

## Revisiting Appraisal Politics From Assessors' Perspective

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**Abstract:** Past research on performance appraisal focusing on assessor's ability to assess accurately has not made much progress because practitioners have not adopted most of the recommendations. One of the arguments has been that enhancing assessor's ability to is useless unless s/he intends to appraise accurately. The focus of this paper is to understand assessor's intention to appraise performance and it draws from political view of organisation, which considers assessor as a politician and proposes that certain contextual factors cause assessor's to adopt goals other than accuracy. Specifically, it is proposed that, instrumentality of outcomes, ambiguity in the process/ policies, and accountability pressures shape the assessor's perception of appraisal politics, which determine assessor's intention to achieve specific goals through appraisal. Accountability research reveals that only specific accountability conditions have favourable affect on decision. While procedural accountability reduces assessor's perception of appraisal politics, the outcome accountability will increase this perception and affect appraisal accuracy.

## REVISITING APPRAISAL POLITICS FROM ASSESSORS' PERSPECTIVE

### Introduction

Accuracy in appraising employee performance is a major concern faced by organisations that desire to improve their performance management system. Any attempt to increase accuracy has to focus on assessor. In traditional system, immediate superior is the only assessor in most of the organisations. However, to increase accuracy and to get a comprehensive and balanced feedback about employee performance, 360-degree feedback system is becoming popular. In this system, peers, subordinates and customers also do the appraisal. This is particularly relevant in the light of research, which has empirically proved that 360-degree feedback system improves employee performance significantly (Rai, and Singh, 2005). However, appraisal by different assessors does not take care of inaccuracies introduced by each of these individual assessors in the appraisal report. This paper looks into the various factors related to assessors that affect appraisal accuracy.

There has been great deal of research on performance rating, but little progress has been made in improving assessor's accuracy in assessing performance (Landy and Farr, 1980; Banks and Murphy, 1985; Cleveland and Murphy, 1995). Landy and Farr (1980) noted that the performance appraisal research has progressed in a fragmented manner with research on formats, scales, and characteristics of assessee and assessor being treated separately from each other. They suggested a process model of evaluating performance, which combined variables such as position characteristics, organisation characteristics, purpose of rating, rating instrument, assessee and assessor characteristics with the administrative and cognitive processes of performance appraisal and its outcome. (Feldman, 1981) further developed the cognitive process model for evaluating performance by outlining various steps in such cognitive processing like supervisor recognising and attending to relevant information about employees, storing and organising information for later access, and recalling and integrating relevant information in organised fashion while making assessment.

Although cognitive research in performance appraisal helped in understanding this process, it did little to improve the process in practice because practitioners found it difficult to adopt these recommendations. Banks and Murphy (1984) cautioned researchers about the growing gap between their focus of research and practitioner's expectations, especially in view of new cognitive process approach. This has led to focus on the influence of the organisational context on the appraisal process (Cleveland and Murphy, 1995; Harris, 1994; Judge and Ferris, 1993; Landy and Farr, 1980). Landy and Farr (1980) also delineated position characteristics and purpose of the appraisal as contextual factors in their model. Jawahar and Williams (1997) conducted a meta-analysis on these studies and found that appraisal linked to administrative decisions like promotions, etc. is more lenient than appraisal done for developmental and research purposes. One of the reasons is the discomfort of assessors in giving poor rating to the under-performer because the possible outcome of the process for the under-performing assessee influences them (Landy and Farr, 1980). Researchers have argued that appraisal errors or biases may be deliberate signals to the employees or may be adaptation to the conflicting demands of the process (Murphy, et. al., 2004; Cleveland and Murphy, 1995). This has been termed as "appraisal politics" defined as "superior's deliberate manipulations of employee ratings to enhance or protect self or department interest" (Sims Jr., Gioia, and Longenecker, 1987: 184). It also means that assessor's intention can be other than to appraise accurately.

