017).

In the DoD, rater training is mandatory for all supervisors, self-
assessments are required for all employees, and performance appraisal
feedback sessions are required during a midpoint assessment and during the
annual assessment. This offers potential advantages to DoD supervisors and
employees due to the formal requirements to conduct interactive sessions
during the performance rating period.

**Performance Appraisal Litigation**

Goldenkoff (2017) noted that performance appraisals are the most
litigated personnel human resource management activity. Goldman, Shapiro
and Pearsall (2016) stated that workforce grievances effect organizations from
an economic, mental and prestige standpoint. Litigation costs have increased
over 200% over the past several decades and continue to increase at a rate of
7% per year since 2000 (Goldman et al., 2016). There are also immeasurable
costs due to unfavorable attention and loss of prestige related to the employee grievances (Goldman et al., 2016). Therefore, the examination of employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process on turnover intent and motivation is a critically important subject for organizational success.

According to Bernardin, Thomason, Buckley and Kane (2016) there are potential legal considerations which lead to the increase in personnel participating in the appraisal review process. The legal considerations include promotion and pay equity, potential gender bias issues and perception of equitable administration of performance appraisals (Bernardin et al., 2016).

**Department of Defense Performance Appraisal Systems**

*DoD performance management and appraisal system (DPMAP).*

Department of Defense Department (DoD) civilian workforce members transitioned to an enterprise-based standardized performance appraisal system (Garamone, 2016). The new system, titled the DoD Defense Performance Management and Appraisal Program (DPMAP), originated from a requirement outlined in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 (Garamone, 2016). DPMAP is a tiered performance evaluation system based on 3 performance ratings: outstanding, fully successful and unacceptable (Garamone, 2016). The program focuses on continuous feedback, workforce recognition and reward initiatives and employee engagement (Garamone, 2016). According to Garamone (2016) raters must conduct at least 3 counseling sessions with each
workforce member during the rating period. Garamone (2016) stated that over 600,000 DoD employees will utilize the DPMAP. The new DoD performance appraisal system is an expensive program that was initiated to address workforce concerns and organizational requirements.

**Acquisition demonstration project (AcqDemo).** DoD established the Acquisition Demonstration Project (AcqDemo) for the Department's civilian acquisition workforce and those supporting personnel assigned to work directly with the acquisition workforce under the authority of Section 4308 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996 (DoD, 2006). AcqDemo was designed to improve the local acquisition workforce effectively through streamlined hiring processes, introduction of a broadband pay construct, simplified job classification, and revised reduction-in-force procedures (DoD, 2006). The system was designed to promote an encouraging environment in the growth of employees through a contribution-based compensation and appraisal system, expanded training opportunities, and sabbaticals (DoD, 2006).

Fundamental attributes of successful governmental performance appraisal systems within the context of a human resource management construct include: systems which provide compensation and workforce options that are in sync with the organizational mission, supervisors have input into workforce and compensation measures, supervisors are incentivized to support
organization objectives through the effective use of workforce and compensation utilization measures and organizational policy ensures the availability of sufficient resources to install and assess workforce and compensation policy effectiveness (OPM, 2007).

According to OPM (2007) the General Schedule (GS) system allows each federal agency, including DoD entities to develop appraisal systems which meet their organizational requirements. These systems are generally effective and consistent with organizational objectives (OPM, 2007). DoD performance appraisal systems are subject to review and oversight (OPM, 2007). The broadband compensation system is a commonly used system within the DoD (OPM, 2007). Broadband compensation systems are primarily found in the DoD demonstration projects such as the Acquisition Demonstration Project (DoD, 2006). The pay banding systems are useful for organizations that are in the process of organizational redesign, have a performance-oriented workforce structure, and organizations with an effective performance management program (OPM, 2007).

**DoD civilian intelligence personnel system (DCIPS):** DoD developed a performance appraisal system with the primary purpose of providing a singular human resource management system to all DoD intelligence components (DoD, 2008). There are six specific areas that must be evaluated by supervisors and employees during the performance appraisal administration.
process: Accountability for results, communication, critical thinking, engagement and collaboration, leadership and integrity and technical expertise/managerial proficiency (DoD, 2008). DCIPS is the only authorized performance appraisal system for DoD civilians who work in positions with a designated intelligence function (DoD, 2014). DCIPS is intended to evaluate over 50,000 DoD employees when it is fully implemented (National Academy of Public Administration, 2010).

**Federal employee viewpoint survey (FEVS).** The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducts an annual survey to all federal agencies, (listed in Appendix G) including DoD in order to assess workforce perceptions of organizational effectiveness (OPM, 2017). The survey results offer quantitative data with insight in regard to employee perspectives of multiple areas of organizational concern including performance appraisal and employee engagement. According to OPM (2017) 485,000 Federal employees participated in the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. DoD employees rated employee engagement at 74%, the highest rate in the past five years and the Department of the Army employees rated employee engagement at 73%. These ratings indicate an increasingly engaged workforce in DoD and within the Department of the Army. This is an important factor in employee motivation and turnover intention in DoD. 48% of DoD participants strongly agree that their work is important and 41% agree to the same question on a
Likert Scale (OPM, 2017). 49.7% of Army participants strongly agree and 41.5% agree that their work is important for a combined favorable rating of 91%. 29.4% and 44.6% of DoD participants strongly agree and agree, respectively, that their performance appraisal is an accurate reflection of their work for a combined total of 74% favorable rating (OPM, 2017).

The findings indicated that although the favorable ratings are positive on the Likert Scale, only 29.4% of participants strongly agree that the performance appraisal accurately reflects their work. 29.9% of DoD employee participants strongly agree and 40.7% agree that through the performance appraisal process they understand the requirements to achieve increased levels of responsibility. 34.4% and 40.5% of Department of the Army participants, respectively, strongly agree and agree to the same question (OPM, 2017). These insights are indicative of an effective performance appraisal process that should be examined through DoD employee perspectives of motivation and turnover intent. Only 8.6% of DoD participants strongly agree that differences in work performance are treated in a meaningful manner at their work location, while 28.6% agree. These findings indicate a potential challenge for DoD leadership in performance appraisal process perception among employees. The researcher sought DoD employee perspectives on the performance appraisal process during this research study. The FEVS results provided valuable insights that assisted in the examination of employee perspectives of
the DoD performance appraisal process effects on motivation and turnover intent.

**Relevant Theories**

**Maslow’s theory of needs (1943).** Maslow (1943) outlined five hierarchal levels of needs which motivate individuals to seek fulfillment in a ladder approach with each need satisfaction leading to the next higher level. Physiological needs, safety needs, social affiliation, self-esteem and self-actualization are motivators that affect all individuals in the workplace (Maslow, 1943). Performance appraisals are mostly associated with self-esteem and self-actualization needs although the other three needs must be met before an employee focuses on the higher level needs.

**Theory X and theory Y (McGregor, 1960).** There are several theories related to the concept of performance appraisal selection, utilization, and administration. McGregor (1960) offered a leadership theory contrasting two opposing styles of leadership prevalent in the workplace. Theory X and Theory Y provide differing leadership approaches to leader interaction with employees in an organizational environment, workforce behavior effects and leadership impressions (McGregor, 1960). The concepts focused on leader characteristics and behavior displayed by their internal beliefs of the particular traits and values of workforce members (McGregor, 1960).

Theory X indicated a propensity for managers to expect workforce
members to serve in a selfish manner with individual rewards as the primary focus of their efforts. Theory X leaders believe workers are guided by the pursuit of incentives such as compensation and other workforce perks (McGregor, 1960). McGregor (1960) noted the belief of Theory X leaders in the expectation of satisfactory employee performance only as a means to avoid unfavorable actions and punitive measures. Theory X posited leaders anticipate employee malfeasance and a display of incorrigible traits including, shirking of responsibilities, workplace incivility, selfish attitudes and a lack of loyalty to the organization or organizational goals (McGregor, 1960).

Theory Y leaders anticipate a workforce with internal preferences toward satisfactory performance in the organization caused by sincere work ethic and a sustained sense of loyalty to the organization and other workforce members (McGregor, 1960). McGregor (1960) suggested Theory Y employees display discipline, selfless service, and an independent focus on organizational goals and mission accomplishment.

Russ (2011) offers insight into potential combinations of Theory X and Theory Y oriented leaders. Theory X leaders may place less importance on employee feedback or job satisfaction during the performance appraisal process (Russ, 2011). Theory Y leaders are more likely to focus on employee feedback and job satisfaction during the performance appraisal process (Russ, 2011). The particular situations in which an individual leader displays Theory
X and Theory Y orientations are primarily based on the workplace environment, relationship with individual employees, organizational structure and workplace mission requirements (Russ, 2011).

Berg et al. (2012) supported McGregor (1960) through the finding of sustained success in business entities which fill critical leadership positions with charismatic individuals displaying an integrated approach to organizational mission accomplishment and employee interaction. Berg et al. (2012) noted a relationship between participative leadership styles prevalent in leaders with a Theory Y orientation and participative organizational culture. Theory X and Theory Y offer opposing leadership views on supervisor relationships with subordinates in the workplace (McGregor, 1960). Performance appraisal processes are enhanced by the relationships built through the leader actions (Brower, 2000).

**Implicit leadership theory (Eden & Leviatan, 1975).** Eden and Leviatan (1975) introduced Implicit Leadership theory based on a factor analysis study of college students. The findings suggested personal experience through societal and other interactions led to the development of implicit leadership theories by individuals (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). The findings supported research on leadership effects on performance appraisals because it infers a potential relationship between individual responses on performance appraisals and their implicit perspective of leadership (Eden & Leviatan,
Implicit Leadership Theory suggested an interconnection between employee expectations for performance appraisals and their internal views on leader behavior. Relational Leadership Theory (Brower, 2000) posits a distinctive advantage for leaders who build trust and confidence in employees through sustained interactive activities. Frost (2016) contended individuals develop implicit leadership theories through familial processes or social interactions. This leadership theory formed the basis for future expectations in school, employment and other relational settings (Frost, 2016).

**Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985).**
Transformational leadership theory posited transformational leaders change their subordinates through the perspective of visionary thinking, confidence and admirable qualities the subordinate finds in the leader. Bass (1985) posited subordinates exert more effort for the transformational leader and form a shared vision of organizational success through the influence of the leader. According to Bass (1995) transformational leaders strive to transform subordinates into leaders dually focused on organizational success and increased self-actualization.

**Complexity leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).** Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) introduced complexity leadership theory, a leadership model better suited towards a knowledge-based view. The theory posited a modified construct for leadership in which leadership is outlined as a
challenging, constantly changing element producing innovative outputs (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Uhl-bien et al. (2007) suggested a requirement to transition from leadership constructs focused on employee productivity in a manufacturing setting. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) suggested the shift to a leadership framework, which supports knowledge producing organizations prevalent in the contemporary business environment. Fenwick (2010) cautioned against the improper use of complexity theory in the examination of leadership due to the differences in human behavior compared to the abstract nature of complexity theory.

**Relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006).** Uhl-Bien (2006) introduced relational leadership theory, which possesses two approaches: entity approach and relational approach. Relational theory provided a comprehensive framework for an examination of leadership as a societal influence system which social effects and societal modification elements are developed (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational leadership theory examined the process of leadership interactions and environmental effects on relationships (Uhl-Bien, 2006). This theory may have significant relevance to the research topic of DoD performance appraisal effects on employee morale and engagement.

Brower (2000) introduced a model examining relational leadership theory through the process of interaction between individuals who assess competence, kindness and trustworthiness. Brower posited a dynamic
relationship between the formulated perceptions and workforce interactions between leaders and subordinates (Brower, 2000). The findings indicated a critical relationship between individuals based on interactive feedback received from personal assessments (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Lakshman (2007) presented a theory outlining the task of leadership involvement in organizational knowledge management functions. The author posited a paucity of leadership theory research in the critical activity of data management in a knowledge-based organization (Lakshman, 2007). The theory offered a grounded theory framework through the examination of knowledge management perspectives and responsibilities of 37 chief executive officers (Lakshman, 2007). Lakshman (2007) noted an understanding of knowledge management importance by the senior business leaders.

Lakshman (2007) contended leaders have a critical function in knowledge management processes to facilitate organizational success in the contemporary business environment. Rowland and Parry (2009) reinforced the grounded theory approach by positing a relationship between leadership and organizational structure.

**Distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005).** Spillane (2005) discussed the theory of distributed leadership with a concentration on educational environments. Spillane (2005) suggested the prevalence of a distributed function of leadership in schools as opposed to a single individual leading organizational change or
effectiveness (Spillane, 2005). The author suggested distributed leadership involves the function of leadership instead of a focus on an individual leader or leadership position (Spillane, 2005). The distributed approach offered a perspective, which displays interactive results from the relationships between organizational leaders, subordinates and the organizational environment (Spillane, 2005). Timperley (2005) reinforced the argument of the sustained effectiveness of a distributed approach to leadership across several individuals and areas compared to the single leader concept.

**Peter principle (Peter & Hull, 1969).** Another theory related to performance appraisal usage and effectiveness is the Peter Principle (Peter & Hull, 1969). The Peter Principle posited in a structured environment every worker advances to their own unique level of incompetence if there is a sufficient time frame and organizational structure available (Peter & Hull, 1969). This concept contended a specific level of incompetent performance each worker is destined for if time and structural opportunity is available (Peter & Hull, 1969). The concept suggested employees who perform well as a certain level tend to receive promotions irrespective of their personal preference or potential for success at the next higher position (Peter & Hull, 1969). The resulting effect is a potentially negative effect on the employee and the organization (Peter & Hull, 1969).
Supervisors should use the performance appraisal to mitigate inequitable situations or criteria which fosters an unsuitable work environment (Peter & Hull, 1969). Performance appraisal administrators should mitigate potential bias or other factors which may trigger the activation of the Peter Principle during the performance appraisal process. Ali et al. (2012) posited effective organizational appraisal processes should offer constructive feedback to workforce members. According to Peter and Hull (1969) the Peter Principle exists when successful employees are systematically promoted beyond the level of their ability to perform at optimum efficiency levels. Fetta et al. (2012) contend the Peter Principle should be carefully considered within the context of rational decision-making.

**Pygmalion effects (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).** The understanding of the concept of Pygmalion effects is critical to organizational success (Darity, 2008). Pygmalion effects are defined as a phenomenon in which an individual’s personal view of another person leads to the manifestation of the latter person’s acceptance and demonstration of the former’s view (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Darity (2008) suggested Pygmalion effects remain prevalent in the workplace because the inherent behaviors which trigger these effects are typically subconscious. Inamori and Analoui (2010) posited that Pygmalion effects can have a positive outcome for employees that are viewed favorably by supervisors. Groupthink is a related phenomenon that can occur
in organizational settings (Janis, 1972). Janis (1972) defined groupthink as a thinking mechanism in which members of a group seek to gain unanimous consent behind a common theme without the challenge or pursuit of thorough review of the potential consequences of the decision. Groups that have a high level of cohesiveness and camaraderie have an increased tendency to substitute objective analysis with aberrant behavior towards dissenting groups (Janis, 1973). Self-fulfilling prophecy is a fictitious definition of a circumstance that leads to actions that transform the original false definition into a truth (Merton, 1948).

According to Whiteley, Sy, and Johnson (2012) Pygmalion effects are critical to businesses which place significant value on utilizing employee performance as a unique competence for competitive advantage. There is a potential presence of Pygmalion effects caused by performance appraisal entries. The potential effect is a situation in which an employee internalizes the views of the performance appraisal administrator through their own actions (Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968). Pygmalion effects and self-fulfilling prophecy are affected by cultural norms (Whitely et al., 2012).

Knowledge-based view of the firm (Grant, 1996). Grant (1996) stated that the knowledge-based view of the firm is a natural evolution of consistently held concerns regarding the desire for predictability and management of emerging views of the firm as a learning organization. Polanyi
(1966) introduced the concept of tacit knowledge. Tongo (2015); Sveiby (2001) posited that knowledge management is a critical function in knowledge-based organizations. Hankanson (2010) expanded the perspective of the cognitive effects on the knowledge-based view of the firm. Humans increase knowledge capacity through the process of experiential learning through their personal, dynamic, judgmental processing and incorporation of events that are experienced (Polanyi, 1966). Takeuchi (2013) noted that individual judgmental thinking is typically not considered in the review of the firm.

**Hofstede dimensions (Hofstede, 1983).** Organizational culture and societal culture play a significant role in the performance appraisal process (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) introduced a cultural behavior theory named the Hofstede Dimensions. Hofstede conducted an extensive study of employees of a single U.S. corporation based in over 50 countries, using over 115,000 surveys. The focus of the research was employee behavior in the workplace based on specified behavioral observations. The four areas of observation were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism in contrast to collectivism, and masculinity in contrast with femininity (Hofstede, 1983). Cultural differences are a critical factor in international performance appraisal administration (Hofstede, 1983).

Hofstede (1983) posited firms must account for the difference between foreign cultural practices and domestic cultural conditions in an international
business setting. International performance appraisals used by multinational firms are an example of the integration requirement (Shen, 2004). Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham (2007) posited Hofstede’s Dimensions are based on a workplace environment and intended for human resource management usage. This supports the contention of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions serving a potential role in the research and formulation of performance appraisals.

**Power distance.** Hofstede (1980) defined power distance as the level a culture believes institutional and organizational power is transferred in an inequitable manner (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance is determined by the amount of situational control and leverage held by a supervisor in contrast to the workforce (Hofstede, 1980). Employees who wield a lower level of influence tend to perceive an inequitable distribution of power in the firm (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance in a cultural setting differs across international firms and multinational entities (Hofstede, 1983). Employees assess performance appraisal equity through the lens of their cultural perspective (Hofstede, 1983).

**Uncertainty avoidance.** Hofstede (1980) defined uncertainty avoidance as a condition in which individuals possess a sense of risk caused by unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances in a societal context. These societies take steps to avoid unpredictable situations through enhanced job security, formalizing guidelines for behavior and strict enforcement of policies
which minimize unacceptable conditions (Hofstede, 1980).

This relates to Hofstede’s contention of the presence of a range of uncertainty avoidance preferences in societal and organizational settings. According to Hofstede (1997) cultures which possess a dominant form of uncertainty avoidance tend to experience an increased sense of apprehension and contention which fosters an intrinsic desire to intensify their work efforts. The evidence suggested individuals from a high uncertainty avoidance culture may avoid performance appraisal feedback opportunities due to their cultural background (Hofstede, 1980). Hogg and Terry (2000) posited that uncertainty avoidance is a primary factor in social identity development within organizational cultures.

