Gender and Performance Appraisal System in a Maltese Banking

Institution: How do gendered organisations assess women's

performance?

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Social Science

at the University of Leicester

by

Angele Ellul Fenech MBA (Leicester), ACIB (Malta), CeFa

Centre for Labour Market Studies

University of Leicester

2017

Gender and Performance Appraisal System in a Maltese Banking Institution: How do gendered organisations assess affect women's performance?

By

Angele Ellul Fenech

Abstract

Despite increasing awareness of gender equality, significant inequalities in Maltese paid employment persist. The theory of gendered organisations predicts that norms and practices in organisations serve to construct the experience of gender practice. Drawing on the work of Acker (1990), this study aims to discover how gender disparity is reproduced within the performance appraisal system.

The performance appraisal process was investigated by conducting 29 semi structured interviews both with male and female appraisees undergoing performance appraisal, and with appraisers. Interview analysis identified attendance at the organisation's social activities as being the appraisers' most highly valued assessment criterion. Collecting data from multiple sources provided rich information, affording the opportunity to verify from each key respondent how men and women who work in the same role and undergo appraisal are considered to be two different types of worker. The study found that participants justified this difference in terms of biological arguments: by drawing from the different biological functions associated with motherhood.

Examining the importance of social activities, the study revealed the ways in which exclusive and distinctive strategies are applied when women attempt to socialise in the same way as their male colleagues. These strategies interlink with the local cultural meaning of sociability that guides appraisers in assessing their peers. Consulting French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, the study discovered how social norms embedded in the appraisers' norms are regenerative in the way that appraisees experience the evaluation process.

For the purposes of this study, a local financial company offered a unique opportunity to explore how gendered norms are more powerful than increasing women's representation in organisations when discussing gender gaps in organisations. Applying Bourdieu's habitus concept can help explain gender in work and organisations, in the way that employees bring to bear in their practical knowledge of the socially structured world in which they live.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Dr Shireen Kanji and Dr Szuszanna Vargha, who guided me with their insight throughout the writing of this study and for the support they provided me along this journey.

I am deeply thankful for the helpful discussions and proof reading by my friends Josianne Mamo Azzopardi and Delaina Haslam.

My special thanks go to other tutors, staff members at CLMS, IT staff and librarians for their dedication and assistance during my six years of study at the University of Leicester.

I would also like to thank all the participants of this studies who trusted me, dedicated time and provided me with their own experiences. Without their contribution and input, this study would not have been possible.

I want to show my full appreciation to my husband Gordon for his endless love, and whose constant support patiently assisted me throughout the most challenging moments in this roller coaster adventure.

Also I want to thank my children Matthew (six) and Martina (four) who both started their life accompanying me in this study. Each time you have asked me about my homework, you kept me going with my determination to provide you with a good example of perseverance in finishing any started project in life.

To God for giving me the strength, the insight and the perseverance to continue this important stage in my life through a lot of tough moments.

Last, but most important, I would like to dedicate this study to my father. Although he is not still with us, I know that he is proud with my project. 'Thank you Dad for your belief in me'.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

CA – Confirming Appraiser

CIPD – Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

DA- Direct Appraiser

EFILWC- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

EIRA-The Employment and Industrial Relations Act

EU- European Union

EUROSTAT- European Commission Statistics

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

HR- Human Resources

HRM-Human Resources Management

ILO- International Labour Organization

MFSA-Malta Finance Service Authority

NCPE-The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

NSO- National Statistical Office

PA- Performance Appraisal

PRP-Performance Related Pay

UOM- University of Malta

Chapter One

Introduction

The last three decades have seen rapid worldwide growth in the number of women entering the labour market. Yet gender inequality in organisations persists despite this growth and notwithstanding the increase in equality legislation in many countries, including Malta (European Commission, 2017). Occupational gender segregation, the lack of women participating in the labour market and the glass ceiling are some of the facets of gender inequality that have been debated for a long time now. Some researchers attribute gender gaps to the choices women make in relation to their domestic responsibilities (Hakim, 2003). Other researchers claim that women's choices are restricted due to the social structure they find themselves in (Kanter, 2008).

Malta has obtained positive milestones including women's right to vote in 1947, property ownership, the removal of the marriage bar and recently the right to divorce and separation, all encouraging steps towards gender equality. An increase in female participation in the Maltese labour market has also been seen (NSO, 2017). However, the so called 'glass ceiling' and 'glass cliff' are still evident (European Commission, 2012a; NCPE, 2011). These local facts raise some questions: why are top positions predominantly taken by men, despite the high representation of women in the University of Malta (UOM, 2017)? Are women less committed and less competitive in their work than men? Do motherhood and family duties limit women's commitment to the organisation they work for? Or

does the workplace and societal perception of motherhood impact on their professional career, as Blair-Loy (2003) claims? These are some of the key questions raised by my reading of the literature and discussing gender within organisations.

According to Acker (1990) gender in organisations means that advantages and disadvantages, exclusions and control are patterned through the distinction between male and female in organisational processes. Pursuing this line of thought, this study will focus on how human resources management (HRM) practices, in particular the performance appraisal system, are processed. This objective will explore how women's performance is used to limit their carer progression, their assessment and portrayal in their evaluative report.