Decotiis and Petit (1978) proposed that accuracy of performance appraisal is a function of: assessor's intention to appraise accurately, assessor's ability to evaluate assessee's job behaviour, and the rating standards. There has been a lot of research on understanding and improving the assessor's ability (Harris, 1994; Landy and Farr, 1980), but research on assessor's intention has been lacking (Harris, 1994; Cleveland and Murphy, 1995). Of late there has been more focus on the assessor's motivation context (Levy and Williams, 2004). The third factor, rating standards, is a function of: assessee job characteristic; assessee personal characteristic; appraisal format; and organisation policies/ procedures with respect to performance appraisal (Decotiis and Petit, 1978). In the context of our paper, organisation policies and procedures related to performance appraisal are of considerable interest. These policies are related to performance management processes such as goal setting, assessee participation in different stages, feedback, performance appraisal, monitoring/ evaluation of the appraisal process, and appraisal-reward linkage. These policies and procedures impact appraisal accuracy through their impact on rating standards and assessor's perception of the consequences of accurate appraisal. The consequences can be shifted in favour of accurate appraisal if assessor perceives that s/he would be held accountable for the appraisal report (Decotiis and Petit, 1978; Tetlock, 1985; Wherry Sr. and Bartlett, 1982). Curtis, Harvey, and Ravden (2005) found that one of the ways of reducing leniency error is by making assessors accountable for the accuracy of their ratings, particularly when appraisal is linked to administrative decisions. Our paper looks into the role of accountability in improving the accuracy of performance appraisal by checking the assessor's intention to fulfil purposes other than accuracy, such as preventing deterioration of relations with subordinates, enhancing self-image, etc.

### **Assessor's Intention Context**

Assessor's intention in context of performance appraisal is defined in terms of basic goals or objectives that assessor aims to fulfil through appraisal and which drive his or her behaviour. In political approach, assessor's intention plays a key role in making accurate appraisal. While appraising, the assessor may consider the objective of accuracy to be of less importance than more self-serving and political goals or agenda (Murphy, Cleveland, Skattebo, and Kinney, 2004; Sims Jr., et al., 1987). Some of the goals, other than improved performance and accurate appraisal, that superiors attempt to achieve through performance appraisal are: avoiding confrontation with subordinates, maintaining subordinate performance, avoiding written record of poor performances, hiding poor department performance, shocking subordinate to improve, sending a signal to the subordinate to leave the organisation (Gioia and Longenecker, 1994; Cleveland and Murphy, 1995). Some managers give higher ratings to their employees to project an image of overall good performance by the department. This may affect their appraisal and rewards. The heads of powerful departments can also use it to showcase their power and garner maximum benefits for their team. These manipulations can be understood from the agency theory perspective (Eisenhardt, 1986). The manager is an agent trying to maximise his own returns by placating his subordinates and avoiding discomfort of negative feedback. The manager who heads the most critical department constituting employees who either possess critical skills or perform critical functions is able to play this power game most effectively. Thus an assessor may be motivated to manipulate appraisal to get rewards for her/himself, avoid negative consequences or create good impression in the eyes of superiors (Harris, 1994). These assessor behaviours have been defined as loyalty, sympathy, concern, conflict avoidance, deviance, and power seeking (Longenecker and Gioia, 2000) and represent assessor's political behaviour in appraisal context.

One school of thought considers such manipulations to be justified in certain instances like avoiding ranking to maintain harmony within work-group, motivate assessee's to perform better in future (Murphy et. al., 2004), etc. and managers consider these manipulations to be their legitimate discretion (Longenecker and Gioia, 2000). Although these manipulations of performance appraisal may fulfil the short-term goals of the assessor, it hurts the long-term organisational goals. The negative consequences appear in form of: diminished ability to reward high performers, damaged trust between assessor and assessee, increased uncertainty and doubt among employees, potential legal and ethical issues, creation of more performance problems than solving, failure of pay for performance policy and suspect data for promotion decisions (Longenecker and Gioia, 2000). It is in the interest of the organisation that performance appraisal be used for accurately assessing performance of its employees and for identification of developmental needs rather than for any other uses mentioned above. One of the ways to make assessors' realise the negative effects of manipulating appraisal is by providing proper training about the entire appraisal process and its various implications.