**Individualism.** Individualism infers a detached societal structure that expects individuals to be self-supportive of their individual family groups, while collectivism infers a rigid societal structure defined by the views of associated and unaffiliated groups (Hofstede, 1980). The associated groups which include immediate family members and other associated groupings are required to take care of the needs of its internal group members (Hofstede, 1980). The bond produced by this expectation is very strong and reciprocity with unwavering allegiance is the expected result by all members of the group (Hofstede, 1980). This cultural dimension is relevant to international performance appraisals because of the diverse nature of multinational

**Masculinity.** Masculinity is displayed through its contrast with femininity (Hofstede, 1980). The characteristics of masculinity are outlined by the level of influence present in society by attributes associated with the male gender. These attributes include the pursuit of property, financial gain, determination, and lack of concern about the welfare of others (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede (1983) posited there was a trend to each of the four dimensions over the four-year survey conduct time period. There was an increase in the prevalence of uncertainty avoidance behavior in the workplace, an expected decrease in the trend of power distance, and an increase in the prevalence of individualistic behavior in the workplace (Hofstede, 1983). Masculinity in contrast to femininity varied based on the surveyed region of the world (Hofstede, 1983). These cultural dimensions remain prevalent to international performance appraisal processes due to cultural differences and expectations across global boundaries (Hofstede, 1983). According to Shen (2004) cultural factors are essential components in the development of effective international performance appraisals.

**Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964).** Expectancy theory is useful in examining the cause of organizational challenges due to unmet expectations in
the workplace. According to Vroom (1964) individuals maintain a presumption of an expected outcome from their efforts at work. Unmet employee expectations can be attributed to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1963). According to Adams (1963) equity theory described the perception a person has of an inequitable work situation based on the outcomes of his contribution to the work effort compared to the outcome of a similar contribution of a counterpart. Adams (1965) suggested the perception of an inequitable situation and not pure evidence of an inequitable situation is pertinent to the definition of inequity in organizational settings.

**Action research theory (Lewin, 1946).** Lewin (1999) noted that group dynamics have a critical role in the organizational functions and group activities. Lewin (1946) developed Action Research Theory and pioneered the study of group dynamics (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011). Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011) noted that action research includes a four-part cycle of investigation, planning, active response and assessment. These research findings support the examination of employee perspectives of the performance appraisal process in DoD due to the integrated nature of group dynamics and organizational culture influence on employee and organizational success.
Theoretical Frameworks

The researcher used two frameworks for the examination of the research topic based on an in-depth review of the current literature and its relevance to the research topic. DoD performance appraisals and their impact on employee motivation and turnover intent is a critical area of concern for DoD organizations. The researcher used the theoretical frameworks of Organizational Commitment Theory (Kessler, 2013) and employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Ferguson, 2007). Organizational commitment and employee engagement are key indicators of employee motivation and intent to remain at an organization (Flint et al., 2013). DoD employees are similarly influenced by organizational commitment and employee engagement factors. The study examined employee perceptions of performance appraisal impacts on motivation and turnover intent through the lens of Organizational Commitment Theory and employee engagement.

Organizational commitment theory. Organizational commitment theory posited that individual requirements related to competence, affiliation and independence are universally prevalent in society and the workplace (Kessler, 2013). Flint et al. (2013); Cheng (2014); Chen (2010) posited that organizational commitment is a perspective toward an entity dependent on exchange. Organizational commitment is dependent on the relationship between individual workforce members and organizational entities (Flint et
al., 2013). According to Flint et al. (2013) there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and employee turnover intent. This is a critical point to address in the examination of employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process.

Meyer and Allen (1991) posited that organizational commitment entails three components: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. These components serve as psychological factors which determine an individual’s intent to continue to work at an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment refers to the sentimental views that a person possesses towards their workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This is related to positive feelings that an individual maintains toward their supervisor. The impact of this is an increased likelihood of retention and job satisfaction.

Continuance commitment is described as a necessity to remain with an organization due to thoughts of financial dependence, need for organizational affiliation or other costs of departing the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Birecikli, Alpkan, Ertürk and Aksoy (2016) found that organizational leadership should be cognizant of employee needs in the workplace to in order to foster commitment to the organization and minimize turnover intentions. DoD leaders should pay particular attention to employee needs and personal attributes during the recruitment, onboarding and continuous evaluation
Birecikli et al., (2016) stated that the relationship between employee attributes and workplace systems has a significant impact on workforce attitudes toward the organization.

Performance appraisals are important for management of affective commitment as well as continuance commitment. Normative commitment is present when workforce members remain employed at an organization because of a sense of obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This is prevalent in DoD organizations due to the presence of former military servicemembers employed in DoD civilian positions, national defense mission of the DoD and high onboarding costs due to training, security clearance processing and relocation requirements. It is imperative that supervisors maintain awareness of employee commitment through formal and informal interaction at the workplace.

DoD employees with high levels of organizational commitment tend to have increased employment satisfaction, higher motivation levels, improved job performance and reduced presence of turnover intentions (Goldenkoff, 2017). DoD civilian employees have numerous regulatory, legislative and performance-based factors which require strict adherence to established processes. These factors are valid within the construct of affective, continuance and normative commitment. Retention and hiring processes in DoD organizations tend to improve when organizational commitment is
present and nurtured within the organization (Goldenkoff, 2017). Performance appraisal processes are an integral part of a sustained effort to increase organizational commitment within the DoD.

Organizations are constantly challenged to react to internal and external changes in their respective operating environment (Schein, 1965). Organizational culture and societal culture play a significant role in the performance appraisal process (Cheung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011). Ali et al. (2012) posited effective organizational appraisal processes should offer constructive feedback to workforce members. According to Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011) power and politics are in every organizational environment.

Organizations that focus on ethical choices and acceptable workplace behavior are less likely to employ organizational leaders that exploit performance evaluations for political motives (Shore & Strauss, 2008). This is especially important in DoD organizations due to the mission, organizational scope and size of the workforce. Organizational commitment is one of the primary areas of concern and potential impact for DoD leadership.

**Employee engagement theory.** Employee engagement entails the display of physical, psychological and cognitive attributes at work during the performance of employee job-related duties (Kahn, 1990). The DoD has made employee engagement a specific focus in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey that is conducted annually throughout DoD. The survey is a
quantitative assessment of employee perceptions on the workplace but there is a paucity of qualitative data which focuses on employee perceptions of DoD performance appraisals and employee engagement relationships.

MacLeod and Clarke (2009) stated that “employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being” (p.9) (Rowley, 2014). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) suggested that through the use of employee engagement, organizational leadership actively pursue the cooperative involvement of employees to improve workplace efficiency.

**Synthesis**

The purpose of this study was to examine the connection between employee motivation and turnover intent to the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations. This study is significant because there is a paucity of qualitative research on employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process in DoD. The researcher selected organizational commitment theory and employee engagement because of the importance of these concepts to organizational success and employee job satisfaction.

DoD has made a significant push to focus on employee engagement with specific guidance to raters, organizational leaders and human resource
managers (Garamone, 2016). Flint et al. (2013) stated that there is a critical link between organizational commitment and employee turnover intentions. Therefore, DoD organizations should focus on specific options to engage employees, offer consequential job duties, and provide meaningful advancement opportunities to increase workforce commitment to DoD organizations.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology that the researcher used to collect data and analyze results from research participants. The literature review indicates that effective performance appraisal processes are very important to organizational success through increased employee motivation and commitment to the organization. The literature review also highlights an absence of qualitative research that seeks to examine employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process and its effect on motivation and turnover intent. Examining employee perceptions in a phenomenological study may further the literature on performance appraisal process factors that impact employee motivation and turnover intentions in DoD organizations.
Chapter 3. Methodology

Overview

This research examined employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and potential connections between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation and ultimately turnover intent. Several themes emerged from the data collection process that will further the research on DoD performance appraisal experience effects on employee motivation, engagement and turnover intent. The purpose of this chapter was to outline the research methodology that the researcher will utilize in the proposed study. This chapter will address the philosophical worldview, research design, research approach, data collection plan, data analysis plan, ethical considerations and specific processes that the researcher used in the study. The chapter will also discuss target sample, participant selection, researcher positionality, research validity and trustworthiness, and research credibility.

Worldview

According to Creswell (2014) the philosophical worldview determines the viewpoint that the research is conducted from. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of DoD employees in the performance appraisal process and the perceived impact on their motivation.
and turnover intent. The researcher conducted the study using a social constructivist viewpoint. Creswell (2013) defined social constructivism as a viewpoint where individuals attempt to comprehend the environment in which they live and are employed. The researcher with a constructivist worldview seeks to understand the perspective of the research participant, thus anticipated that interviews were the most appropriate and effective data collection method to conduct the study. The remainder of the chapter will discuss the research questions that the researcher addressed in the study, the research design, processes, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, validity, trustworthiness and research credibility. To review, the research questions that guided the study are:

1) What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization?

2) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization?

3) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

**Research Design**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) there are six prevalent designs that are commonly used in qualitative research: (1) phenomenology, (2) grounded theory, (3) narrative inquiry, (4) case study method, (5)
ethnography and (6) standard qualitative research. Moustakas (1994) stated that the intent of phenomenological research is to determine the meaning of an experience or phenomenon from the perspective of the person that underwent the experience. This study used the research design of phenomenology to examine the potential impact of performance appraisal experiences on DoD employee motivation and turnover intent. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) stated that phenomenological research centers on the comprehension of underlying factors of a situation familiar to several individuals to discover the importance of experiencing the phenomenon. This study used a phenomenological approach to examine the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations through the perspectives of DoD employees who have the lived experience of the phenomenon of participating in the performance appraisal process. There are eight steps in the phenomenological research process according to Moustakas (1994):

1) Determine topic and formulate a question

2) Review of the literature

3) Develop selection criteria for participants

4) Gather participant permission, develop confidentiality procedures, gain participant agreement on interview location, time and session recording and publishing consent.

5) Construct interview questions
6) Data collection

7) Organization and data analysis

8) Develop summary of findings

In the following section the researcher briefly addressed how the eight steps were used in the study. The researcher will discuss and break down how each step functioned in the study. Further in the document the researcher will break down the process in additional detail. These steps were critical to the process of research, data collection and analysis because the researcher must follow a detailed process that is traceable and easily replicated by future researchers to ensure validity and reliability of the findings and the research process.

**Step 1: determine topic and formulate a question.** The researcher reviewed the relevant literature before deciding to examine the topic of “understanding Department of Defense employee perceptions of performance appraisals: Making a connection between performance appraisals and employee motivation”. Performance appraisal impact on employees in DoD organizations continued to be an important topic to the researcher as a result of his experience in the performance appraisal process and continued observations of the perceived organizational challenges involved in that process.
Step 2: review of literature. The researcher conducted the literature review through a detailed process of reviewing legislative documents, DoD regulations related to the performance appraisal process, scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles, books and seminal research from existing research in the field of performance appraisals, motivation, organizational commitment, employee engagement and turnover intent. These documents are publicly available documents found on various U.S. Government websites, Florida Institute of Technology Library through ProQuest queries, books and peer-reviewed articles. The researcher found suitable quantitative research related to performance appraisals in DoD organizations but identified a paucity of qualitative literature focused on DoD employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process and its impact on motivation and turnover intent. The researcher identified the lack of qualitative research on DoD performance appraisal processes and its impact on motivation and turnover intent as a significant gap in the literature worthy of examination.

Step 3: develop selection criteria for participants. The next step in the research process involved the development of selection criteria for participants which facilitated the examination of the research questions in this study. The researcher gained access to DoD employees through voluntary participation requests coordinated through human resource management directorates at various DoD organizations that participated in the Federal
Employee Viewpoint Survey conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. This method of participant selection allowed the researcher to analyze qualitative data collected during the data collection process. There are two participant categories in this study: employees and human resource management directors. The selection criteria for human resource management directors differed from the employee participants. Human resource directors were required to work in the organizations whose employees participated in the study and required significant experience in performance appraisal management. Employee participants were selected based on relevance to the study and selection as DoD civilian employees who received at least two performance appraisals as an employee of a DoD organization. The study participants received a performance appraisal within one year of the interview date. The study participants were also selected based on acceptance of a participation request and meeting the screening criteria. The screening criteria was:

1) Participants must be DoD civilian employees of a mid-sized organization that participated in the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

2) The preferred employee participants should have received an AcqDemo (Civilian Acquisition Workforce Demonstration Project), Defense Civilian Intelligence Performance System (DCIPS) or TAPES (Total Army Performance Evaluation System) performance appraisal to ensure that they
meet the requirements of a shared phenomenon experience (Creswell, 2013). The participants were selected through voluntary participation in the study through emailed participation requests, referrals from DoD employees and cold call participation requests to human resource management directors and other DoD employees.

The research population consisted of three DoD organizations primarily located in Maryland and Northern Virginia with a minimum of 1000 employees. The sample included employees from DoD organizations in the midsize category of the 2017 Partnership for Public Service Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Survey, to ensure a diverse population and adequate sample size. A midsize category organization consists of agencies with 1,000 to 14,999 employees. Agencies must participate in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to participate in the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government ranking survey.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 DoD employees at three participating organizations. Creswell (2013) stated that a sample size of three to ten people is appropriate for a phenomenological study using a purposeful sampling approach. The target sample was 15-20 people to ensure the researcher received an adequate number of interview subjects to meet research requirements and theme saturation.
Step 4: gather participant permission, develop confidentiality procedures, gain participant agreement on procedural factors. The researcher gathered participant permission, developed confidentiality procedures, gained participant agreement on interview location, time and session recording and publishing consent in a manner that was consistent with the guidelines in Moustakas’ (1994) seminal work on research design. The researcher submitted requests for participation through email queries submitted by human resource management personnel at participating DoD organizations, cold calls to prospective participants and face-to-face participation requests. Validity and trustworthiness are critical factors in the qualitative research process due to the threat of invalid assumptions and interpretations (Maxwell, 2013).

Researcher bias based on selection of theories, data and preconceived findings can significantly skew research results (Maxwell, 2013). For example, given my employment with a DoD organization and my exposure to DoD employees, my preconceived thoughts concerning the DoD performance appraisal process could potentially affect my interpretation of the study findings. I acknowledged my potential bias and focused on the essence of the participant perspectives to minimize potential skewing of the data. The researcher took measures to maintain cognizance of the potential for researcher bias during data collection, analysis and interpretation to minimize the inherent
effects of bias on the study. Maxwell (2013) posited that triangulation, the
purposeful act of gathering data from multiple sources in varied locations using
multiple methods is an effective way to reduce threats to the validity of research.

The researcher sought feedback from the study participants and
gathered information from multiple sources to further minimize the presence of
researcher bias and therefore strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the research. The researcher asked participants to review their interview responses
to ensure accuracy. The researcher recorded all interviews with a digital tape
recorder and gained participant permission prior to initiating the recorded
interview. The digital recording process allowed greater accuracy in
Participant interview transcripts and data verification. Participants may
receive copies of the research study upon completion of the dissertation
process. Document review consisted of government documents from primary
sources and scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles and books relevant to the study.

The researcher is a career military officer currently serving in the
United States Army, and has extensive experience in performance appraisal
administration and feedback due to their length of military service and
supervisory responsibilities. The researcher is not personally connected to the
outcome of the research findings, but is interested due to continued service as a
military personnel rating official and a Department of the Army civilian rating official involved in the performance appraisal process at a DoD organization.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed for this study and each of the following items were accomplished as stipulated in the IRB application: participant recruitment results based on male versus female participant recruitment, and other factors including management participation and Human Resource Manager participation. The risk level to participants in this research was reported as minimal on the IRB application and there were no reports of harm or discomfort from study participants, this continued to hold true throughout the course of the study. The researcher will provide an executive summary of the results of this study to all study participants in accordance with IRB guidelines.

**Step 5: construct interview questions.** The researcher developed interview questions for the study through a review of literature and examination of the primary research questions that the study intended to address. The first interview protocol (Appendix A) was intended for use with DoD employees who agreed to participate in the study. The second interview protocol (Appendix B) was for human resource management personnel who were employed at participating DoD organizations. The interview questions were written in a conversational tone to gain rapport with the participants. The questions were sequentially ordered to ensure a smooth transition between
topics during the interview process. The researcher conducted 19 interviews with DoD employees, two of which were Human Resource Management professionals from participating organizations. The DoD employee interview protocol was used for 17 interviews. Two interviews from the pilot study were not used during the data analysis process of this research study. The human resource management personnel interview protocol was used for two interviews. The human resource management interviews were conducted at the participants work location in a private conference room.

**Step 6: data collection.** The researcher collected data using interviews of DoD personnel and human resources management professionals who participated in the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations. The researcher used a qualitative approach with data collected through in-depth interviews with DoD civilian employees and human resource management professionals. Creswell (2014) notes that data collection using interviews should be conducted using scheduled timeframes and at a location based on the preference of the research participants. The researcher conducted the interviews face-to-face and via telephone based on the location, availability and preference of the participants. The face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participant work locations in a private setting, typically a conference room or office. The researcher conducted nine of the interviews in a private, face-to-face setting. 10 of the interviews were collected via telephone due to
participant availability or physical distance from the researcher. The researcher scheduled an appointment with each participant prior to each interview and followed the same interview protocol procedure for telephonic and face-to-face interviews.

The researcher verified participant consent prior to each interview session. Each participant signed a consent form that was approved by the Florida Institute of Technology Institutional Review Board prior to the start of the interview session. The researcher ensured the participants that their personal identifying information including names and employment organizations would remain anonymous. The researcher constructed a profile of each participating organization and participant without disclosing names of participants or their respective employment organizations in order to maintain confidentiality.

The researcher recorded the interviews with participant approval and utilized Vanan Online Services, an online transcription service, to transcribe the participant interview responses. The researcher secured the digital tape recordings on the researcher’s laptop computer and any documents related to the interview participants were kept in a locked drawer only accessible to the researcher. The researcher also secured the digital tape recorder in a locked drawer at home only accessible to the researcher to ensure confidentiality was maintained.
The researcher gained approval from the respective Human Resource Management directorates at each participating DoD organization prior to soliciting interview participants. The researcher also interviewed two Human Resource Management directors for additional insight into performance appraisal impact on employee motivation, employee engagement and turnover intent. The researcher discussed the study intent and purpose with organizational leadership to facilitate access to employees.

The research study did not involve the review, analysis or discussion of actual performance appraisal instruments at the organizations, but rather involved an in-depth review of interview responses from DoD employees who have a keen insight into the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations. This approach was based on findings in literature which noted the paucity of narrative data from employees concerning performance appraisal effects on motivation, retention and organizational effectiveness. Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2010) noted that phenomenological research seeks to determine the essence of lived experiences from individuals or groups relative to a particular phenomenon. The DoD performance appraisal experience was the phenomenon that this research examined.

The participant organizations had experience with the Acquisition Demonstration performance appraisal system (AcqDemo), the Total Army Personnel Evaluation System (TAPES), Department of Defense Civilian
Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) and Department of Defense Performance Management Appraisal Program (DPMAP), which implemented throughout the Department of Defense in 2017 (OPM, 2017). The majority of the participants received AcqDemo, DCIPS or TAPES appraisals. DPMAP was implemented during 2016 and 2017 and most participants did not have significant experience with the DPMAP process. The researcher did not ask specific questions about individual participant performance appraisals but selected participants that used similar performance appraisals to facilitate a standard set of procedural norms for the performance appraisal process study.

**Pre-Survey Screening Questions:**

1. Have you received an employee performance appraisal within the past year?
2. Have you participated in the performance appraisal process at least two times as an employee of a DoD organization?
3. Are you currently a DoD Civilian employee that received an AcqDemo, DCIPS, TAPES or DPMAP appraisal?

**Step 7: organization and data analysis.** The researcher used an interpretive phenomenological approach through the theoretical framework of Organizational Commitment Theory (Kessler, 2013) and employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Ferguson, 2007) and compared and contrasted findings from individual interviews. The use of Organizational Commitment
Theory (Kessler, 2013) and employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Ferguson, 2007) facilitated the examination of employee perceptions of motivation, employee engagement, turnover intent and the potential effects on job performance. Organizational Commitment Theory proposed that individual requirements related to competence, affiliation and independence are universally prevalent in society and the workplace (Kessler, 2013).

Employee engagement entailed the display of physical, psychological and cognitive attributes at work during the performance of employee job-related duties (Kahn, 1990). The researcher compared the findings to scholarly, peer-reviewed findings in the existing literature and primary data from the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to ascertain potential causality and common themes between the interviews and survey results.

The data analysis entailed interpretative phenomenological analysis involving 19 DoD civilians. Phenomenological research is used to examine a phenomenon that all research participants have experienced (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2014) stated that five to ten participants are appropriate for a phenomenological study. The researcher recorded the interviews with participant approval and utilized NVivo Pro 12 (NVivo, 2018), an interactive software program that assists in data coding and qualitative analysis.

According to Moustakas (1994) there are eight phases in phenomenological research analysis. The researcher outlined personal
background in the performance appraisal process to proactively minimize procedural bias during the conduct of the study. The researcher has an extensive background in the phenomenon of performance appraisal processes in DoD organizations due to a lengthy career as a U.S. military officer that received and administered performance appraisals.

The researcher highlighted important comments in the interview transcripts from each person that demonstrated participant experiences in the performance appraisal process. Moustakas (1994) described this process as horizontalization; the process of batching significant statements or quotes that detail how an individual experienced a specific phenomenon. These statements were then transferred into themes through the development of clusters of meanings from the respective statements (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then profiled each participant with their name and interview transcript. This was followed by polling the most significant statement from each person and then adding the research questions to the first page of each participant’s transcript. The researcher then associated each statement to the research questions to facilitate theme development. The researcher organized the prevalent comments into themes that allowed the researcher to answer the research questions. Creswell (2014) stated that phenomenological research should include specific examples of participant characterization of the phenomenon that is being examined. Maxwell (2013) found that qualitative
researchers should ensure that they do not discount the theories discussed by the actual participants in the research study because they typically know the topic much better than the researcher. This process entailed listing specific examples of participant responses to the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations.

**Step 8: develop summary of findings.** The researcher organized the findings categorically through themes and associated the themes to the research questions. The findings are listed to identify trends and further the literature on 1) the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations 2) the impact of the performance appraisal experience on employee motivation in DoD and 3) the connection between the performance appraisal experience and turnover intent in DoD organizations. The summary of findings identified additional gaps in the literature and limitations of the research study to offer potential areas for future research.

**Pilot Study**

In order to ensure the validity of the research study, the researcher conducted a pilot study with two research participants that met the screening criteria for the research study. Creswell (2014) stated that conducting a pilot study for qualitative research provides critical insights into the participant understanding and perspective of topics, experiences and events that the study intends to examine. The pilot study interview results were not included in the
research study findings and recommendations. The pilot study interviews were conducted in person in a private office setting. The pilot study participants signed the consent form as dictated by the IRB and agreed to the digital recording request. The pilot study participants were both male and worked in DoD. The pilot study interviews were conducted using the employee interview protocol found in Appendix A for non-human resource management personnel. The researcher requested feedback from each of the pilot study participants at the end of each interview session to verify if the interview protocol was sufficient or required modifications. The participants noted that the interview questions were detailed and sufficiently open-ended to facilitate discussion during the interview. The participants also stated that the sequence of the questions followed a logical flow that was appropriate for the research study.

The researcher decided to provide the interview questions to the participants in advance of the interview based on recommendations by the pilot study participants. Each pilot study participant noted that participants could provide more detailed responses to the interview questions if they had the questions in advance of the interview. This change served as a helpful option which allowed participants to review the questions in advance and formulate answers or thoughts prior to the interview. The decision to provide the questions to participants prior to the interview also served to alleviate potential concerns about the questions and topics that were discussed. The researcher
provided the interview questions to participants after they agreed to participate in the study. The researcher did not offer any compensation to interview participants for their participation in the study. The lack of compensation did not impact the participant recruitment process.

The researcher scheduled each interview session for one hour to ensure sufficient time was available for each interview. Although the pilot study interviews were relatively short, the researcher maintained the one-hour scheduling for the interviews to allow sufficient time for each participant. The interview protocol remained unchanged throughout the data collection process based on the results from the pilot study. The researcher used the pilot study to sharpen the flow of the interview process and to examine the effectiveness of the questions to answer the research questions. The interview data from the pilot study was not included in the full study.

Chapter three outlined the research methodology that the researcher utilized in the study. This chapter discussed the philosophical worldview, research design, research approach, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations and specific processes that the researcher used in the study. The chapter also described the target sample, participant selection, researcher positionality, research validity and trustworthiness, and research credibility. The following chapters discuss research findings, limitations and the conclusion of the study.
Chapter 4. Findings

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine employee experiences who have experienced the performance appraisal process in the Department of Defense (DoD). Ultimately the objective of the study was to examine potential connections between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation, and finally turnover intent. A phenomenological research design was selected in order to examine the lived experiences of the DoD employees that participated in the study. The researcher conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with 19 DoD employees at three participating organizations. Participants were selected from three DoD organizations based in Northern Virginia and Maryland with a workforce size exceeding 1000 employees. The sample included employees from DoD organizations in the midsize category of the 2017 Partnership for Public Service Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Survey (Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey), to ensure a diverse population and adequate sample size. A midsize category organization consists of agencies with 1,000 to 14,999 employees.

There was a total of 19 participants who participated in the research study with a breakdown of the sample being 10 male participants and nine
female participants. The interviews were based on the following research questions:

a. What is the performance appraisal process experience in a DoD organization?

b. In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization?

c. Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

Chapter four outlines the research study findings in connection to the research questions. The findings utilized the research design of phenomenology to examine the potential impact of performance appraisal experiences on DoD employee motivation and turnover intent. This study used phenomenological analysis to examine the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations through the perspectives of DoD employees who have experienced the phenomenon of participating in the performance appraisal process. The researcher conducted individual interviews to facilitate the examination of the lived experiences of the study participants during the DoD performance appraisal process. The individual interviews were instrumental in gathering sufficient data to answer the research questions foundational to the
study. The study utilized the eight-step phenomenological research process (Moustakas, 1994). As noted in chapter three, the eight steps in the phenomenological research process according to Moustakas (1994) are:

1) Determine topic and formulate a question
2) Review of the literature
3) Develop selection criteria for participants
4) Gather participant permission, develop confidentiality procedures, gain participant agreement on interview location, time and session recording and publishing consent.
5) Construct interview questions
6) Data collection
7) Organization and data analysis
8) Develop summary of findings

**Participant Interviews**

The researcher used two interview protocols for the research study. The first interview protocol (Appendix A) was used to interview DoD employees who agreed to participate in the study, were employed at participating DoD organizations and were not human resource managers. The second interview protocol (Appendix B) was utilized during the course of interviews with human resource management personnel who were employed at participating DoD organizations. All participants met the screening criteria of
currently working as a DoD civilian employee that received an AcqDemo, TAPES, DCIPS or DPMAP performance appraisal, received a minimum of two performance appraisals from a DoD organization, and received a DoD performance appraisal within one year of the interview. The interviews were conducted in person and via telephone based on the preference and availability of the interviewee. The researcher conducted 10 interviews in person and nine interviews via telephone.

All interviews lasted no more than one hour and were conducted over a four-month period between February 2018 to May 2018. The researcher utilized the four-month timeframe to recruit qualified participants from three specific DoD organizations with diverse levels of experience, work requirements and performance appraisal experiences. The researcher identified the participants by pseudo name to ensure the anonymity of the research participants. The participants worked at three DoD organizations based primarily in Northern Virginia and Maryland. The three organizations consist of civilian and military personnel affiliated with the DoD.

The researcher used Vanan Online Services, an online transcription service to transcribe the interviews. The online transcription service ensured participant confidentiality through the use of number coding as a naming convention for each transcript. The transcripts are uploaded to the transcription service via a secured portal once the transcription order has been
placed. Vanan Online services also guaranteed data confidentially through the use of non-disclosure agreements for all of their employees. The company deleted each transcription file once the transcription was completed and submitted to the customer. The company noted the use of state-of-the-art encryption including multiple firewalls, virtual private network servers with complex authentication requirements to ensure data security. The transcribed interviews were coded and reviewed through multiple iterations by the researcher to identify themes in order to answer the research questions. The researcher manually coded the transcribed documents and used NVivo Pro 12 NVivo (2018), a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software platform to assist in the verification of coding accuracy and theme analysis. NVivo Pro 12 was used to query the transcribed interviews via a word frequency search which served as a backup to the manual transcription coding that the researcher performed.

Maxwell (2013) stated that qualitative researchers and the interview setting always affect the response of the participant. The researcher acknowledged this fact during the development of the interview protocols to account for the potential validity challenges caused by the interview process (Maxwell, 2013). The presence of specific words and textual phrases which occurred throughout the transcribed documents were a factor in the development of themes. The themes were also derived from the process of
comparing and contrasting data from the literature review to the themes found in the interview process. The identified themes addressed the research questions that the study sought to examine.

**Research Participants**

**Demographic Overview**

The research study consisted of participants who had been active employees at a DoD organization for at least two years. The participants were required to have received at least two DoD performance appraisals. There were eleven male participants and eight female participants in the study. The participant demographics are outlined in Appendix I, Participant Demographic Data. The researcher did not recruit participants based on gender, age, or ethnicity. The researcher assigned pseudo names to all participants and the participating organizations to maintain participant confidentiality.

**Organization and Participant Profiles**

The researcher used the Organizational Commitment Theory (Kessler, 2013) and Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990; Ferguson, 2007) as frameworks for the study. Flint et al., (2013) stated that employee engagement and organizational commitment are critical indicators of individual motivation and intent to remain employed at an organization. The study examined employee perceptions of performance appraisal impacts on motivation and turnover intent through the lens of Organizational Commitment Theory and
Employee Engagement. DoD employees are influenced by organizational commitment and employee engagement factors.

This study used the research design of phenomenology to examine the potential impact of performance appraisal experiences on DoD employee motivation and turnover intent. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that phenomenological research focuses on the understanding of underlying factors of a situation familiar to several individuals to discover the importance of experiencing the phenomenon. This study used a phenomenological approach to examine the performance appraisal process in DoD organizations through the perspectives of DoD employees who have the lived experience of the phenomenon of participating in the performance appraisal process.

Organizational Profiles

The researcher created participant profiles, including profiles of the three participating organizations to highlight the diverse sample of participants in the study and the separate organizations that comprise the study. The researcher created profiles of the three participating organizations to highlight the diverse mission sets at each organization while simultaneously comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the respective employees that participated in the study. The pseudo names of the three organizations are Red, White and Blue.
Organization A: Red

Organization Red is based in Maryland and has employees stationed across the country. Organization Red is a technology-centric organization that employs personnel from a wide range of technical and administrative fields. The organization employs scientists, engineers and other broad-based functions. The majority of the interview participants from Organization Red were based in Northern Alabama. Organization Red is comprised of military and civilian employees. The researcher interviewed seven DoD civilians at Organization Red for the study.

Organization B: White

Organization White is based in Northern Virginia with employees stationed nationwide and globally. Organization White is a highly technology-centric organization that employs personnel from a wide range of technical and scientific fields. The organization employs physicists, scientists, engineers and other highly technical skill sets. The interview participants from Organization White were based in Northern Alabama and Colorado. Organization White is comprised of military and civilian employees. The researcher interviewed two DoD civilians at Organization White.

Organization C: Blue

Organization Blue is based in Northern Virginia with employees stationed nationwide and around the globe. Organization Blue is a
technocentric organization that employs personnel with specific skill sets in network defense and information system technology backgrounds. The organization also employed physicists, scientists, engineers and other highly technical skill sets. The interview participants from Organization Blue were based in Northern Virginia. Organization Blue is comprised of military and civilian employees. The researcher interviewed 10 DoD civilians at Organization Blue.

**Participant Profiles**

Creswell (2013) stated that the purpose of qualitative research is to empower participants to share their experiences while minimizing the potential power relationship that may exist between researcher and participant. The researcher provided detailed profiles of each participant to provide the perspective and context of each participant’s response to the interview questions. The pseudo names of the individual participants were chosen from the names of U.S. Army installations.

**Participant: Gordon**

Participant Gordon is an African-American female employed in a DoD organization in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue). She is a human resource management professional with a broad background in employee engagement and performance appraisal administration. She was very interested in the research topic and readily agreed to participate in the study.
She is a career government employee who has worked in DoD for over 17 years. She is currently a supervisor to DoD employees.

**Participant: Stewart**

Participant Stewart is an African-American female that is employed in a DoD organization in Northern Virginia (Organization C). She is a human resource management professional that was very interested in the research topic and readily agreed to participate in the study. She is a career government employee who has worked in DoD for over 14 years.

**Participant: Leavenworth**

Participant Leavenworth is a Caucasian male with over 31 years of government service. He works at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization B). He has several degrees including a Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering. He stated “I’ve been a government civilian now for eight and a half years”. Participant Leavenworth does not currently serve as a supervisor to government civilians. He has significant experience in several DoD performance appraisal systems. His interview was conducted via telephone based on availability and participant preference.

**Participant: Riley**

Participant Riley is a Caucasian male with over 14 years of experience as a DoD employee. He works in a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization Red). He noted “*My professional experience for rating DOD*
civilians is 14 years as a supervisor. I’ve undergone all the required DOD training for supervising personnel in the mandatory supervisory development program.” He has several degrees including a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree. Participant Riley serves as a supervisor to government civilians. He has significant experience in several DoD performance appraisal systems.

Participant: Campbell

Participant Campbell is an African-American male with over 20 years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. He works in a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization C). “I’m a retired military officer. I have over 20 years’ experience in the Department of Defense as a government employee.” He has several degrees including a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree in Management. Participant Campbell does not currently serve as a supervisor to government civilians, although he has significant experience in several DoD performance appraisal systems.

Participant: Knox

Participant Knox is a Caucasian male with over 24 years’ experience in government service. He has served as a DoD civilian for the past four years. He is a retired United States Army Commissioned Officer. He works in a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization White). He states that “I’m a retired army (officer), 20 years. Currently employed with
[Organization White] as an operations research analyst. I’ve been working here since I retired from the military.” Participant Knox did not currently serve as a supervisor to government civilians, however, he has significant experience in several DoD performance appraisal systems.

**Participant: Polk**

Participant Polk is a Caucasian female with over 14 years’ experience in government service as a DoD civilian employee. “I have worked for the Department of Defense in the Navy, Marine Corp, the Army and the Air Force. I’ve been in the DOD arena for 13 years.” She has a Bachelor’s degree and works at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue). Participant Polk did not serve as a supervisor to government civilians.

**Participant: Aberdeen**

Participant Aberdeen is an African-American male with over 29 years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. “Experience 29 years of service... Right now, doing the acquisition work more on the management side; Bachelors in Electrical Engineering.” He has worked in his current position for six years. He has a Bachelor’s degree and two Master’s degrees. He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization Red) and served as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.
**Participant: Bliss**

Research Participant Bliss is a Caucasian male with over eight years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. He has been in his current position for the past eight years. He has a Bachelor’s degree and two Master’s degrees. Participant Bliss described his professional experience as “a combination of government civilian for 11 years. Senior civilian in the Army. Then combined that with a quite extensive military background. Almost 22 years now. acquisition, then right now working the whole of government interagency.... seven and a half years in the organization. Current position would be three years.” He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization Red) and serves as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Participant: Drum**

Participant Drum is an African-American female with 24 years’ experience as a DoD employee. She has been in her current position for two years. She has a Bachelor’s degree. She described her educational and professional background as “I served in the military for 22 years. I now am a logistics management specialist. She worked at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.
**Participant Buchanan**

Participant Buchanan is a Caucasian female with five years’ experience as a DoD employee. She has been in her current position for three years. She has a Bachelor’s degree. She described her professional background as “I worked in money, state government, non-profits, and now Federal Government.... Five years.” She worked at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Participant: Redstone**

Participant Redstone is an African-American male with eight years’ experience as a DoD employee. He has been in his current position for three years. He listed his experience as “I have over 25 years, all of it in the Air Defense industry. The last eight years have been in civilian or DoD employment.” He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization Red) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Participant: Rucker**

Participant Rucker is an African-American female with 12 years’ experience as a DoD employee. She has been in her current position for two years. She worked at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD
civilians. She described her educational background as “Human resource management and administration. The administrative part varies, so it depends on what part of DoD I’m working for that applies for the administrative work.”