Researcher's focus and practitioner's expectations in this field has not matched: the practitioner talks about top management commitment, communication between superior and subordinate, improvement in feedback skills, clarity of performance objectives, while the researcher is concerned about rating accuracy, observation skills, better formats, etc. It is in this context that the current paper conceptualises the impact of accountability in minimizing the effect of deliberate attempts by assessors to manipulate rating. Accountability for the procedures of performance appraisal appears interesting as it brings to focus the practitioner's concerns mentioned by Banks and Murphy (1984).

### **Perceived Appraisal Politics**

Organisational politics means managing the meaning of situation to produce outcomes desired. All behaviours are not political and emphasis is on deliberate attempts to control outcomes, thus omitting mindless or subconscious behaviours (Ferris and Judge, 1991). The situational characteristics that are antecedents to political behaviour are ambiguity, accountability, instrumentality of associated outcomes, and spatial distance between supervisor and subordinate dyad. In our paper, perception of appraisal politics is considered rather than actual political behaviour. Lewin (1936) suggested that people react to situations based upon perception of reality instead of reality per se. But the antecedents of political behaviour will also affect perception of politics. Thus ambiguity, accountability, instrumentality of associated outcomes, and spatial distance are assumed to influence appraisal politics perception also. Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989) conceptualised the concept of perception of organisation politics and identified antecedents and outcomes of this variable based upon past literature. The antecedent variables were grouped under three sources of perception: organisation characteristics, job characteristics, and personal characteristics. Organisation characteristics affecting politics perception are centralisation, formalisation, hierarchical levels and span of control. Political behaviours are most likely to occur when there is high degree of uncertainty or ambiguity in work environment. Unambiguously defined processes, procedures and standards of performance will reduce perception of politics, and thus clearly stated procedures and policies would reduce perceived degree of appraisal politics. Also, job characteristics such as autonomy, variety, and feedback, reduce uncertainty and negatively affects perception of politics (Ferris et al., 1989). Thus feedback, a very important outcome of appraisal, will reduce perceived appraisal politics. Similarly another outcome of appraisal, opportunity for promotion, also affects perception of appraisal politics. So clearly stated outcomes for assesseees and assessors would influence perception of

appraisal politics. On empirically testing the Ferris et al. (1989) model, Ferris and Kacmar (1992) found that supervisory behaviour, co-worker behaviour (predicted by span of control, formalisation, and hence ambiguity) and organization policies and practices, particularly related to promotion opportunities, were the strongest factors affecting perception of politics.

Ferris and Judge (1991) found evidence of political behaviour of superior in performance evaluation where s/he tried fulfilling his self-interests through appraisal. While during performance feedback, subordinate may be trying to influence the attribution of success or failure on self or situation, supervisor might be just going through motions of conducting appraisal to manage impression on reviewer, 'playing to different audience', without actually concerned about accurate appraisal. Longenecker (1989) argued that whenever short-term ramifications of accurate ratings are negative for assessor, temptations to manipulate ratings to lessen negative impact is strong. The short-term results may be good for manager but bad for the organisation. As Poon (2004) found in an empirical study that when employees perceived performance ratings to be manipulated because of assessee's personal bias and intent to punish subordinates they expressed reduced job satisfaction, which led to greater intention to quit. Attractiveness of short-term orientation and political perception can be reduced by certain managerial and organisational actions. Managerial actions can be more frequent appraisal to kill the fear of the process, clarification of the purpose of appraisal, immaculate performance planning, education of short-term and long-term costs and benefits. Organisation actions can be top management support, multi-faceted training, and open and positive appraisal climate, revising policies and procedures that prevent accurate appraisal, and provision of feedback to assessors on their appraisal performance (Longenecker, 1989). Further Longenecker and Gioia (1992) found that as executives rise in the hierarchy, their jobs become more uncertain, ambiguous and more dependent on factors beyond their control. So they require more frequent feedback as they rise. But paradoxically, it has been found that such executives are given even lesser feedback. Their paper argues against these myths and suggest following actions to make feedback more meaningful: conduct structured appraisal by incorporate performance planning into executive review and appraisal process; make review and feedback ongoing; focus on process as well as outcomes as focussing only on outcomes promotes perception of politics; and appraisal need to be thorough, specific, structured even when job is unstructured. Thus, more clearly stated are the guidelines and policies related to appraisal, lesser will be the perception of appraisal politics.