**Participant: Greely**

Participant Greely is a Hispanic female with 10 years’ experience as a DoD employee. She has been in her current position for two years. She has a Bachelor’s degree. “I’m in the intel civilian world.” She works at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Participant: Wainwright**

Participant Wainwright is an African-American female with nine years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. She is a retired United States Army Commissioned Officer with 26 years of military service. She outlined her professional and educational experience as “I have a lot of experience with actually writing performance appraisals both the military and civilian. I have a Master’s degree.” She has been in her current position for nine years. She worked at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and serves as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.
Participant: Carson

Participant Carson is a Caucasian male with nine years’ experience as a DoD employee. He has been in his current position for over two years. He has a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree. He stated “My educational background is that I have a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree. I have been working for almost ten years as a government employee.” He worked at a DoD organization based in Northern Virginia (Organization Blue) and serves as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

Participant: Hood

Participant Hood is an African-American male with 15 years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. He is also a retired United States Army Non-Commissioned Officer with 21 years of military service. He has been in his current position for eight years. He described his professional experience “I was with the military 21 years. I’ve got 15 years of civil service.” He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization Red) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

Participant: Bragg

Participant Bragg is an African-American male with 12 years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. He has been in his current position for 12 years. He described his professional background and education as, “High school graduate, college. Twelve years as a government employee.” He has a
Bachelor’s degree. He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization A) and does not currently serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Participant: Benning**

Participant Benning is a Caucasian male with eight years’ experience as a DoD civilian employee. He noted “I have been a working engineer for... almost 19 years. I’ve been in this organization since 2010”. He has been in his current position for eight years. He has a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree. He worked at a DoD organization based in Maryland (Organization A) and does not serve as a supervisor to DoD civilian employees.

**Emergent Themes**

The researcher identified six emergent themes during the research study and 13 subthemes. Themes were identified as emergent or subthemes based on the cluster of meanings identified through the horizontalization process (Moustakas, 1994). The emerging themes were derived from the manual transcription review and coding by the researcher through the process of horizontalization. According to Moustakas (1994) the process of horizontalization entails grouping key quotes from participants that describe how they experienced a particular phenomenon. The researcher highlighted important comments in the interview transcripts from each person that demonstrated participant experiences in the performance appraisal process.
These statements were transferred into themes through the development of clusters of meanings from the selected statements (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher profiled each participant with their name and interview transcript. The researcher then polled the most significant statement from each person and then added the research questions to the first page of each participant’s transcript. The researcher associated each statement to the research questions to facilitate theme development. The researcher organized the prevalent comments into themes that allowed the researcher to answer the research questions. This step took several iterations due to the voluminous amount of interview data that the researcher collected from the participants.

The emergent themes discovered were 1) Seeking to Resolve Discrepancies Between the Formal Performance Appraisal Process and Actual Performance Appraisal Experiences 2) Seeking Feedback and Communication as a Means of Understanding 3) Striving to Satisfy Desire for Performance Appraisal Training for Supervisors and Employees as an Approach to Mutual Understanding 4) Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Engagement in Relation to the Performance Appraisal Process and Experience 5) Performance Appraisal Process and Experience are Minimal Determinants of Employee Turnover Intent and 6) Quest for Stronger Employee-Supervisor Relationships to Improve Employee Engagement.

Longenecker (2015) noted that employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process are critical in the relationship between employees, supervisors and organizational success. The research findings did not fully support the existing literature findings of employee perceptions of the
performance appraisal experience and the resulting effects on employee engagement, employee motivation and turnover intent.

**Emergent Theme 1: Seeking to Resolve Discrepancies Between the Formal Performance Appraisal Process and Actual Performance Appraisal Experiences**

The research questions being addressed are: a) What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization? b) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization? and c) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

The emergent theme Seeking to Resolve Discrepancies Between the Formal Performance Appraisal Process and Actual Performance Appraisal Experiences refers to the contrast between the formal process of performance appraisal administration in a DoD organization and the actual lived experiences from the perspective of the employees, supervisors and HR managers that have lived experiences with the phenomenon of the performance appraisal process. DoD mandates the recording of employee performance and contributions to organizational goals during the performance appraisal process. Although DoD employees are required to develop goals in coordination with their supervisors to ensure common understanding of requirements at the
beginning of each performance appraisal rating cycle, many participants noted that this requirement was either too cumbersome or simply not sufficiently conducted by supervisors and employees.

Participant Gordon, an HR manager stated, “The intent of DoD across the board is that supervisors are engaging their employees, they’re having conversations with their employees. There are more sit-downs, there are more face-to-faces. There’s more assessing of what the employee is doing and what the needs of the employee are and how the supervisor and the employee are going to work together to meet those needs. Because ultimately the need being met is the mission being met.” This sentiment is in agreement with the literature review finding that DoD employees are required to conduct more face-to-face counseling or feedback sessions with employees as part of the new DoD performance appraisal system, DPMAP (OPM, 2017). The participant interviews highlighted the fact that DoD employees, including supervisors are aware of the feedback and communication requirements found in DoD policy but are varied in the approach and method of meeting the requirement. The interviews also suggested that some supervisors and employees are not in complete acceptance of the usefulness or validity of the DoD performance appraisal system as a whole.

Participant Leavenworth stated, “With (Organization Red) we would do a mid-term self-assessment that would go up to the rater, and they would look
at that and make comments on that as well. Then at the end of the year, you would do an annual self-assessment. Then that went up to the rater. They’d put their comments on it, and then that was used in the pay pool to determine who got what bonuses. Gave you a rating, a rack and stack of all the NH03’s that I was competing against for those bonuses.” This illustration of the compensation system in Organization Red highlighted one of the differences in employee compensation methods that vary based on organizational structure, collective bargaining agreements and federal regulations. Hemaida and Everett (2003) contended organizational leaders are required to measure individual worker performance and provide compensatory recommendations through the performance appraisal process. DoD organizations must strive to ensure that employees perceive fairness in the rating and compensation process in order to strengthen organizational commitment and minimize the likelihood of turnover intentions.

Participant Riley described the performance appraisal process as duplicative and time-consuming. He stated, “I think the current performance rating system is duplicative, overbearing, and more burdensome that it should be. We do initial counseling at the beginning of the rating period. Counseling in the middle of the rating period. Plus, mid-term performance appraisals and then final performance appraisals and counseling at the end of the rating period. It’s very duplicative…But in the past, there are six performance areas
that we’ve had to rate. Then there’s been a lot of duplicability in the performance areas where you ended up writing twice about essentially the same thing. I think the system needs to be revamped.” This sentiment was found in several of the interviews conducted for the study. This statement and others indicated that in several instances, neither employees nor supervisors are in acceptance of the appraisal system or process at their respective organizations. Kamer and Annen (2010) noted the importance of employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system as organizations strive to enhance employee motivation and decrease feelings of departure from the workplace. DoD employees are particularly attuned to perceived instances of workplace bureaucracy that do not appear to improve efficiency, performance or organizational success.

Participant Campbell stated, “Performance appraisals are a good thing when it’s done properly. Too many times it comes down to when the appraisal was due, when they try to put the whole process together, as far as writing and recording the individual’s accomplishments or failure. It needs to be more of a process where you do the formal counseling at the three, the six, the nine-month period so that you’re able to record and keep track of pros and cons in the individual performance.” Hemaida and Everett (2003) noted the importance of leaders providing an equitable assessment subordinate performance in the workplace. Taormina and Gao (2009) found that defining
performance appraisal criteria that is acceptable to employees will potentially increase employee job satisfaction and acceptance of the performance appraisal system. DoD performance appraisal systems have specific requirements concerning the frequency of performance appraisal counseling that is designed to facilitate mutual understanding between employees and supervisors (OPM, 2017).

Participant Knox does not believe that the performance appraisal process adds value to the employee or the organization. He states, “I think a lot of the evaluations are canned, and that the person regardless how they perform get a pretty standard write-up. I think a lot of that has to do just when it comes down to supervisors and stuff having to do this kind of evaluation of subordinates, we have a window of time that you’re supposed to do it, and it comes down to basically just a lot of supervisors don’t have the time to devote to it because of their other responsibilities. So, they just kind of expect their subordinates to basically do it for them. Of course, the subordinate isn’t going to give an honest assessment of his appraisal. He’s going to inflate his appraisal. I think that inflates the system.” Appraisal rating inaccuracy or inadequacy was a common finding in the study interview results. Many of the participants noted that performance appraisals did not have a significant impact on their pay, promotion or training opportunities.
Vroom (1964) noted that unmet employee expectations can be attributed to expectancy theory and equity theory (Adams, 1963). These unmet expectations in DOD organizations because of the performance appraisal process can have challenging consequences for organizational success and individual motivation, job satisfaction and job performance. Rice (2008) found that employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention is increased when leaders take an active role in ensuring employees have a vested interest in organizational success.

Participant Bliss believed that the rigid structure of the DoD performance appraisal system is a hindrance to organizational success. He states, “I think I’ll probably expand on it, it’s very, again being a military DoD organization, it’s very structured. It really takes the flexibility out of the supervisors to write, again, a lot of that real time feedback. Which again, going back to feedback. I correct behavior instantaneously if I can address it instantaneously. But again, if you get on my case three months later, and again, same thing with the rigidity of the system is yeah, you can’t give that final ranking, for lack of a better term, until three and a half months after the cycle. You’re not going to really overcome it.” According to Dessler (2013) there is a correlation between performance appraisal design and employee satisfaction. DoD supervisors should focus on employee engagement through continuous
feedback throughout the rating cycle to mitigate the perceived rigidity of the DoD performance appraisal structure.

Participant Buchanan tied her experience to the performance appraisal process to the rigid nature of the system and the lack of effective guidance from supervisors. She states, “I mean, it’s even like, at the initial counseling people are like, oh what, let’s pick a date when we talk about this stuff. I think that it’s, and I’ve used DPMAP, DCIPS, I’ve used them all; several of the different programs. And I can see the intent behind how they built it, but they make it so restrictive that people just don’t want to do it. That’s why you have all these civilians that haven’t done their goals and stuff because, my goal is to do a good job and get promoted and get a bonus. That’s what my goal is. My goal is to make sure that they get a good report and we take care of them and that I advise the command appropriately. My goal is to stay employed and continue to get promotions, that’s my goal. Really, you need to have supervisors knowing what they want out of their employees. What are your goals for me, sir? Where do you think this needs to go? That’s the feedback that’s missing.” Longenecker et al. (2014) noted that supervisors were poorly trained in critical workforce management functions including; interview techniques, legal requirements, writing skills, and future performance planning. This experience illustrated the sense of frustration shared by some of the participants with the performance appraisal process in DoD. DoD
employees work in a diverse, global environment with specific regulations and requirements due to the important and sensitive nature of the organization.

Participant Redstone describes the process, “In general I think performance appraisals are good; a way for individuals to assess themselves. I think that’s important. But, they’re time consuming and sometimes they don’t seem as effective in, when you rate yourself individually, it doesn’t seem as effective in reflecting your true maybe importance to the organization maybe. It’s probably more the process. I think the appraisal, you know doing it, I think it’s valuable and each person should do an assessment of themselves. But it’s more of the process, you know. It’s kind of time consuming. You got to have it in on a certain day. It’s got to go, you know, just all the wickets that you have to go through to get it done. Okay, so I guess we do our self-assessment. Then we send that to our rater. They get a chop at it, and add their assessment. Then I think they do some type of salary panel something that decides what everybody’s going to get. And then those results come back to you in your supervisor counseling.” This is illustrative of the phenomenon of a performance appraisal process that has very specific requirements intended to achieve organizational and employee goals but in practice may appear overburdening to employees and supervisors. The challenge that DoD organizations face is the added complexity of specific job requirements,
regulatory and legislative mandates that are rigid and mandatorily enforced as part of the performance appraisal process.

Participant Rucker notes that the performance appraisal process is most effective when used to develop employee skill sets. She states, “So, why not say oh, since you’re interested in this, let’s send you to training. You’re not going to know that if you don’t give whoever you’re working for the opportunity to say, hey, I’m interested in this. That’s how we grow. Just like the military. They go to training, so they can get promoted and move forward. You don’t find any service member wanting to stay the same rank forever. So, what they do, the same thing is what civilians do with their performance. Okay, you’ve been doing this job for this long. Are you interested in anything else?” DPMAP, the DoD performance appraisal system introduced in 2017, was designed to counter this particular source of employee dissatisfaction. The new system sought to improve the connection between workforce performance and career development goals through the use of continuous feedback and assessment processes between DoD supervisors and employees. Future studies may examine the impact of the new appraisal system on employee satisfaction with career development goal progression and training. The FEVS (OPM, 2017) found that only 17% of DoD employees strongly agreed that their training needs were assessed. This may lead to reduced acceptance of
performance appraisal results and higher instances of turnover intent if left unaddressed.

Participant Greely described her experience with the DCIPS process. She stated, “the DCIPS process; first of all, the objectives are on the employee to create. It’s not the supervisor. So, the process is that puts again, puts more on the employee because then it’s a goal that they’re setting for themselves versus something that a supervisor says this is what you’re going to do this year. You do that, you do your objectives. DCIPS has a lot of different little rules.” DCIPS (DoD Civilian Intelligence Personnel System) is a DoD performance appraisal system designed specifically for DoD employees working in designated defense and national intelligence positions. DCIPS is dependent upon an interactive relationship between DoD supervisors and employees to ensure mission success.

Participant Carson felt that the performance appraisal process in DoD is designed in a manner that rewards complacency. He stated, “On the Army civilian side they switched the entire platform (DPMAP). So, I’ve seen both the legacy one that we went away from and then the new web-based one. The legacy one was pretty antiquated (TAPES). It was a paper form, they have to do a face-to-face counseling. Which a face-to-face is good. That’s not antiquated. It looks like a DA form that you’re going down the list. You do pen and paper changes to it, then you both kind of sign it. The new one is
better for distance work, for tele-work, for employees that are not in your physical space because it’s all online and you can kind of certify through the web portal. Technically, that’s easier, but it adds a layer of even less effectiveness to the actual content. Because the performance standards that you’re trying to hold in place are buried beneath in another layer of computer basically. Another layer of paperwork. When it’s as easy as just click, click, click, click, yes, I think people, supervisors and employees alike put even less time into that. It’s a time commitment in any way to do a performance appraisal.” Longenecker et al. (2014) noted that the majority of organizations use web-based systems or other software-based platforms to administer performance appraisals. This participant response denoted the inherent challenge with technological innovations in DoD that are designed to automate and streamline the performance appraisal process. The unintended effect of the technological advancement in performance appraisal administration may lead to feelings of decreased employee engagement if supervisors do not remain cognizant of the effect on their respective employees.

Participant Carson was particularly candid concerning his views of the efficacy of the performance appraisal process and experience in DoD. He stated, “It’s tough. I really like being an Army civilian and I don’t want to negatively speak about Army civilians. I’m glad for what the federal unions have negotiated for compensation and treatment of workers. I don’t think that
should change. It’s just that the current culture kind of, it’s designed to create people who don’t do anything. It’s designed to produce 60 or 70% of the workforce that can just sort of hide out and not be bothered. And the 20 or 30%, because they’re so overworked, they’re incentivized to make painful process less painful. If performance appraisal is painful, the 30% that’s overworked will say what’s the least painful way I can do this? Right now the least painful way is to take that 70% and keep giving them top blocks. It makes that process permanent. It makes it set in stone. So, there’s no reason that that 30/70 split will ever change. 30% high performers, 70% under-performers.” Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011) stated that organizational politics can have a negative effect on employee views of the performance appraisal process, especially there is a perception of favoritism or selective preferential treatment. Several of the interview participants indicated a perception of inequitable treatment in the performance appraisal process. Ishaq and Zuilfqar (2014) noted that the perception of favoritism could trigger significant erosion to employee commitment and organizational success.

This interview response reinforced the literature findings concerning organizational politics and the potential harm that perceptions of inequity in the performance appraisal process may cause DoD organizations through increased turnover, motivation detractors and potentially litigation outcomes. The 2017 FEVS results highlighted this sentiment in that only 9.5% of DoD
employees strongly agreed and 27.5% agreed that promotions in their workplace were based on merit. 34% of the DoD respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed. This finding has a potentially devastating effect on employee motivation, turnover intent and organizational commitment. Equity theory (Adams, 1963) characterized the perception a person has of an inequitable work situation based on the outcomes of his contribution to the work effort compared to the outcome of a similar contribution of a counterpart. This sentiment was prevalent in several of the interviews and indicated potentially undisclosed turnover intent and motivation impacts.

Participant Gordon stated in response to improving the performance appraisal experience, “I think they can improve it…probably one of the main things is to be more engaging and applying it properly. I think transparency will also improve it, and then maybe accountability. So, having more accountability to not just the rubber stamp mentality of a lot of organizations. And I don’t know that that’s the reason why TAPES had some of the challenges that it had. But the rubber-stamping process has to not happen. We’ve got to ensure that the engagement is happening, that we are having the face-to-face’s, we are having the sit-downs, we’re having the hard conversations, because then we can have the rewarding conversations. I think that if we do that, in the employees as well the supervisors at the end of the day
will be better served. And then the mission will be better served.” Kampkötter (2017) found that high performing and self-actualized employees are often discouraged by performance appraisals that are not tied to compensation or other discernable benefits. The lack of additional compensation options or other discernable positive outcomes could lead to deficient expectations in the workforce (Kampkötter, 2017).

Participant Stewart, a Human Resource Management participant, recommended additional training for supervisors and employees, “I just think more training. Get the information out there as we have changes. We do have different things that change, and we do, we send it out, human resources sends it out. I think the supervisors should go to their own group training for the appraisal system and let the employees go their own, so they can know the difference on what they need to do to engage with the appraisal system. If you see somebody that’s not doing well, what you need to do before they get to the end of it. Just a whole process on what you’re required to do as a supervisor. What your game plan should be is to make that employee better in the appraisal system. Because it impacts them. It impacts their work.” According to OPM (2017) all DoD supervisors are required to conduct formal rater training and employees are required to conduct formal training on their specific performance appraisal system. Although the DoD is recognized as one of the leading proponents for performance appraisal administration best practices
(Goldenkoff, 2017), the perceived need for supervisor and employee training is expressed throughout this study.

Participant Leavenworth had mixed views of performance appraisals. “I’ve always hated appraisals, especially self-appraisals. I mean 23 years in the military in the Air Force doing OPRs (Officer Performance Report) and EPRs (Enlisted Performance Report); but it’s hard to sell yourself or to take credit for the things that you’ve done and try to make sure that it’s a strong enough package that it’s going to positively affect your promotion capabilities or your raises and bonuses. I’m kind on the fence there. I think it’s kind of necessary evil.” DoD employees express similar feelings of discomfort with the performance appraisal administration process as outlined in the existing literature. Kamer and Annen (2010) found that supervisors and employees tend to experience challenges with the performance appraisal process.