In short, assessor's perception of the degree of appraisal politics would affect her/his intentions regarding influencing the appraisal outcomes. If the assessor thinks that there is high degree of appraisal politics in the organisation, then s/he feels justified about her/his decisions that compromise accuracy of evaluation. The three factors that affect the assessor's perception about the degree of appraisal politics are: assessors' accountability, extent of clarity about the guidelines and policies of the performance management system, and assessor's training. Assessor's accountability and its effect on perceived appraisal politics is covered in the next section of this paper. Better clarity about the guidelines and policies of the performance management system could obviously reduce the appraisal politics in the organisation. Assessor's training in appraisal techniques would also increase her/his understanding of the performance management system and may help her/him to differentiate between myth and reality of the appraisal politics in the organisation.

### **Accountability in Decision-Making**

Accountability is a neglected social context/ construct in the management research (Tetlock, 1985). Giving a call for more research on accountability in decision-making environment, Tetlock (1985) laid down the framework for studying it. The isolated

information processor in a laboratory and decision-maker situated in rule-governed social and organisational settings need to be merged. The guiding metaphor is that decision maker is a politician whose primary goal is to maintain a positive regard of important constituencies to whom s/he is accountable (Tetlock, 1985). As a result, his two core assumptions are related to nature of real world decision settings and goals/ motives that drive the decision-making process. This view regarded accountability of conduct as a universal feature of natural decision environment and people's goal as approval and status seekers in their social context. Thus, "Accountability is a critical rule and norm enforcement mechanism: the social psychological link between individual decision makers on the one hand and the social systems to which they belong on the other" (Tetlock, 1985: 307).

Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy, and Doherty (1994: 634, in Brtek and Motowidlo, 2002) defined accountability as "being answerable to external audiences for performing up to certain prescribed standards thereby fulfilling obligations, duties, expectations, and other charges". Across different accountability situations, common theme is the need for decision makers to justify their judgments and decisions to others. How people cope up with this problem depends upon accountability relationships, i.e. who is accountable to whom and under what ground rules (Tetlock, 1985; Simonson and Nye, 1992; Lerner and Tetlock, 1999). Lerner and Tetlock (1999) in their review of past research lists down different forms of accountability studied in different decision-making contexts: (a) mere presence of another (participants expect that another will observe their performance) (b) identifiability (participants expect that what they say or do in a study will be linked to them personally) (c) evaluation (participants expect that their performance will be assessed by another according to some normative ground rules and with some implied consequences) and (d) reason-giving (participants expect that they must give reasons for what they say or do).

The research on accountability in the last two decades has shown that pre decisional accountability to an unknown audience/ or audience with unknown views will attenuate biases that arise from lack of self-critical attention to one's decision processes and failure to use all relevant cues (Lerner and Tetlock, 1999). By contrast, accountability is likely to amplify bias to the extent that (a) a given judgment bias results from using normatively (but not obviously) proscribed information or (b) a given choice bias results from the fact that the option that appears easiest to justify also happens to be the biased option. Finally, accountability is likely to have no effect on biases that result exclusively from lack of special training in formal decision rules (Lerner and Tetlock, 1999). Another direction in accountability research has shown support for positive impact of procedural accountability on decision quality compared to outcome accountability (Brtek and Motowidlo, 2002; Simonson and Nye, 1992; Simonson and Staw, 1992). Procedural accountability is in operation when "someone's judgments or decisions are monitored and valued according to quality of procedure that a judge or decision maker uses in making a response, regardless of the quality of the outcome of that response" (Siegel-Jacob and Yates, 1996: 2). Under outcome accountability, "judgments or decisions quality are monitored and evaluated according to standards of decisions quality or its consequences and procedures used to decide are ignored" (Siegel-Jacob and Yates, 1996: 2).

Accountability research has shown support for positive impact of procedural accountability on decision quality compared to outcome accountability (Siegel-Jacobs and Yates, 1996; Brtek and Motowidlo, 2002; Simonson and Nye, 1992; Simonson and Staw, 1992). Procedural accountability encourages people to take more of the available information into account compared to outcome accountability (Tetlock and Boettger, 1989). But it is useful only when the information is relevant to judgment as procedural accountability does

not makes decision-maker a better discriminator of information (Siegel-Jacobs and Yates, 1996). Procedural accountability caused people to be more attentive to information, to take more notes, and follow structured interview format more conscientiously compared to outcome accountability. It raised interview judgment validity in predicting subsequent job performance compared to outcome accountability (Brtek and Motowidlo, 2002). Inter-rater judgmental accuracy of interviewee ratings increased when procedural accountability existed (Rozelle and Baxter, 1981). According to Chaiken (1980), high involvement (procedural accountability) condition led message recipients to employ systematic information processing, using more message cues rather than source cues. Low involvement (no accountability) condition involved heuristics based information processing, where source cues (such as likeability) had strong influence compared to message cues. Procedural accountability also improved consistency with which judgment policies are applied (Ashton, 1992) and lowers susceptibility to bias (Simonson and Nye, 1992). On the other hand, outcome accountability pressure forced decisions in line with expected views of constituencies (Adelberg and Baston, 1978). Outcome accountability makes decision-makers more politically motivated (Fandt and Ferris, 1990), less willing to compromise, heightens escalation of commitment, and affects quality of judgment negatively (Simonson and Staw, 1992).

On analysing the causes for superior outcome of procedural accountability on decision quality, Siegel-Jacobs and Yates (1996) argued that whereas procedural accountability condition suggests method to enhance performance, outcome accountability might provide incentive to produce positively evaluated response, but no guidance to achieve the goal. Also, outcome accountability may induce stress, affecting decision quality if the outcome is uncertain; whereas procedural condition does not induce same level of stress as one is answerable for a procedure that is relatively certain (Siegel-Jacobs and Yates, 1996). Another explanation is that procedural accountability induces controlled information processing, whereas outcome accountability induces more automatic information processing (Chaiken, 1980; Brtek and Motowidlo, 2002).

### **Performance Appraisal and Accountability**

In the context of performance appraisal it is expected that assessor's procedural and outcome accountability would influence her/his intentions. Following research on accountability, some studies have been conducted on the effect of accountability on decision made during performance appraisal (Klimoski and Inks, 1990; Mero and Motowidlo, 1995). Klimoski and Inks (1990) found that the pressure on account of accountability would be higher when assessors expect face-to-face feedback sharing with the assessees than when there is anonymous feedback or no feedback. Also, assessor's rating will be higher in case of self-assessment rating by assessee being high than when there is no or low self-assessment rating. In their experiment assessors were held accountable to assessees only and hence assessors aligned their ratings to the assessees' expectations. This was termed as "acceptability heuristic" by Tetlock (1985). In another laboratory experiment, Mero and Motowidlo (1995) found that assessors who were held accountable for their ratings would rate more accurately than assessors who were not held accountable. In this experiment the subjects were held accountable to the researcher and the following pre-process rating norms were specified as treatment conditions: to rate accurately, to rate leniently, and to rate women more leniently. Under control conditions, subjects were not held accountable for ratings. As expected, "acceptability heuristics" worked and subjects held accountable for rating accuracy were more accurate, while others aligned their assessment in line with specific norms.



But the above studies did not differentiate the nature of accountability. Brtek and Motowidlo (2002) argued that, procedural accountability might have been dominant in the Mero and Motowidlo experiment as it was found that compared to subjects under pressure to achieve certain outcome, subjects who were accountable for accuracy exhibited more attentive behaviour like taking more notes, which might have led to more accurate assessment. Similarly, if an assessor feels more accountable to assessee, assessor may be more motivated to fulfil other objectives than to appraise performance accurately, e.g. inflate ratings to maintain relationship, especially in case of poor performance (Klimoski and Inks, 1990). Brtek and Motowidlo (2002) found support for following hypotheses in the interview context: holding interviewers accountable for the procedures they follow raises interview validity. On the other hand, holding interviewers accountable for the accuracy of the judgments lowers interview validity. Similar distinction needs to be made in performance appraisal context and test whether appraisal accuracy is higher for procedural accountability than for outcome accountability. Accountability to some neutral authority to whom assessor needs to justify her/his decision (e.g. superior or HR manager or audit team) for following well-defined policies and guidelines, will improve the quality of decision. In a typical appraisal system, superior of assessor functions as reviewer, and is expected to ensure adherence of appraisal procedural norms. Higher the assessor's procedural accountability, lesser is the assessor's perception of appraisal politics. On the other hand, higher the assessor's outcome accountability, higher is the assessor's perception of appraisal politics.