Participant Riley stated, “Yeah, I mean, I think from my perspective it’s gotten to be burdensome towards the rating periods. Because of the way the system’s designed, if a person’s been a stellar performer, you’re constantly looking for what more they’ve done. Instead of being just an average performer, the way the system’s done to, yeah, if you’re below the line they give you a pay raise to get you on the line. So, for next year if you don’t do anything more than the previous year you just an average employee, and that person may still be the best employee you got but he’s been duly compensated.
That’s what’s difficult to show where the employee still excels and is more than just a valued employee.” Ahmed et al. (2013) found that employee turnover intent is related to employee perceptions of equity in the performance appraisal process. DoD employees that perceive inequitable treatment may have increased feelings of departure from the organization.

Participant Knox stated regarding their performance appraisal experience “What I found just from personal experiences is that a lot of supervisors, and my supervisor included, doesn’t necessarily sit down with you at the beginning or at the mid to discuss performance. It’s just something that’s done at the end. I think it’s only done just because it’s a requirement. If he doesn’t do it, then they get in trouble. Again, my personal experience is pretty much for the beginning part with the goals and objectives, is pretty jammed. And then for the early assessment and mid-point assessment, it really isn’t done. Then the end point assessment when you sit down to discuss your accomplishments; that is discussed, but it’s basically, in my experience, my supervisor just basically saying you’re done, you did a great job. That’s really what it amounts to.” Birecikli, et al. (2016) found that organizational leadership should be cognizant of employee workplace requirements to strengthen commitment to the organization and minimize turnover intentions. Garamone (2016) noted that DoD has made a concerted effort to increase Employee Engagement through the use of specific guidance to supervisors,
raters and organizational leadership. Employees that do not receive systematic feedback through formal and informal processes may develop increased feelings of turnover intent (Kamer & Annen, 2010).

DoD employees displayed a high level of organizational commitment in the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2017). The high level of organizational commitment may explain the relatively low number of participants that reported turnover intentions in this study.

Participant Polk stated “For civilians, I don’t really like the performance review process. I feel like they really don’t matter. More times than not over my span of my career, the mid-terms were not done. Most organizations I have been with, they just didn’t do them. You get the one thing, you get your 30-day notice, hey, they’re coming, they’re coming, and everybody’s scrambling in order to grab all their items that they hopefully did that year or whatever. I feel like there’s not a real emphasis on it. It’s just not key.” Participant Aberdeen stated that supervisors should be cognizant of the importance and purpose of a performance appraisal. He stated “understand that when you're writing a performance appraisal, there is a recipient, there is an audience that you're going to give it to. That person is counting on you to give them feedback. Make it worthwhile for them.” DoD employees tend to respond favorably when performance appraisal systems are administered in an atmosphere of unhindered communication between supervisors and employees.
Conversely, DoD employees tend to harbor feelings of discontent when there is a real or perceived atmosphere of ineffective communication between supervisors and employees.

Participant Bliss provided his experience as a supervisor, “Again I see a lot of the other supervisors just kind of run through the motions, copy/paste the previous appraisal. Maybe change one or two things, but really don’t put that full thought into it; very positive or only positive in their appraisals. Again, I think that’s serving their employees better, but at the same time as everybody thinks they’re the top gun, the top shooter in the organization because nobody’s ever told them otherwise.” Participant Buchanan described a similar experience that displayed the potentially negative aspect of the performance appraisal experience. “You’ve had your counseling with your supervisor and they’ll tell you, you’re wonderful and doing a great job. But they won’t give you the areas that you need to work on. And then you’re surprised at whatever your (pay) increase is. It doesn’t match your feedback that you got from your supervisor.” This phenomenon could negatively affect employee motivation and lead to increased turnover intent. Ismail and Gali (2017) found that organizations should seek to achieve employee performance appraisal satisfaction to minimize the unfavorable results caused by workplace stress which tend to have a negative effect on employee and organizational performance.
Participant Drum noted the time intensive nature of the performance appraisal experience, “So, I think that they are meant to be a tool to grow and mentor and develop employees. But I feel like it has become so labor intensive that it’s become a check the box thing, and that people don’t really engage in it.” DoD employees desire constructive feedback from supervisors to facilitate professional development and career progression opportunities. The study also found positive experiences with the performance appraisal process from the participant responses.

Participant Redstone described a positive experience with performance appraisals, “I would meet with my supervisor I would say maybe quarterly. But we had mid and the annual performance appraisal where we’d meet and say this is what’s going to be on your performance appraisal. Do you agree? What can you do to correct it? So, meeting quarterly helps to iron out any wrinkles you may have before. Now, there’s a performance appraisal and you don’t agree. You can address things that are occurring at that time before the mid-point and the annual one.” Participant Rucker had a similarly positive experience with the performance appraisal process. She stated that she had a collaborative experience with her supervisor, “I’ve had supervisors that have been great; that if I have any question, if I feel like I’m not going to meet my objectives for any reason, I can go and sit down and talk to them. We can always…up until we do the final review, we can always readjust what the
objectives are.” Kamer and Annen (2010) noted that effective performance appraisal usage is essential to employee motivation and likely leads to reduced performance appraisal litigation.

Participant Greely described a challenging experience with DoD performance appraisals, “The process is the individual is supposed to be counseled within 30 days of arrival or 30 days of being on certain standards. They’re supposed to be counseled mid-term. They’re supposed to be counseled at the end. What the rater writes is supposed to reflect their performance for the whole year, so there shouldn’t be any surprises.” He described the actual process “It’s almost like pulling teeth…. I think if you go anywhere in this organization there’d be very few places that you actually will see or being able to get hands-on counseling sessions. I think we pay a lot of lip service. The new DPMAP is out now, and so you can’t really…make up things.” Folger and Lewis (1993) contended supervisors and employees are often uncomfortable with the performance appraisal administration process. The discomfort with the performance appraisal administration process in DoD may explain the tendency of supervisors to forgo feedback opportunities with their employees. Maley and Kramer (2007) suggested that the existence of an equitable benefit for both supervisor and employee is necessary for the effective administration of the performance appraisal process. Shore and Strauss (2008) noted that supervisors should strive to overcome the challenge
of performance appraisal administration because an effective system may foster ethical decision-making by supervisors and employees.

Participant Hood held a relatively neutral view on the DoD performance appraisal experience. Participant Benning stated that the performance appraisal experience did not affect his compensation “my experience has been it doesn't really seem to affect the end result being the pay that you get, the extra pay that you get.” Several participants stated that the performance appraisal process had no measurable effect on their compensation. This was an unexpected finding and a departure from the existing literature.

The findings from the study for this theme indicated that the performance appraisal process and experience in DoD organizations is varied but has common perspectives from employees including; time-intensive preparation, tendency towards standardized ratings with a central tendency approach, insufficient or nonexistent feedback from supervisors to employees and lack of meaningful impact on employee pay, promotions or training in many cases.

**Emergent Theme 2: Seeking Feedback and Communication as a Means to Understand**

Seeking Feedback and Communication as a Means to Understand is an emergent theme that involves the feedback process between employees and
supervisors and overall communication involving the DOD performance appraisal process. This theme emerged in each interview that the researcher conducted. The responses related to this phenomenon were used to answer research questions #1, #2 and #3. The primary research questions being addressed are: a) What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization? b) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization? and c) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization? The participants had strong feelings concerning the feedback and overall communication process in the DoD performance appraisal process. According to Islam and Shuib (2006) employees display increased effectiveness and efficiency when achievable work requirements were outlined through feedback from supervisors and organizational policy. The interview responses support the literature findings on employee feedback.

Participant Gordon, an HR manager stated that the new DPMAP would provide better opportunities for interaction between supervisors and their employees, “it’s strategically putting supervisors and employees in a more conversational environment to talk goals and missions and requirements and expectations of what they should be doing. So, it is engaging. Then it gives the employee the opportunity to provide feedback, and challenging in some
instances if there’s something that they feel that’s not being done.” Employee feedback opportunities are critical to mission success in DoD. Employees desire transparency and constructive feedback from their supervisors.

Participant Leavenworth stated “I didn’t really feel like we got…it may have been designed that I was supposed to get, in that mid-term assessment, I was supposed to get better feedback at that point too. As you know, I tried to do the best I could, and I didn’t get a lot of constructive criticism of well, you should be doing this. You should be doing that. I didn’t get a lot of feedback in ways that I could better myself or work towards getting a better rating, because I was getting a pretty good rating as it was. There might have been more feedback opportunities, but I don’t really remember getting that feedback. If someone’s not doing something right at the beginning of the year, they shouldn’t have to wait a year to find out what they could have done. If there was more of a continual feedback, that might help you become a better and more viable, more productive employee.” Timely feedback from supervisors is critical to employee success because it allows employees and supervisors an opportunity to discuss requirements, resources and other critical workplace factors.

Participant Knox states” I think from beginning to end, it needs to be an interactive process. As of right now, the way I kind of see it is the supervisors don’t really get involved until the very end just because it’s a requirement.
Whereas throughout the year when they should be doing stuff, it isn’t really, their hand really isn’t forced to do anything. It kind of just gets the routine treatment where no one really takes it serious.” Ismail and Gali (2017) found that employee job stressors impact employee performance. The desire for transparency and constructive feedback can lead to job dissatisfaction and decreased organizational commitment.

Participant Polk stated “Normally the performance feedback, you get a 90-day feedback. You’ll get a mid-term review that you can go over with your rater, and then the end of year review. If you ask me what I think about that, I actually think the mid-term and the shorter-term reviews are a great tool to see where you’re sitting in your supervisor’s eyes, or your rater’s eyes. And where you can actually get stronger. Plus, if you know you have to report kind of what you’ve done in the last six months, you kind of pay attention to it and you tabulate it and you make sure that you’ve got your ducks in a line. And then when you can go to your rater or, in my case, my ratees were coming to me, I didn’t have to sit there and go oh my gosh, let’s see if I think about all the things that we had done.” Employees that are satisfied with the performance appraisal process, including constructive feedback tend to be satisfied with the performance appraisal system (Ismail & Gali, 2017).

Participant Aberdeen stated “It’s back and forth, it’s a two-way street to have a comprehensive performance appraisal, but the most important thing
about performance appraisal really is to allow people to go out, is to provide feedback so the staff can go and know what's required, how to do it, how they’re doing, if there's anything to move on… The acquisition demonstration system requires that you do have feedback. It’s a very dynamic process, but feedback is important, you got to go it, you got to go beyond what's required based on regulation. You let the personal performance and the mission dictate how often you give them feedback.” AcqDemo, DPMAP and DCIPS are different performance appraisal systems but they have a common requirement for consistent feedback to employees throughout the rating period. Hannah and Iverson (2004) noted that employees that viewed organizational efforts in a positive manner would strive to respond in a reciprocal fashion through organizational commitment and reduced likelihood of turnover intent.

Participant Bliss stated, “I think throughout the organization, I wish more of the supervisors would adopt the method I do where again, that their guys or ratees got a lot more of that real time feedback. I’ve only had in my 22 years of working, I’ve really only had one boss that really ever set me down, really give me that feedback of areas to improve.” Feedback is a critical function of effective organizations and DoD employees have a strong desire to receive feedback from supervisors and organizational leadership. Participant Drum offered, “Is there a process? I think it should be a feedback process to explain how appraisals are formulated, what they are looking for, any kind of
criteria. I don’t think it’s done…maybe on the one-on-one counseling, but a lot of times you don’t know you get it until you get the EOP notification.”

Participant Buchanan noted the absence of a formal feedback process, “The last three years I’ve written my performance evaluation and they were like yep you’re the best. We agree. You get a one. Have a great day. No, it was me telling them how great I was, and they were agreeing. I mean I would have loved to be like hey, you know, you do this really well. But previously as a GS12 and staff officer this is something that we think you should grow on, you know. I mean I don’t think that I’m perfect. I know that I’m not, right. So, there has to be something I can improve on.”

DoD employees are typically self-determined individuals with a strong sense of organizational commitment and employee engagement due to the national security mission of the organization. Several of the participants voiced frustrations with the lack of feedback and supervisor interaction that they expected and desired during the performance appraisal process.

Participant Redstone stated “I think supervisors need to be honest with their employees. I think they need to rate them honestly. Because the people you work with, they know what you’re doing and they, for the most part, we know who the high achievers, high performers are. We know who the people are who deserve it. I think our supervisors should be honest about that. If you’re a good performer, they should rate you a good performer. If you’re a
poor performer, they should rate you poor and tell you what you need to do to improve. What I found is, if you’re a poor or average performer, normally you don’t get a poor rating. You get lumped in at an average and they don’t really tell you what you need to do to improve. So, sometimes people can be confused thinking that they’re doing a good job, because their rater or supervisor wasn’t honest with them, and told them the areas where they need to improve.” Employees that perceive an inequitable situation in the workplace based on his work efforts compared to the work efforts of a coworker may have decreased motivation and develop feelings of turnover intent. Equity theory (Adams, 1963) stated that perceived inequity and not necessarily confirmed inequitable situations in the workplace have a potentially negative effect on employees.

Participant Rucker had a similar experience, A lot of times, supervisors don’t know that a person needs their feedback before the performance appraisal gets to that mid-point. We’re talking about the mandatory ones, and the annual. Then now someone’s given a rating that they don’t agree with. But if you’re communicating throughout the whole year with anything that you feel that a person’s not doing, and you say hey, can we talk or schedule an appointment? Then that way they already know the areas that is favorable and unfavorable. Not when mid-point comes. Now someone’s rushing, trying to do someone’s performance appraisal. Not really being fair because they don’t
know much about the person or the annual. I think all supervisors and managers go to a training that prepare them in those areas that can help situations like that. That’s why I’m surprised a lot of supervisors don’t know. I mean you can be in an organization for six or seven months and have not sat like you and I and say hey, this is what I’m expecting. You’re surprised, but some things I just say okay, I hope it gets better.” Hofstede (1980) found that employees who perceive a low level of influence in the workplace are more likely to feel the presence of an inequitable distribution of power in the workplace. Employees who do not receive feedback from supervisors may harbor feelings of minimal influence which may lead to lower motivation and increased feelings of turnover intent.

Participant Greely describes positive experiences with the feedback process, “you are required to do a mid-point and a final review, and your supervisor is supposed to do a sit-down. It’s not supposed to be acceptable to just do an email. It’s supposed to be an actual face-to-face sit-down. Yes, objectives it’s just your supervisor just looks at it and then approves it, changes it, or whatever. So, the only two sit-downs, and they’re supposed to be face-to-face, is mid-point and final review. I’ve had supervisors that have been great; that if I have any question, if I feel like I’m not going to meet my objectives for any reason, I can go and sit down and talk to them. We can always…up until we do the final review, we can always readjust what the objectives are.”
This statement suggested an effective feedback process between the supervisor and employee. The expected outcome with constructive feedback is employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal process.

Participant Wainwright when asked to describe the feedback process in their organization stated, “I know what it should be. What it is is completely different than what it should be. It should be that after the performance appraisal is complete, then the supervisor and the individual sit down and talk through it, then they set the milestones and objectives for the next phase. That’s what it should be. Do we do that? Not as well as we should. I think we would be better performers if our bosses actually counseled us and told us what we were doing well at and what we needed to improve. I believe in the feedback process. DPMAP is supposed to help us with that feedback.” Locke and Latham (2006) posited that it is critical for workforce members to acknowledge performance goals as achievable and desirable, instead of as an unnecessary risk. DoD and OPM outlined specific feedback requirements for the performance appraisal systems that are discussed in this study. The interview findings indicated that the formal prescribed process and the actual process may vary based on supervisor and organizational approaches to feedback.

Participant Carson displayed mixed feelings toward the DoD performance appraisal feedback process. He stated “Speaking both as an
employee and a supervisor. So I’m talking about the ones that I sat for from
my higher supervisors and the folks that I supervise. The feedback process
would basically go over the position description and itemize whether or not
they’re achieving those performance targets. For the people that achieve them,
it’s just going through the motions. It’s basically hey, we both know that you
did all this stuff. We don’t have to pretend like…if you’re a successful or
above employee, the performance appraisal doesn’t matter because you just
hey, I know you did it all. Good to go. Then for the people that are below
standard performance, then it’s a real checklist item. Did you do this? Tell me
how you did this. Did you do this? No, okay, well improve that for next year.
That’s how I kind of consider the feedback process. It’s effective to get
through the form (performance appraisal) as it’s written. I don’t know that it’s
effective to guide that employee’s performance for the rest of the year.”
Supervisors should assess their employees to ensure they are providing
meaningful feedback that will support the organizational mission and
employee career objectives.

Participant Hood described a situation in which the supervisor and rater
are different people. He stated, “Okay, basically what happens is, after you do
your appraisal, you go talk to your supervisor, your supervisor to your rater,
and usually you don’t usually talk to your rater. You just talk to your
supervisor unless there is an issue. Like you have a grievance, or something
like that, that’s when you talk to your supervisor. That’s when you talk to your rater. But usually you just talk to your supervisor. I think that if they tell an individual how they can actually get a better performance. I mean tell the individual what you expect of them. Instead of just telling what they did, tell them what they can do to improve.” Employees that are not rated by their supervisor may face additional challenges in receiving feedback in the workplace. Supervisors in this situation should take steps to ensure that the rater is involved in the employee feedback process to ensure equitable treatment during performance appraisal administration.

Participant Benning described his experience with a completely automated feedback process. He stated, “I guess my experience with the feedback process has been, you know, I put my stuff in, release it to send it to my supervisor, the supervisor put something in and then after the supervisor is done, whether it's the midyear or the final, I won't see it for a while. But I do get the opportunity to see what the supervisor says and sends up the chain to the organization.” The web-based performance appraisal entry process in DoD has streamlined the appraisal administration process. Some employees noted that the web-based process may have the unintended effect of further decreasing face-to-face communication between supervisors and employees during the rating cycle.
In reference to overall communication concerning the performance appraisal experience, Participant Gordon stated “I think supervisors need to be honest with their employees. I think they need to rate them honestly. Because the people you work with, they know what you’re doing and they, for the most part, we know who the high achievers, high performers are. We know who the people are who deserve it. I think our supervisors should be honest about that. If you’re a good performer, they should rate you a good performer. If you’re a poor performer, they should rate you poor and tell you what you need to do to improve. What I found is, if you’re a poor or average performer, normally you don’t get a poor rating. You get lumped in at an average and they don’t really tell you what you need to do to improve. So, sometimes people can be confused thinking that they’re doing a good job, because their rater or supervisor wasn’t honest with them, and told them the areas where they need to improve.” Ali et al. (2012) stated that constructive feedback was critical to the functioning of effective organizations and employees.