The negative effect of outcome accountability appears counter intuitive despite preceding discussion, thus the two forms of accountability are discussed in more detail. Procedural accountability in the context of appraisal rating means, answerability for following a defined organisational procedure and norms related to appraisal. Some of the procedures that have been found to have positive effect on improving rating accuracy are: goal setting, ongoing informal/ formal feedback, and maintaining diary for noting down critical incidents (DeNisi and Peters, 1996). Participative goal setting removes some ambiguity about the criteria and relevant measures help in assessing performance more accurately. Ongoing feedback also helps assessor to share assessee's performance shortcomings without any immediate consequences. This helps to reduce accountability pressures towards assessees (e.g. to maintain good interpersonal relations) during final appraisal and s/he need not feel the necessity to appraise poor performance more favourably. Outcome accountability in case of performance appraisal can be in terms of appraising the performance as accurately as possible. But in case of behavioural performance dimensions, it is difficult to assess the standards of accurate appraisal. One way is to check the validity of certain behavioural performance assessment in predicting the objective outcome parameters, e.g. sales, quality, production related figures. But still there is a strong possibility that in case of outcome accountability, if outcome is accurate appraisal, assessor will try to find out the views on performance assessment of the authority to whom he/she is accountable, mostly his superior who is reviewer in a typical appraisal process. This will increase the assessor's perception of appraisal politics.

The above differentiation between procedural and outcome can also be understood from cognitive processing perspective. While procedural accountability forces assessor to carry out controlled cognitive processing that involves consciously monitored processes of attention, search, and stimulus detection (Feldman, 1981), the outcome accountability involves more often the automatic cognitive processing. Automatic processing is more dependent on stereotypic categorisation of employee in the mind of assessor without conscious monitoring

(Feldman, 1981) and causes more inaccurate and biased appraisal. The controlled processing in procedural accountability can be augmented by well-defined appraisal procedures.

### **Appraisal Guidelines and Policies**

Knowledge about appraisal norms not only reduces the ambiguity and perception of politics, but also increases the assessor's ability to appraise accurately. The degree of perceived appraisal politics is directly affected by the precision and unambiguity about the appraisal guidelines and policies like: clearly stated purpose; clearly stated appraisal procedure; unambiguous and relevant rating criteria and standards; clearly stated implications of outcome for assessee; and clearly stated implications of outcome for assessor. The reason being that if norms are not clear or assessor does not know these norms, the perception of appraisal politics increases, as managers take that ambiguity as discretion (Cleveland and Murphy, 1995). Also, in that case it will be difficult to ascertain the procedural accountability. Appraisal norm may recommend proven methods like maintaining appraisal diaries (DeNisi and Peters, 1996) to help improve accuracy. Accountability towards this norm by means of audit can force assessor to follow this norm and improve appraisal accuracy.