Participant Bliss stated, “The informal, again I meet with my (employee), who works for me right now, twice a day go over tasks and performance. Again, we use this as a two-way communication of mentoring, providing that real time feedback of activities. Probably about once at the end of each month we kind of do that more strategic macro level appraisal. Okay, there’s everything you’ve done over the last four, four and half weeks. Here’s
the strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, I use it to gauge my own methodologies where again, I ask her to, based on the direction I’ve given, have you got enough direction? Have I provided the right tools, resources? Again, it’s a very two-way ongoing conversation. Again, covering both positives, negatives and maintain the status quo asset. That’s kind of an information biorhythm I take.” This example of continuous feedback is critical to the maintenance of engaged employees and reduction in turnover intent in DoD organizations.

**Emergent Theme 3: Striving to Satisfy Desire for Performance**

**Appraisal Training for Supervisors and Employees as an approach to Mutual Understanding**

This emergent theme refers to the training of supervisors, employees and leadership at all levels of the organization on the performance appraisal process. The primary research questions being addressed are a) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization? and b) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

Longenecker et al. (2014) found that supervisors lead the workforce appraisal process but are generally untrained in the performance appraisal administration process. The participant interviews support this finding based
on the training challenges and requests that the participants noted during the interview process. Participant Stewart stated, “So there should be leaders in the training. Not just send the employees out to do the training, and then assess. The managers need to understand what the employees are being trained on. Training is important, and I realize the recruitment and staff and the recruitment is important too. But I think in order for us to staff and recruit the people, that we need to make sure that in this organization and as HR, that we are on top of our game, so when we bring them in, we know exactly what they need when they come onboard.” Verbos et al. (2014) noted that employees typically display negative reactions to performance appraisals when there are beliefs of insufficient resources leading to unachievable work requirements.

Training is one of the most sought-after resources for DoD employees. The interview participants noted the lack of training opportunities, ineffective training and training that is not internalized within their respective organizations as de-motivators and potential factors in heightened turnover intent. Participant Riley believes that employee training should focus on self-assessment preparation. She stated “I know they do their self-assessment. But I think employees need some more training. I think that would be helpful too.” Participant Campbell noted that the training was required and adequate but was not always adhered to. “Anybody who was considered a rater or a senior rater or a supervisor was required to go through the training to see how the new
system operated. Then there was also a separate course that you could take for the individual ratee so that they were fully aware of what the requirements were and how they were going to be able to fit in and utilize the system correctly. Like I said, if the system worked the way they had it written, everything would be so smooth. But then again when you have the different jobs and skills that’s required, and the work level and responsibility, sometime that gets pushed by the wayside.” DoD and OPM offer a large variety of mandatory and elective training on all facets of the performance appraisal process. Supervisor and organizational leaders should ensure that their employees and themselves take full advantage of the training opportunities to facilitate better understanding and acceptance of the performance appraisal system and process in their organization.

Participant Knox noted an unintended effect that the automated performance appraisal system had on employee interaction with their rater. “they just go in and just check the box that they approve it without actually analyzing it, discussing it, reading it. So as a result, you don’t get that face-to-face interaction at all.” Continuous feedback throughout the rating process is a potentially effective mitigation strategy to counter the potential negative connotation of the web-based performance appraisal system. This may facilitate employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system and results.
Participant Aberdeen stated that performance appraisal training reinforced his perception of the importance of the performance appraisal process. “So, I was always been aware of the importance that performance quality I would say it’s more aware and gave me a chance to reflect on how I have a push in it.” Participant Bliss felt that performance appraisals are not particularly effective. He stated, “I don’t think it changed my perception. I’ve been under three Army civilian personnel systems in the last ten years. I get trained every time it happens. Again, I see every one of the appraisal processes being almost nearly identical. Again, mechanics of the particular website or the form change, but the quality of the training again, is focused on the mechanics of filling out the white space on the Department of Army form or filling up every line in the National Security Personnel system, (NSPS), then the current Acquisition Demonstration projects. Again, everything focused on the mechanics, not the really how to do you provide that feedback to the individual or how do you make that larger organization operate better.”

Garamone (2016) stated that over 600,000 DoD employees will utilize the DPMAP. The new DoD performance appraisal system is an expensive program developed to address workforce concerns and organizational requirements. Employee desire for feedback continued to serve as a critical theme regardless of the performance appraisal system or organizational affiliation.
Participant Redstone stated that performance appraisal training changed his perspective on the performance appraisal process in a positive manner. He also recommended that employees have the opportunity to rate their supervisors, “It did, because I didn’t necessarily see the importance of the performance appraisal system and the process, but the training kind of highlighted that it is important that it’s the process where sometimes senior leadership, that’s the only way they’re going to know who you are is through this process. Maybe supervisors need some training on how to deliver performance back to the employee to really help them to grow and get better at their job? But another piece of that would be, I don’t know if this may be kind of out of the box thinking. I don’t know if the employees get an opportunity to rate their supervisors. In my opinion that would be something novel to give a try.” Park (2014) posited that higher level supervisors should conduct evaluations of employees and compare their ratings to the primary supervisor rating. The resulting effect could lead to increased accuracy of employee ratings based on the felt accountability construct which posits supervisors are influenced by perceptions of accountability in the performance evaluation process (Hall, Frink, Ferris, Hochwarter, Kacmar & Bowen, 2003). According to the 2017 FEVS (OPM, 2017) employees stated that they were relatively satisfied with their immediate supervisor. 78% of DoD respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their supervisor listened to what they had to say. 83% of
DoD respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their supervisor treated them with respect.

Participant Rucker also notes the importance of supervisor training on performance appraisals, “The same thing – someone hiring me in an expertise situation that I should know this or that, I should specialize in this and that, that’s the same thing that we expect from our supervisors, that they know what they’re doing.” Participant Carson explains the performance appraisal training in a similarly challenging light, “I would say the training only covered the change in the system. If I said hey, help me manage this process better, they would just slide me like 200 pages, and they’d say read it. I’d say that doesn’t really help me. So, I would say no, there’s not a good training system for how to execute this. But there is the mandatory civilian training for supervisors. It teaches a little bit about leadership. That’s not bad. It helps a little bit. But it doesn’t really tackle the ins and outs of how to better make this appraisal system better.” This statement indicated that there are different levels of training required for supervisors and employees to feel comfortable with the performance appraisal process. The training format may also be a factor in the employee perception of the training. Performance appraisal training is offered online and in person by a trained facilitator or human resource management personnel.
Emergent Theme 4: Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Engagement in Relation to the Performance Appraisal Process and Experience

The primary research question being addressed is: a) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization? This theme referred to the effect, if any, that the DoD performance appraisal experience has on employee motivation and employee engagement.

Participant Stewart stated that employee engagement had a positive effect on employee motivation. She states, “Anywhere that you go, I think that would give motivation to employees because it’s so easy for employees not to feel like they’re doing a great job, or they’re doing too much and not being rewarded at the same time. When you put a job out there, and then you look at it inside, that helps out a lot with morale for employees as well as the whole organization.” Job satisfaction is influenced by employee self-evaluations of themselves and the work environment (Judge, Locke, Durham & Kluger, 1998). Deci and Ryan (2008) posited that individuals are motivated by intrinsic and external factors in the workplace. Employee engagement is positively correlated with employee motivation and organizational commitment. Flint et al. (2013) found that employee engagement and
organizational commitment were key indicators of employee motivation and minimal turnover intent.

Participant Leavenworth stated that the performance appraisal experience did not have a significant impact on his motivation. He states, “As far as my motivation, I didn’t do what I did based on how it would rack and stack and fall out at the end of the year. I don’t know that it had a great impact on my motivation. My motivation was based on wanting to do good for the war fighter, and not for personal gain.” This remark reinforces the findings from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2017) which found that 84% of DoD employees have a strong commitment to their job and organizational mission. DoD supervisors should focus on the positive aspects of the employee commitment to DoD through increased engagement efforts and interaction with employees to further strengthen the employee commitment to the organization and the organizational mission. These efforts will likely increase employee motivation and lessen the presence of turnover intentions.

Participant Campbell stated that the bonus distribution process had a potentially negative impact on motivation. “Now in many cases in the past I’ve known where an organization would get a pot of money, say $25,000, and this money was for everybody in the command, and they had to split it out equally. I didn’t really care for that. I mean let’s reward those people to do the
work, don’t just say we got so and so in the organization, ten people and we
need to split it up among all ten. Give it to those that have performed.” Ertas
(2015) suggested that job satisfaction is a critical factor in employee turnover
intent. Compensation is a workforce issue that affects employee motivation
and turnover intent. Participant Knox noted that the lack of effective feedback
had a negative impact on his motivation. “It’s a little frustrating in that a lot of
times, like I mentioned earlier, the supervisors don’t take the time to really talk
to individuals that need guidance and mentoring.” This supports the existing
literature and findings in the 2017 FEVS (OPM, 2017). Employees desire
constructive feedback from supervisors and may develop lower motivation,
less engagement with the organization and increased turnover intent if they do
not receive meaningful feedback.

Participant Polk noted that the performance appraisal had no effect on
her motivation. “The only reason I’m motivated is because of me. I just don’t
think…like I said again, it’s not a motivating factor if it doesn’t have anything
to do with you and you’re really not doing anything, and we’re certainly not in
any issue where people are afraid that they’re going to lose their jobs and get
RIFs (Reduction In Force). It just doesn’t, it doesn’t motivate me at all.” This
statement was in agreement with other participant responses that noted the
inconsequential nature of the performance appraisal in DoD. The exception is
that the performance appraisal is consequential during a review for reduction in force initiatives and during the probationary period for new employees.

Participant Aberdeen stated that improperly written position descriptions could have negative effects on employee motivation. He states, “I'm referencing the organization or the location of the job, because most likely the PD’s (position descriptions) don’t fit and I don’t know what I'm doing. Okay. That’s the sad thing about that, yes. It can be hurt their motivation depending on how you run the course and how senior they are, and also because they are so familiar with the system.” This sentiment highlighted the importance of establishing employee engagement and feedback during the hiring and onboarding process because the position descriptions in DoD organizations may not fully reflect the actual work that is required in the workplace. This can cause job satisfaction and motivation challenges.

Participant Bliss noted that compensation policies versus the appraisal experience, may have a negative effect on motivation. “I’d say it’s probably not a motivator, would be the short answer. Again, I’ve had the, I guess, privilege or unfortunate privilege of actually working at one of the headquarters a couple of years ago. It was actually kind of disappointing because in all the materials and the training materials that yeah, it’s a paid-for performance type of appraisal system. But then when you actually get into the, I guess, cross leveling of performance appraisals across the command,
command has adopted the “everybody gets a piece” type of appraisal so even the low performers get some kudos and a performance raise, and the really hard chargers might get a slightly larger raise, but not drastically different. So again, it’s a de-motivator for, I guess, the more highly skilled, more producing employees. Again, from the hard charger it’s kind of disappointing, as well as people that take on more and more tasks. I do it for personal enjoyment. I would love if it got reflected in the appraisals and the outcomes. Again, I do it for myself and do it for my friends. Slightly different motivator, but again it’s not really tied to the appraisal process.” This sentiment is in line with the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results that found only 8.6% of DoD Participants strongly agreed that differences in work performance are treated in a meaningful manner at their work location, while 28.6% agree. The participant interviews indicated that this is a valid issue for DoD leadership in performance appraisal process perception among employees. This also indicates that there are employee acceptance challenges with the performance appraisal process.

Participant Drum describes a positively motivating effect of the performance appraisal experience. “It’s very motivating when you get it. Sometimes you feel like, if you hear other people get it and you know they are a sub-par worker, it kind of makes you feel, oh man if everybody’s getting it why should I do more? Or why should I go above and beyond and excel? But
for me getting it and seeing it, I mean it’s a good feeling. It makes you feel appreciated. Like you’re being seen for the work that you do for the organization.” Phin (2015) and Royes (2015) found that employee satisfaction is enhanced when there is a perception of fairness in the performance appraisal process. Freddolino and Heaney (1992) noted that feelings of undermining by fellow employees, including inequitable work performance, was a factor in employee de-motivation and increased turnover intent. Equity theory (Adams, 1963) outlined the potentially negative effect that perceptions of inequitable situations in the workplace has on employee and organization performance.

Participant Buchanan stated that her work experience and not the performance appraisal, affects her motivation. She states, “I can see my job success because when I see Soldiers that I’ve helped, or even coming to (Organization Blue) and having an old client of mine come up to me and give me a hug and be like, you helped me, I remember you.” Participant Redstone reinforces other participants views that the performance appraisal does not affect their motivation. “If I had looked strictly at my appraisal, I was like well I can do nothing and still get rated very well. So, I would say the performance appraisal system doesn’t really motivate me to work harder or smarter, or work less. I’m self-motivated by the job itself because I enjoy the job.” DoD employees displayed a high level of organizational commitment in the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2017). The high level of
organizational commitment may explain the relatively low number of participants that reported turnover intentions in this study.

Participant Carson described a neutral to negative view of performance appraisal effects on his motivation from the perspective of supervisor and employee. He states, “My motivation. For me as an employee, great because I get to count myself among the people who have a very short rating session with my boss. Hey, we both, just keep it up. That makes me feel good. My motivation as a supervisor, it hurts. Because of the pain inherent in the process, it’s just another thing you got to do. It actually doesn’t make me better engaged with my employees. It makes me have to go through this dance that we both don’t like. So, it makes us more unhappy on the back end. Because I’m following a framework that neither of us really believes in. I’m going to tell you this checklist that I don’t really think matters. You’re going to just perform to standard just so you can get through this checklist. It’s like standardized testing in school or something like that. It doesn’t necessarily make you smarter, it just makes you better at taking the test. It makes us better at getting through the rating form, but it doesn’t make them a better employee and it doesn’t make me a better supervisor or more motivated to lead them.” This statement supports the unexpected finding that the performance appraisal is viewed as inconsequential by some of the study participants.
Participant Benning stated that the performance appraisal system did not affect his motivation due to the lack of constructive feedback. He states, “A lot of them tend to focus on positive and there's not a whole lot of, you know, like I said before, not a whole lot of a constructive criticism. There are some but maybe not as much as I would like. So, like I said, it's something that doesn't really impact my motivation and it doesn't really factor into deciding to leave the organization either.” This indicated that constructive feedback is critical for acceptance of the performance appraisal process and organizational commitment.

**Emergent Theme 5: Performance Appraisal Process and Experience are Minimal Determinants of Employee Turnover Intent**

Turnover intent is defined as the willful, informed intent of an individual to leave an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). The primary research question being addressed is: Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization? Igbaria and Greenhaus (1992) noted that intentions are a predominate cue to individual behavior. Therefore, DoD employees that express or display turnover intentions are quite likely to follow through with those intentions and leave the organization if there is no action, real or perceived, that changes the employee feelings of departure. The interview
participants had varying views on the effect that the DoD performance appraisal experience had on their intent to leave or remain in their current organization. Participant Stewart, an HR manager noted that her organization has a dedicated system to promote employee engagement which should mitigate turnover intent. She noted the challenges in minimizing turnover however, “Not sure to minimize it, because turnovers come with people moving, finding other positions, promotions, all that. …That would be a way to keep somebody at the job to give them some kind of incentive. It can be a promotion, or it can be more money than they usually make.” Brashear, Bellenger, Boles and Barksdale (2006) posited that leader actions were critical in the facilitation of increased employee job performance and decreased turnover intentions.

Participant Leavenworth stated that he considered leaving the organization for reasons other than the performance appraisal experience. He stated, “No, I really didn’t. I did consider leaving the organization, as I stated earlier, for other reasons. I don’t think it was due to any poor performance ratings or feeling that I wasn’t being treated correctly as far as the annual appraisals went. I thought that I was being treated fairly, so that would not drive my decision to want to leave the organization, no. Career advancement either within the organization or outside of the organization; Again, that wasn’t part of the rating system. That was just reality.” DoD employees may consider
leaving the organization for reasons other than performance appraisal results. These departures can be very costly due to the recruitment, training and onboarding costs associated with highly specialized DoD employment requirements.

Participant Riley stated in response to feelings of departure from the organization due to the performance appraisal process, “No, not just for that, no. Yeah, so the employees, I don’t think... they won’t leave because of that. I think, they will leave because of the way we have the promotion system; we have caps. So, if they’ve reached a point where they can’t get promoted, they will, because of the performance system that we do have, they do look for other jobs, yes.” DoD employees that participated in the study gave various reasons for turnover intent that did not directly relate to the performance appraisal process. Promotion opportunities, relocation and training resource challenges were some of the reasons listed for potential turnover intentions among DoD employees.

Participant Campbell stated that he had not considered leaving the organization due to the performance appraisal experience but cited other factors. He stated, “I can’t say that I have personally, because throughout my time, 20 years with the DoD, my performance appraisals have always been above and beyond the average. So, therefore I was, I had been constantly recognized as being a high performer. I had no desire to leave. But then again
when you look at some of the other employees and how they were being carried along in some instances, I might say well you know I need to find some place where everybody does their fair share.” Employees are sensitive to the perceived atmosphere at a work location. Supervisors should focus on relieving stressors from the workplace to enhance employee satisfaction and minimize the occurrence of turnover intentions (Moore, 2002).

Participant Knox states that the performance appraisal experience has been positive and did not bring feelings of turnover intent. “No, not for that. For me, I like to think that I do good work and I’m told on a myriad of different levels that my work is good. In that sense, I get feedback from others, even outside of my supervisor. Because of that, when I do get my appraisal and stuff at the end of the year, to be told that I did a great job is kind of what I expect just because throughout the year I try to always exceed everyone’s expectations. For me, it’s not really something that I see as bringing me down. I just kind of see it as hey, it’s a way that I can get a better bonus or way that I can get a pay raise really. Nothing that would cause me to want to leave the organization or something like that.” Workforce need for independence is a factor in organizational commitment and turnover intent (Birecikli et al., 2016). Employees that possess a high need for independence are more likely to depart an organization if there are sustained feelings of inequitable treatment or lack of acceptable autonomy (Steers & Braunstein, 1976).
Participant Polk noted that the performance appraisal was not a factor in her intent to depart or remain in the organization. She stated that engagement was the critical factor for her. “No. Because again, it just hasn’t really been a huge impact. Performance appraisals, they just haven’t been anything. I would be really surprised if I didn’t have firewall outstanding; Even still, if it had longer lasting implications or it could do something for you, maybe monetarily. I’m pretty sure I have to stay engaged. I think I’m still here, and I was going to be gone before.” The lack of turnover intent due to performance appraisal experience was an unexpected finding in the study. The majority of the participants listed other reasons for potentially considering departing the organization but most noted that the performance appraisal process or experience had no bearing on their employment retention decision-making process.

Participant Aberdeen noted that despite an unsatisfactory performance appraisal experience he never harbored an intent to depart his organization. He states, “To me, I've been blessed with it. No, never, never. I told you that that last experience, the last job, that’s the one with the lesson, I was dedicated of course, you think that because of the one that I've been mentioning when I talked to the director for the organization, you know you’ve done a good job, you’ve done well, what will then force them to give you some input, but I didn’t pursue that, not once, not once did it ever cross my mind to say, no, that an is unfair
rating. I don’t like it, I’m quitting, I’m changing job or something. Never.” This participant response is in agreement with the literature finding of strong organizational commitment in DoD organizations due in large part, to the nature of the organizational mission. DoD (2016) noted that the DoD mission is to maintain the security of the United States and the DoD employee workforce is critical to the successful accomplishment of that mission.

There are three components to organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These components serve as psychological factors which determine an individual’s intent to continue to work at an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment is defined as a situation when employees remain at an organization due to a sense of obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This is supported by the study findings from the participant interviews. There is a sense of duty and obligation at DoD organizations due to the employment of former military personnel and the national security mission of the DoD. This may provide insight into the lack of turnover intent reported by the study participants in spite of the reported dissatisfaction with the DoD performance appraisal process.

Participant Redstone expressed strong organizational commitment but was aware of coworkers who expressed feelings of departure. He states, “No, my experiences have mostly been positive. No, I’ve never had a review and said I’m going to leave this place.” He responded to the question of fellow
coworkers expressing turnover intent, “Yeah, I have known some people who’ve considered leaving, yes. And what I consider to be worse is I heard people say that, I’m not going to do anything. In my opinion, that’s even worse that leaving.” This sentiment is indicative of a workplace where turnover intent may lead to decreased motivation and poor job performance which affects the organization and the workplace environment. Employees with turnover intent that remain in an organization typically have reduced commitment, motivation and job performance (Birecikli et al., 2016).

**Emergent Theme 6: Quest for Stronger Employee-Supervisor Relationships to Improve Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is defined as the employee’s sense of purpose that is evident in their display of dedication, persistence and effort in their work or overall attachment to their organization and mission (OPM, 2015). The researcher combined the themes of employee engagement and supervisor roles based on their close relationship. Ali et al (2012) posited effective organizational appraisal processes should offer constructive feedback to workforce members. Participant Gordon, an HR manager states, “We have several initiatives ongoing that address employee engagement, and a council of personnel that are working toward bettering the employee engagement process that we actually have in place. Our strategy for human resource management, and as it ties to employee engagement, is to reach out and recruit and/or retain
personnel. So, we use that as a motivation tool. So, we offer things like incentives, we offer bonuses, advanced options to those personnel that we’re trying to recruit who have a subject matter expertise or have experience that we can’t find within the agency. So, we reach out to that and use that employee engagement as well. We actually use employee engagement to reach out to personnel because we offer sponsorship to people who are new coming onboard, so that too helps in the engagement process. They feel they’re becoming a part of the organization before they actually onboard the organization.” According to Cheung-Judge and Holbeche (2011), organizational leadership should respond to exit surveys and organizational survey results related to employee engagement to highlight their responsiveness to employee needs. The 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2017), found that DoD employees rated employee engagement at 74%, which was the highest rate in the past five years. Although the survey results indicate an increasingly engaged DoD workforce, the study findings suggest that the performance appraisal process is not contributing to the increased employee engagement results. Organizational commitment is the more likely cause of the heightened DoD employee engagement survey results based on the fact that 89% of the FEVS Participants agree or strongly agree that their work is important (OPM, 2017). A cautionary finding for DoD is that only 29.4% of DoD employees strongly agree that their performance
appraisal is an accurate reflection of their work (OPM, 2017). This finding from the FEVS is supported by the interviews conducted in this study.

Participant Gordon, in response to identifying barriers to employee engagement states, “I think probably the biggest barrier to employee engagement and getting that one-to-one or face-to-face is transparency. Maybe an instance is where an employee feels that they can be transparent; you will get more information, or you will get a better feed or read, if you will, on the climate of the command, as opposed to the employee feels like they cannot be transparent or if there’s any type of backlash or retaliation as to what they’re saying. So, a lot of times employees won’t come forward and say things to a specific person based on their rank or structure within the organization. But the feeling is still there. I think one of the barriers would definitely be the ability of the employee to feel that being transparent has no repercussion. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) suggested that leaders should actively pursue the cooperative involvement of employees to improve workplace efficiency through employee engagement. Transparent communication between supervisors and employees in DoD organizations are a critical function to achieve organizational success.

Participant Stewart, an HR manager noted that a lack of clarity is one of the significant barriers to employee engagement. She states, “I think the lack of clarity and understanding of your job and what you should do or what you shouldn’t do. I think that’s number one, it’s big. Sometimes it’s unclear
among the employees based off the communication. That’s just my assessment from the managers.” Verbos et al. (2014) found that an effective performance appraisal process that is accepted by supervisors and employees tends to result in improved organizational success and employee performance.

Participant Leavenworth stated that the performance appraisal process has no effect on his employee engagement at his organization. He stated, “Like I said previously, I don’t believe so. My motivations are not towards personal gain. To a point yes, you want to be able to provide for your family, but with my current pay; the only thing that could increase my pay is just moving to a different position. That has nothing to do with the rating system, or at least not as much as it did when I was in the military. I don’t think it has affected the way that I perform at my current organization or my previous organization.” This sentiment is echoed in the comments by participant Campbell. Participant Campbell noted that his commitment to his coworkers and the organization are the drivers of his employee engagement. He states, “Like I said, for my work environment and with the people I work for, I think highly of my performance, and what I do. And I attempt to go the extra mile to ensure that if they want 100%, I’m going to give them 110% to ensure that, in that it reflects on me is always positive.” These responses support the findings from the 2017 FEVS that indicated high levels of organizational commitment by DoD employees.
Participant Knox states that the performance process has affected his employee engagement due to the perceived inequity in performance appraisal administration. He states, “It has – now I think about it, it has a little bit, because if you work with somebody and you know that they historically haven’t really been holding their weight or doing a great job, but yet at the end of the appraisal process, they get an appraisal that says that they’re doing fine. That can’t help but just kind of have an impact on how you interact with that person. Also, even with your supervisor. Just because you know that they are kind of sugar-coating everything. In that sense it could strain a working relationship some. As far as me and in my section, that hasn’t been an issue, but I have seen it in other people.” This response supported the 2017 FEVS (OPM, 2017) results that found only 8.6% of DoD employees strongly agreed that differences in performance were recognized in a meaningful manner in their workplace. This indicates that the performance appraisal experience may affect employees from the perspective of Equity Theory (Adams, 1963). Adams (1963) suggested the perception of an inequitable situation and not pure evidence of an inequitable situation is pertinent to the definition of inequity in organizational settings. Therefore, DoD employee perceptions of inequity must be identified and mitigated to strengthen employee motivation and decrease feelings of departure from the organization.
Participant Polk did not believe that the performance appraisal process has an impact on his employee engagement. He stated, “No. Again, that’s kind of one those paperwork nuisances. But again, I think the way I approach everybody in the organization is still that kind of information, very honest. Here’s what you can do well, or here’s where you didn’t do well. Again, I think my personality and I guess personal methods have overcome a lot of that shortfall.” Participant Carson stated that the performance appraisal process had no bearing on his engagement at his organization. He noted, “Not my engagement at the organization, no. It’s just viewed as like check the block. Therefore, it has no impact on my engagement with the organization. I’m not talking to Mr. (X) differently because I’m in the appraisal season guys. It doesn’t matter. No, it does not.” This was indicative of the 2017 FEVS findings that noted only 16% of DoD employees were very satisfied that they received recognition for performing well (OPM, 2017). A potential challenge for organizational leaders and supervisors is identifying if the appraisal results are not indicative of employee performance or is the appraisal not used for its intended purposes.

Participant Aberdeen noted a positive effect on his employee engagement. He stated, “It has affected me in a good way, because you’ve done the mid-cycle, so you’ve got to talk to people. I rate my people first. I start with my people then I go to my rating to give my personal
accommodation because I do believe my performance is tied to their performance. So, in that sense, in fairness to the question, yeah, well, this is the benefit, it brings people together.” This sentiment indicated the presence of effective feedback and communication between supervisor and employee.

Participant Benning explained that his employee engagement was affected by other factors not related to the performance appraisal process. He stated, “there’s things that I have asked to do, like you know, be involved in a hiring action and so that I could understand how the Army goes through, how X (organizational leadership) goes through, their hiring process or be involved in something that’s going on at the command level. It’s not necessarily because I want to put it in my performance appraisal. It’s more that I feel like with a wider view of what’s going on, I have a better understanding of some of the challenges of the organization. So, I wouldn’t say that necessarily the performance appraisal process has affected my engagement. It’s that my engagement has kind of directed some of the things that are going into my performance appraisal as kind of a natural byproduct.” This statement continued the trend in the study that finds that employee engagement and motivation are often impacted by organizational factors not tied to the performance appraisal process.

Several participants felt that more emphasis should be placed on supervisor roles in the performance appraisal process. Munn, Barber, and Fritz
(1996) found that the absence of supervisory support was the primary factor in predicting employee turnover intent and work dissatisfaction. DoD employees typically leave the organization due to their supervisors, not the organization. Participant Stewart stated that supervisors should be held accountable for their responsibility to their subordinates. She stated, “I want them to be accountable for their positions as well too. Not just for, say for instance, they should take training also. So, they should be leaders in the training.”

Participant Leavenworth stated that supervisors could improve the performance appraisal experience through increased interaction with employees. He stated, “Probably feedback should not be just a once-a-year type thing, or even a twice-a-year type thing. Maybe monthly or quarterly just have a dialog with the employee to say hey, this is how you’re doing. You’re doing a great job in this, this and this, but I think you could improve in this area. Or have you considered doing this? Have it been an open dialog so that it also includes opportunity for, possibly for the employee to give feedback to the supervisor and how well they’re doing their job. But also talk about career progression in other things that may be outside of the appraisal process.” The 2017 FEVS (OPM, 2017) results found that only 35.5% of DoD employees strongly agreed that their supervisor had talked to them about their performance in the previous six months. This finding supported the study findings that indicated a lack of employee feedback from supervisors in DoD.
Participant Campbell reinforced this position. He stated, “Basically, they just need to step up to the plate and fulfill their responsibility as a senior leader or rater. I mean a rater or a senior rater. Like I said a lot of times that doesn’t come up to the surface until time for the report is due. But if they’re constantly monitoring tracking their employees, looking to make them better, then the organization would run a lot smoother.”

Participant Polk noted the importance of supervisors treating subordinates in a respectful manner to ensure success. She stated, “It’s all mindset. You can’t act like you’re still in the military. You’re not.” Over 69% of DoD employees strongly agreed or agreed in the 2017 FEVS that they have trust and confidence in their supervisor (OPM, 2017). This indicates that employees trust their supervisors but desire more communication and interactive feedback.

Participant Aberdeen denoted the importance of supervisors focusing on the needs of the employee and the organization during the performance appraisal process. He stated, “I would say that supervisors who are going to administer appraisals need to stay abreast of leaders’ wish list and stay on top, try to educate themselves, and definitely, definitely think about the employee rating, and what it means to him or her.” Kahn (1990) stated that employee engagement is directly associated with employee commitment and relationships with organizational leadership. Supervisors must focus on
employee needs to foster employee engagement which minimizes turnover
intent and strengthens organizational commitment.

Participant Bliss states, “I focus on the leadership aspect, I would
probably focus more on the strategic messaging as probably the top place.
Again, too many of the leaders both at the local level, the (organizational) level
and even at the Army level, make it sound like performance appraisal is the
semi-annual type thing. I think if you do the more positive impacts, really
have the senior leaders enforce their division chiefs or other raters to have
those ongoing conversations with people, I think it would go much further. So,
when the documentation does get done, it’s honest, straightforward, again,
gives that ratee the input perspective of how to improve their behavior or
improve their skills for the long term.” Senior leader involvement in the
performance appraisal process may lead to higher levels of motivation and
organizational commitment in the DoD workplace.

Participant Drum felt that leadership above the first line supervisor
level should have a more active role in the performance appraisal process to
enhance employee performance and job satisfaction. She stated, “Well I think
the higher-level leadership should look at the performance during that rating
period when the appraisals are due. And see if it matches what the supervisor is
saying, you know, that this person should get. I think they should have the
ability to increase or decrease based upon how the write-up is done. Because,
and then too talk to the supervisor, because some people may be a poor writer and they might not be able to convey how good that employee is based upon, you know, how they did within the rating period. But if they are giving them say a sub-par appraiser rating but, that higher level supervisor knows this person has done more than what you’re writing. I think interaction between the two levels would better enhance that experience.” This sentiment supported the FEVS (OPM, 2017) results that found only 25.8% of DoD respondents felt that the manager directly above their immediate supervisor was doing a very good job. 36% of DoD respondents felt that the manager was doing a good job. DoD organizational leader involvement in the performance appraisal process is critical to employee acceptance of the process as equitable and fair.

Participant Buchanan felt that there should be oversight of the supervisors that are writing the performance appraisals to ensure consistency and fairness. She stated, “The other thing is, also doing, as the supervisor’s supervisor, doing litmus tests. So, how often are you as a senior rater talking to the person that your subordinate is rating? And then when people do leave the organization, are you guys doing exit interviews? Like truly doing exit interviews? And finding out where the organization can improve? Because that’s when people are going to be the most honest.” She additionally noted that the atmosphere that the supervisor conducts performance appraisal functions in is important. She stated in reference to the process, “Somewhere
warm. Just by genuinely sitting down with our employees and giving them that constructive feedback. Instead of waiting for the annual evaluations and pencil whipping it and pushing them along down the line.” Supervisors and employees in DoD tend to focus more on processes when there is involvement and interest from senior organizational leadership.

Participant Wainwright reinforced the sentiment of requiring higher level organizational leadership involvement in the performance appraisal process. She stated, “I honestly think if the commander would ask the G1 (Personnel Directorate) to pull the reports and let him see which supervisors have actually done what they’re supposed to do, and which ones haven’t; if he saw that report and he called us in on the carpet, I think we would all do a lot better. I do. I really do.” This sentiment supported the results from the FEVS (OPM, 2017) that found only 13.9% of DoD employees strongly agreed and 33.1% agreed that senior leaders in their organization generated high levels of motivation and commitment in the organization.

Participant Hood noted that he doesn’t speak to his rater unless there is an issue with his appraisal since his supervisor and rater are different people. He stated, “Okay, basically what happens is, after you do your appraisal, you go talk to your supervisor, your supervisor to your rater, and usually you don’t usually talk to your rater. You just do not talk to your supervisor unless there is an issue.” Participant Hood also noted the belief that supervisors should
represent employees in compensation reviews. He stated, “Pay pools, if you have the pay pools that they oversee, they should have to go up there and you have to fight for your folks. They should have a level of understanding of each one of those players, what they’re actually doing. You know like, when Mr. (X) comes down here, he likes to sit down and talk to individuals. So, he understands what they are actually doing. He got his hands in the pie. He can understand what the employee is actually bringing to the table when the appraisals actually come up.” Schein (1980) stated that there is a psychological contract between workforce members and their respective organizations that outlines the expectations of resources that each entity expects from the other. Employees expect supervisors to represent them effectively as a reciprocal gesture of their shared commitment to organizational success.

Participant Bragg in response to the question of supervisor improvement of the performance appraisal experience noted the importance of supervisors writing the performance appraisal and not requiring employees to write their own appraisal. He stated, “Well, in my opinion, more of a personal interaction with the employee knowing exactly what the employees do. And actually writing the performance appraisals rather than the employee writing the performance appraisal and they basically agree with or disagree with it…. Just requiring a more personal interaction between the employee and the supervisor, and focusing on the supervisor actually writing the performance
appraisal…. versus the employee doing it himself or herself.” DoD regulations and guidance are particularly specific concerning performance appraisal administration but the employee experiences differ according to the organization and supervisor. In some cases, the supervisor and rater are different people which may lead to ineffective feedback and employee dissatisfaction.

**Summary**

The research questions presented during the one-on-one interview process examined the relationship between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation, and ultimately, turnover intent. The study found a gap between the DoD performance appraisal process as outlined in DoD regulatory guidance for performance appraisals and the lived experiences of the performance appraisal process by DoD employees. The study did not find overwhelming evidence of a relationship between the DoD performance appraisal process and employee motivation and did not support the literature findings of a significant connection between the DoD performance appraisal process and employee turnover intent. The findings indicated a significant connection between organizational commitment and turnover intentions in the Department of Defense. There were no indications of differences in lived experiences of employees based on education, gender, occupation or race. There were also common experiences and perceptions of the DoD performance
appraisal process between supervisors and non-supervisors. The six themes and 13 subthemes are intertwined and offer a holistic view of the lived experiences of DoD employees that share the phenomenon of the DoD performance appraisal process. Chapter 5 summarizes the study findings, provides recommendations to DoD organizations, outlines limitations of the research and provides conclusions to the research study.
Chapter 5. Discussion and Recommendations

The basis of this study was to explore employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and the connection between employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process, employee motivation and engagement, and finally turnover intent.

Kamer and Annen (2010) stated that employee perceptions and understanding of the performance appraisal process in relation to their own well-being and employment is essential to organizational effectiveness and employee motivation and likely leads to a minimization of litigation due to performance appraisal challenges. Performance appraisals affect careers, education, promotion, pay, employee advancement opportunities and organizational success (Ahmed, et al., 2013). Performance appraisals also have a significant link to employee engagement and employee turnover intent (Cho & Lewis, 2013). The United States Department of Defense (DoD) comprised of approximately three million employees, is the largest employer in the world, including 732,000 civilian employees (DoD, 2017). This study concentrated on DoD civilian employees only, so as to place focus on their experiences and perceptions of the standard performance appraisal process.

The examination of employee experiences with the DoD performance appraisal process may lead to increased employee motivation, enhanced
employee engagement and ultimately, reduced turnover intent. Kamer and Annen (2010) stated that supervisors should maintain consistent awareness of the unique qualities and behavioral attitudes of their employees in order to ensure an effective and efficient performance appraisal process.

The research sought to gain clarification of DoD employee perception of the performance appraisal process, the impact the process has on employee motivation, and lastly how, if at all, does the performance appraisal process influence or contribute to thoughts of turnover intent. The significance of this study is to provide qualitative, phenomenological insight into the effect of DoD performance appraisals on employee motivation, engagement and turnover intentions through the theoretical lens of organizational commitment theory (Kahn, 1990) and Employee Engagement Theory (Kessler, 2013).