### **Ability to Appraise Accurately**

As mentioned by DeCotiis and Petit (1978), another important factor affecting accuracy is the assessor's ability to appraise accurately. The ability of assessor also affects positively the assessor's intention to appraise accurately through its positive effect on self-efficacy of the assessor. The assessor's ability is affected both by knowledge of the appraisal norms, purpose, procedure and outcomes as well as organisation support in terms of training on appraisal, which has been shown to positively affect accuracy (Pulakos, 1984). Thus, clearly stated purpose; clearly stated appraisal procedure; unambiguous and relevant rating criteria and standards; clearly stated implications of outcome for assessee; and clearly stated implications of outcome for assessor, would improve assessor's ability to appraise accurately. The more relevant the performance appraisal training is, more able the assessor will be to appraise accurately. Frame of reference (FOR) training has been shown to improve appraisal accuracy. FOR training aims at establishing common reference among assessors as to what constitutes effective appraisal by establishing the rating standards and showing behavioural examples on various rating dimensions. Athey and McIntyre (1987) empirically found that FOR training in comparison to training that is only 'information providing' improved retention of information given during training, improved 'distance accuracy', and reduced halo effect. In another study McIntyre, Smith and Hassett (1984) found that FOR training improved accuracy and reduced halo effect as compared to training on rating errors. In another study by Woehr (1994), it was found that FOR-trained subjects not only produced more accurate performance appraisal, but also recalled more behaviour representing wider variety in performance dimensions. In all these studies any kind of training was better in improving assessor's accuracy than no training.

### **Assessor-Centric Model of Appraisal Politics**

Based on the above discussion a comprehensive model that identifies the antecedents of accurate appraisal when assessor is placed in the situation where s/he may have conflicting goals to fulfil and different constituencies to satisfy. The model is shown in Figure 1.

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Many models have been proposed in the past in the context of performance appraisal (Decotiis and Petit, 1978; Harris, 1994; Murphy and Cleveland, 1991), but this model differs from these models in significant ways. The first departure is that it clearly delineates the accountability perspective (Tetlock, 1985) in the context of appraisal. The second is to look at the ways in which rating inaccuracies can be minimised through policies, procedures and standards. It clearly moves away from research focusing on removing unintentional biases, psychometric properties of scales, validity and reliability issues of the performance dimensions and measures etc, which have been researched extensively (Landy and Farr, 1980). On the other hand, the paper focuses on the contemporary research agenda in performance appraisal by studying the context in which appraisal occurs. The model takes its cues from the theory of reasoned action, which says that the outcomes shape the attitudes towards behaviours and attitudes along with subjective norms affect the intentions to perform behaviour and the actual behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

### **Additional Variables**

Though not mentioned in the model, other assessor related variables that affect the appraisal accuracy are assessor's personality variables. Conscientiousness and agreeableness has been shown to predict rating leniency (Bernardin, Cooke, Ross, and Villanova, 2000). The effect of mood in the recall of information and the accuracy of the appraisal has also been studied (Isen, 1987). The dependent variable considered in the model is rating accuracy, which is the measure of actual performance of the assessee on the dimensions assessed. There are operational difficulties in measuring this variable especially in field tests. Another variable which can be used to assess the effectiveness of appraisal can be the reactions of both assessor and assessee, which can be operationalised by measuring satisfaction with the rating, justice perception, and acceptability of rating (Levy and Williams, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

In the last decade or so, researchers in performance appraisals have called for considering the social context and political view of the process (Levy and Williams, 2004; Ferris and King, 1991). There has been some movement in this regard (Levy and Williams, 2004), but as identified in their extensive review, Levy and Williams (2004) identified few interesting directions in which research can move. One of these directions has been accountability research in decision-making, which calls for merging the isolated decision-maker in laboratory who involved in cognitive processing with political decision-maker in field coping with opposing accountability pressures (Tetlock, 1985). The accountability research essentially points towards this merger of two schools of thought so that more practical propositions and solutions can be evolved. Our paper presents a model to improve the accuracy or effectiveness of the appraisal from the point of view of assessor's role. To keep the conceptualisation simple, the individual level factors related to assessor and assessee, i.e. personality variables, impression management by assessee and other distal organisational factors have not been considered. But this simplicity does not in any way affects the lucidity and perspective of the model as it focuses on the political view in which assessor takes deliberate decisions in absence of organisational norms and accountability. The model also makes a differentiation between procedural and outcome accountability and hence norms related to procedures also become important. An interesting outcome/ effectiveness variable to study could be perception of procedural justice in view of procedural accountability of the assessor and assessee. This paper has tried to advance the knowledge in understanding the complex appraisal process in a manner that can be appreciated both by the researchers and the practitioners.

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**Figure 1: Assessor-Centric Model of Appraisal Politics**