This research adds to the literature on the effect of performance appraisals on employee motivation, engagement and turnover intentions, in addition to gaining clear insight with regard to the DoD performance appraisal process from the lived experiences of DoD employees. The findings may facilitate improved performance, motivation reduced turnover intent and organizational success at DoD organizations.
Conclusions

This research study examined employee perceptions of the performance appraisal process experience in DoD organizations and possible connections to employee motivation and turnover intent via the following research questions:

1) What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization?

2) In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization?

3) Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

Six emergent themes were identified from the participants lived experiences in the DOD performance appraisal process using the phenomenological analysis process developed by Moustakas (1994). The six emergent themes were: 1) Seeking to Resolve Discrepancies Between the Formal Performance Appraisal Process and Actual Performance Appraisal Experiences, 2) Seeking Feedback and Communication as a Means of Understanding, 3) Striving to Satisfy Desire for Performance Appraisal Training for Supervisors and Employees as an approach to Mutual Understanding, 4) Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Engagement in Relation to the Performance Appraisal Process and Experience, 5) Performance Appraisal Process and Experience are Minimal Determinants of Employee
Turnover Intent, and 6) Quest for Stronger Employee-Supervisor Relationships to Improve Employee Engagement.

**Research Question 1: What is the performance appraisal process in a DoD organization?**

The study found that the performance appraisal process and experience in DoD organizations is markedly different based on supervisors and organizational culture. DoD mandates the recording of employee performance and contributions to organizational goals during the performance appraisal process. The prevalent finding in the study was the acknowledgement of the formal process requirement by DoD employees offset by the lack of acceptance of the process due to time constraints, lack of feedback and apathetic sentiments due to the perceived inconsequential nature of the performance appraisal results. The study found that employees have a strong desire for timely, consistent feedback on their performance from their supervisors.

The study also found that many DoD employees do not feel that feedback is present or sufficient. The study findings indicated that employees agree with the existing literature review finding that DoD employee supervisors are required to conduct at least three face-to-face feedback sessions with employees as part of the new DoD performance appraisal system, DPMAP (OPM, 2017). The findings suggest that the feedback requirement is
either not being met or is not sufficiently suitable for most DoD employees. The findings support the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results that show only 8.9% of DOD employees agree that their performance appraisal captures their work contribution. The findings also suggest that many DoD supervisors and employees do not accept the usefulness or validity of the DoD performance appraisal system.

**Research Question 2: In what ways does the employee performance appraisal experience impact employee motivation within a DoD organization?**

The research study indicated that the performance appraisal process and experience may have a limited effect on employee motivation due to the perceived inconsequential nature of the performance appraisal process. The study found that DoD civilians do not believe that there is a significant correlation between performance appraisal outcomes and career advancement or promotion. The findings do indicate that perceptions of inequity may lead to decreased motivation for employees that feel they are not being recognized or treated equitably based on their work performance compared to their peers. Feedback was listed as the most critical shortfall and need in the performance appraisal procedure by the majority of the participants. Training was a significant area of concern and importance for DoD employees. The findings indicated that supervisor training and employee training is an important factor...
in employee satisfaction and acceptance of the performance appraisal process in DoD.

Research Question 3: Does the performance appraisal experience at a DoD organization contribute to feelings of turnover intent from the organization?

The researcher made the unexpected finding that the participant DoD employees were not significantly influenced to leave the organization due to the performance appraisal process or performance appraisal experience in DoD organizations. This finding opposed the findings in existing literature that posited the performance appraisal process and experience was a significant factor in employee turnover intentions. The participants noted that the performance appraisal process had little impact on their retention, pay or advancement due to several factors including standard, generalized evaluations and the lack of tangible benefits or consequences to performance appraisal results.

The research did not indicate that the lack of feedback led to feelings of turnover intentions in DoD employees. However, some of these employees stated that they would likely consider departing for another organization within DoD due to the structure and regulatory requirements in DoD organizational hiring practices. The findings also indicated that DoD employees would
consider leaving the organization for other factors such as career progression, training opportunities or increased compensation.

The findings support the literature review findings on organizational commitment theory (Kessler, 2013) and employee engagement theory (Kahn, 1990). The study found that DoD employees display a high level of organizational commitment and employee engagement. Additionally, the findings from the qualitative study support the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results, which found that 89% of DOD employees are strongly committed to their work and the organization. The FEVS results also support the findings of 74% of DOD employees are actively engaged in their organization. The high level of employee engagement and organizational commitment are central contributors to the findings of negligible intent to depart DOD organizations due to the performance appraisal experience.

**Recommendations**

The study findings resulted in several recommendations for DoD organizational leaders and supervisors. The recommendations include:

1. Organizational leadership should take specific, measurable steps to ensure that supervisors provide consistent, candid feedback to employees throughout the performance appraisal cycle to enhance employee engagement and motivation. Chew and Chan (2008) found that adaptation of best practices
is a fundamental step in improving employee satisfaction and performance. Lack of constructive and consistent feedback and improved communication between supervisors and employees is a primary challenge identified by employees in this study. Supervisors should address employee concerns about perceived or actual inequitable workplace situations and other factors identified in the study as potential causes of employee dissatisfaction or contributing to turnover intent. Improved feedback and communication will likely lead to higher employee acceptance of the performance appraisal process, increased motivation, employee engagement and reduced turnover intent.

2. Supervisors and employees should complete the mandatory and elective performance appraisal administration training as directed by DoD and OPM. Supervisors should also focus on interview techniques, writing, communication skills and employee engagement approaches. Employees should also focus on seeking training to improve the self-assessment process and to improve communication with supervisors. Ertas (2015) found that employee job satisfaction was the primary determinant of turnover intention. Supervisors should focus on workplace resources, including training, that displays responsiveness to employee concerns and organizational needs. The study participants noted that supervisor and employee training was an area that
needed improvement in order to improve the performance appraisal experience for employees.

3. Supervisors and organizational leadership should examine the findings from this study, FEVS survey results and internal exit interviews and anonymous surveys to ascertain the causes of turnover within their respective organizations. The use of exit interviews and anonymous surveys is an effective method of gathering data on employee turnover intent causes. Supervisors should seek to reinforce the high levels of organizational commitment to DoD found in this study and existing literature to further enhance employee engagement and motivation. Goldenkoff (2017) found that DoD employees with high levels of organizational commitment tend to have increased employment satisfaction, higher motivation levels, improved job performance and reduced presence of turnover intentions. Continuous feedback and transparency during the entire rating cycle is an effective method to strengthen employee engagement and potentially reduce turnover intent. Supervisors and organizational leadership should conduct a thorough assessment of the costs associated with employee turnover including the potential cost of decreased organizational performance (Watrous et al., 2006).

4. Organizational leadership and supervisors should assess performance appraisal system effectiveness and employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system within their organizations. Maley and Kramar
(2014) noted that performance appraisals are a component of performance management systems and should be continuously evaluated to ensure consistency with the performance management process. Organizational leadership should take measures to provide tangible benefits to employees based on performance appraisal results. Awan (2013) posited that raters should focus on overall performance management which will improve the performance appraisal process. Supervisors should seek to tie performance appraisal results to advanced training opportunities, promotion and career advancement to facilitate greater employee acceptance of the performance appraisal system. Employees that accept the validity of a performance appraisal system and process are likely to possess higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and motivation (Kamer & Annen, 2010).

**Limitations**

There are several limitations in this study. The first limitation is the scope of the study. The study was limited to DoD civilian employees who worked for one of three specific DoD organizations based in Northern Virginia, Maryland and Northern Alabama that were selected based on their size, location and participation in the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The participants had to have received at least two DoD performance
appraisals and had to have received an appraisal within the past year. There is a possibility that the findings of this study are not relevant to DoD civilians that are based in areas outside of Northern Virginia, Maryland and Northern Alabama.

An additional limitation is the sample size of 19 participants. Although the sample size was considerably higher than the 3-10 individuals required for a suitable phenomenological research study (Creswell, 2014). The 19 participants are from three separate DoD organizations with different mission sets and employee work requirements. The research also included data from individuals that used one of four DoD appraisals. There are only two Human Resource managers included in the research study due to availability and participation acceptance. 17 of the participants used the employee interview protocol and only two of the participants used the Human Resource interview protocol.

Another limitation is the fact that some of the interviews were conducted via telephone and not face-to-face. The researcher used the same interview protocol for telephonic and face-to-face interviews, including the recording of all interviews but was not able to make visual observations of participant reactions during the interview process. Creswell (2014) noted that visual observations and onsite connection with interview participants is valuable due to the ability to observe nonverbal cues and participant responses.
to the interview questions. Onsite connection with interview participants allows the researcher to observe the organizational environment if the interview was conducted at the participant workplace.

Suggestions for Future Research

This qualitative research study contributed to understanding the lived experiences of DoD employees in the DoD performance appraisal process. The study also examined the effect of the DoD performance appraisal experience on DoD employee motivation and turnover intent. The following suggestions are for future research in examining DoD employee experiences in the performance appraisal process and the resulting effect on motivation and turnover intent.

This study was focused on three specific DoD organizations that are classified as medium sized organizations in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (OPM, 2017). The study could be replicated with different organizations or organizations selected from the large category or small category of federal institutions. Future studies could include a larger sample size or a sample focused more on demographic data such as male compared to female, etc.

Future studies could also utilize a quantitative approach to measure the significance of performance appraisals on motivation, turnover intent and employee engagement based on specific criteria found in the findings within
the emergent themes of this study. This study included participants that used four DoD performance appraisal systems. A future quantitative study focused on DoD employees that use DPMAP or another singular DoD performance appraisal system involving a significantly larger sample size in a different region of the country or with a different segment of the federal government could expand on this research study. A larger qualitative study in another region of the United States with five to ten participating organizations is another option to expand on this research study.

**Conclusion**

Chapter 5 outlined a discussion of the study findings and provided recommendations for improving the experiences of DoD employees with the DoD performance appraisal process and experience. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a summary of the chapter. This study was designed to offer specific, measurable, timely recommendations to increase employee acceptance of the DoD performance appraisal process, increase motivation, enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover intent.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) stated that phenomenological research centers on the comprehension of underlying factors of a situation familiar to several individuals to discover the importance of experiencing the phenomenon. This study used a phenomenological approach to examine the
performance appraisal process in DoD organizations through the perspectives of DoD employees who have the lived experience of the phenomenon of participating in the performance appraisal process. Ismail and Gali (2017) stated that organizations should strive to achieve employee performance appraisal satisfaction to minimize the unfavorable results caused by workplace stress which tend to have a negative effect on workforce performance, ultimately resulting in lower turnover intent, increased employee motivation and improved job performance. The Department of Defense has arguably the most important task in this country, the defense of the United States.

The 732,000 civilian employees that work for DoD are critically important to the successful accomplishment of the DoD mission and their motivation, retention and job satisfaction are critical to the defense of this nation. It is critical that supervisors and organizational leaders take every action possible to continually improve the DoD performance appraisal process and experience to allow DoD employees to focus on maintaining the security of our country.
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Taylor, F. W. (1911). The principles of scientific management


Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Employees

Opening: The purpose of this study is to examine employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and to examine potential connections between the performance appraisal process, employee motivation and ultimately turnover intent. This research is focused on performance appraisal process in DoD organizations only.

1. What is your professional experience and educational background? Do you currently serve as a rater to a DoD Civilian?
2. How long have you worked at this DoD organization and how long in your current position?
3. What are your views on performance appraisals?
4. What is the performance appraisal feedback process in your organization?
5. Can you share with me your experiences with the performance appraisal process at your current organization?
6. How has the performance appraisal system in this organization impacted your motivation?
7. As a result of your performance appraisal experiences, have you considered leaving the organization due to performance appraisal experiences?
8. Based on your experience, how can leaders and supervisors improve the performance appraisal experience in your organization?
9. Does your organization offer or require performance appraisal training? If so, did the training change your perspective of the performance appraisal process in your organization? (for managers only)

10. Do you have any unique experiences in performance appraisal administration? What are some of those experiences?

11. What modifications or actions do you recommend to organizational leadership to enhance employee experiences with the performance appraisal system in this organization? Why?

12. Have you observed any activities that resulted in unfavorable views of performance appraisals?

13. Has the performance appraisal process at your current organization affected your engagement at the organization?

14. Do you have anything else that you would like to share concerning performance appraisals?
Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Human Resources

1. What is your organization’s view on employee engagement?

2. What is your Human Resource Management strategy? How does employee engagement fit into your Human Resource Management strategy?

3. How does your organization define employee engagement? What steps does the organization take to foster employee engagement? Do you assess employee engagement? How?

4. What do you assess as the most significant barriers to employee engagement? What causes these barriers?

5. Do you assess any organizational differences in engagement across the organization? If so, what are they and why do they exist?

6. What is the one step that you would take to improve employee engagement in your organization? Why?

7. Does your organization offer or require performance appraisal training? If so, did the training change your perspective of the performance appraisal process in your organization?

8. Based on your experience, how can leaders and supervisors improve the performance appraisal experience in your organization?
9. Do you have anything else that you would like to share concerning performance appraisals or employee engagement in your organization?
Appendix C: Email to Participants

Greetings,

My name is Kenneth Welch and I am a doctoral candidate at Florida Institute of Technology Bisk College of Business. I will be conducting a research study in fulfillment of my dissertation. The study will explore employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and potential connections between the performance appraisal process and employee motivation.

I am requesting your participation as your perspective as an employee at a DoD organization and experience in the DoD performance appraisal process is critical to this research project. Findings from this research will allow DoD organizations to develop strategies to improve employee engagement and motivation. If you participate in this study, please note:

- Participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate; you may also end the interview at any time.
- There is no compensation for participation in this study.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
- Confidentiality will be maintained and your name will not be used in any way.
I would like to schedule a convenient time and location to conduct an interview with you. Please contact me via email or telephone to verify if you are available to participate in the study.

Thank you very much for your support.

Kenneth Welch

Contact Information: (Insert email and phone number)
Appendix D: Email to Human Resource Management Participants

Greetings,

My name is Kenneth Welch and I am a doctoral candidate at Florida Institute of Technology Bisk College of Business. I will be conducting a research study in fulfillment of my dissertation. The study will explore employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and potential connections between the performance appraisal process and employee motivation.

I am requesting your participation as your perspective as a Human Resource Management professional at a DoD organization and experience in the DoD performance appraisal process is critical to this research project. Findings from this research will allow DoD organizations to develop strategies to improve employee engagement and motivation. If you participate in this study, please note:

- Participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate; you may also end the interview at any time.
- There is no compensation for participation in this study.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

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Confidentiality will be maintained and your name will not be used in any way.

I would like to schedule a convenient time and location to conduct an interview with you. Please contact me via email or telephone to verify if you are available to participate in the study.

Thank you very much for your support.

Kenneth Welch

Contact Information (Insert email and phone number).
Appendix E: Cold Telephone Call Script For Potential Participants

Greetings,

My name is Kenneth Welch and I am a doctoral candidate at Florida Institute of Technology Bisk College of Business. I will be conducting a research study in fulfillment of my dissertation. The study will explore employee perceptions of performance appraisals in the Department of Defense (DoD) and potential connections between the performance appraisal process and employee motivation.

I am requesting your participation as your perspective as an employee at a DoD organization and experience in the DoD performance appraisal process is critical to this research project. Findings from this research will allow DoD organizations to develop strategies to improve employee engagement and motivation. If you participate in this study, please note:

- Participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate; you may also end the interview at any time.
- There is no compensation for participation in this study.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
Confidentiality will be maintained and your name will not be used in any way.

I would like to schedule a convenient time and location to conduct an interview with you. Are you available and willing to participate in this study? Do you know any other DoD employees at your organization that may be interested in participating in this study? You can reach me at (Contact Information). Thank you very much for your support.
Appendix F: Follow up Telephone Call Script

For Participants

Greetings,

Thank you for your participation in the research study on employee perspectives of the DoD performance appraisal process. I would like to follow up on your interview to verify the accuracy of my transcript of your responses and to ask a few clarifying questions. Please note:

- Participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate in the study even after your interview has been conducted.
- There is no compensation for participation in this study.
- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
- Confidentiality will be maintained and your name will not be used in any way.

Thank you again for your time and participation. Findings from this research will allow DoD organizations to develop strategies to improve employee engagement and motivation. If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach me at (Contact Information). Thank you very much for your support.
Appendix G: 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
## Appendix H: Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to Resolve Discrepancies Between the Formal Performance Appraisal Process and Actual Performance Appraisal Experiences</td>
<td>Desire to Improve the Impact of the Performance Appraisal Process on Employee Motivation and Turnover Intent</td>
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<td>Quest to Improve the Impact of the Performance Appraisal Experience on Employee Motivation and Turnover Intent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking to Improve Leadership effects on Employee Motivation and Turnover Intent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Performance Appraisal Systems share similar impact on Employee Perceptions of the Performance Appraisal Process and Experience</td>
</tr>
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<td>Seeking Feedback and Communication as a Means of Understanding</td>
<td>Seeking to Enhance Supervisor Counseling Practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supervisor Actions Impact on the Performance Appraisal Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving to Satisfy Desire for Performance Appraisal Training for Supervisors and Employees as an Approach to Mutual Understanding</td>
<td>Towards a Realization of Employee Desire for Professional Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Engagement in Relation to the Performance Appraisal Process and Experience</td>
<td>Supervisor and Employee Share Neutral views of the performance appraisal experience</td>
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<td>Supervisor and Employee Share Positive views of the performance appraisal experience</td>
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<td>Supervisor and Employees Share Negative views of the performance appraisal experience</td>
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<td>Performance Appraisal Process and Experience are Minimal Determinants of Employee Turnover Intent</td>
<td>Performance appraisal administration has mixed impact on Employees</td>
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<td>Performance Rating as a determinant of Turnover Intent</td>
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<td>Quest for Stronger Employee-Supervisor Relationships to Improve Employee Engagement</td>
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<td>Towards a Realization of Employee Desire for Professional Growth</td>
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## Appendix I: Participant Demographic Data

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
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<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
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</table>
Appendix J: AcqDemo Appraisal Example
Appendix K: DCIPS Example

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS EXAMPLE

- Employee writes self-report of accomplishments
- Rating Official assigns ratings and writes narrative(s)
- Reviewing Official gives approval
- PM PRA approval and final Performance Evaluation of Record shared with employee

November/December - Conduct Pay Pool Panel
- Pay Pool panel develops recommendations for salary and/or bonus increases
- PP PRA review and approval

Performance-based payouts, generally effective first pay period in January

January - Reward Performance

October - Assess Performance
Appendix L: DPMAP Example