This chapter will highlight how performance appraisal practice can perpetuate unequal opportunities through gendering. The focus is the assessment system within the Maltese context, which will be discussed in the next section. The research context is then described, which also provides the motivation for this research in Malta and outlines the contribution that this study can provide. Finally, the structure of this study is outlined.

1.10 Evaluating Output or Assumptions

The performance appraisal (PA) system is commonly used by organisations to identify and recognise committed employees within the company and award them accordingly through financial and career progression opportunities. Commitment has been used as a variable of interest in HRM studies associated with

performance and productivity (Swailes, 2002), including studies specifically on the performance appraisal (Farndale et al., 2011). Various critiques of the system claim it sustains and reproduces gender differences in organisations (Mastracci and Arreola, 2016; Fogarty et al., 1998). One major criticism related to the appraisal system is that appraisers' judgment of their appraisees' performance is subjective and open to producing discriminatory outcomes (Brown and Heywood, 2005; Robbins and DeNisi, 1998; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). This discrimination may be triggered when appraisers evaluate employee' output and commitment, based on people's attributable characteristics such as social gender rather than individual performance (Ngo et al., 2002; Gutek et al., 1996). According to Bourdieu (1990), appraisers are guided by their habitus or socialised norms unconsciously in every perception and action.

Habitus is the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions and structured tendencies that guide behaviour, thinking and action in determinant ways (Wacquant, 2011). Attitudes and beliefs related to gender in the workplace are important to understand especially attitudes that may diverge significantly between home and work environments (Desai et al., 2014). A conflict of embodiment is formed via traditional gender roles, shaping the habitus, which is structured through hierarchical relations of differences symbolised by binary oppositions where male exists in the public, whereas female belongs to the private sphere (Bourdieu, 1984). Pateman (1988) claims that women and men are viewed as two different kinds of worker where women are perceived as primarily responsible for family care. Men are viewed as the ones responsible for supporting the family economically, thus conferring on them the role of 'breadwinner'. These different characteristics may justify the difference between

men's and women's performance within organisations. According to Desai et al. (2014), traditional gender roles are a mindset in which men are expected to have characteristics consistent with public task activities whereas women are expected to align themselves with facilitative family duties according to their social roles.

The implication of using these characteristics in organisations is that the male worker (who has no caring responsibilities and is more committed to organisational demands) is constructed as and therefore perceived as the 'ideal worker' (Acker, 1990) (Williams, 2001). On the other hand, women are considered less committed due to their primary responsibilities centring on family needs (Crompton, 1997). As such, gender disparity may be explained through the distinction between male and female which is deeply embedded in organisational practices and processed by management.

Studies have acknowledged that line managers play a crucial role in implementing HRM practices, specifically when it comes to performance appraisal (Brown et al., 2009; Maxwell and Watson, 2006). Gender distinctions may act as the decisive factors by appraisers. Habitus, which is shaped by social forces, can enforce and reproduce gender inequality in organisations (Bourdieu, 1984) without the appraiser being aware. In the case of performance appraisal, the result is the construction and reconstruction of a hierarchal order where men are featured as the high performers and women are presented as the low performers.

It is in this light that this study shall investigate the performance appraisal system and how appraisers process it. Both appraisers and appraisees are to be included in the interview in order to reveal and verify common themes

surrounding social norms. In this way, the study can examine how habitus can guide appraisers in assessing their peers. Applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus with the theory of gendered organisations (Acker, 1990), the researcher will attempt to understand whether it is women's actual output that is being evaluated, or it is gendered assumptions which are influencing the assessment practice.

1.20 Once Upon a Time in Malta…

Various social policies have been introduced in Malta to enable women to participate in paid work to address the significant under-representation of women in decision-making positions. This includes free childcare centres for working parents to discourage new mothers from leaving their employment, new parental tax bands and the introduction of the Directory of Professional Women.

However, according to the NCPE (2011), the working environment in Malta is characterised by strong patriarchal social structures, strong family and traditional gender roles - the providing husband and the caring wife. Trompenaars and Prud'homme, (2004) claim that personal values are socially constructed, and in organisations social values often manifest themselves through informal norms, practices, values, routines and symbols that are difficult to detect at face value. Assumptions regarding women's abilities and low contribution towards organisations may limit women's potential at work because line managers and the local organisational culture foster an 'old boys network' (NCPE, 2012:37). These assumptions potentially present a challenging environment for Maltese women, especially those who want to progress in their career. Consequently, the

study questions the relevance of social equality policies unless the social norms embedded in organisational practices are given due attention.

The study therefore aims to investigate how the performance appraisal may contribute to gender inequality by its understanding of what constitutes good performance for men and women who work in the same role. This will lead to an understanding of how appraisers distinguish between high and low performers. Are the criteria the same for men's and women's performance in their reports, considering that men and women may be seen as two different kinds of worker? To be able to do this, the study also needs to determine the real meaning these criteria have in Malta. In understanding the meaning of the important criteria, the study may provide comprehensive knowledge about the way appraisers are guided by their habitus.

The context of this research is a Maltese bank. The researcher is bound by a declaration of confidentiality whereby the name of the company is not to be mentioned, and identifiable details are not to be used or divulged. The number of female employees working at the company amounted to 57.5 percent in 2012, based on a report published by the same company. Although female participation within the company increased by 20 percent of in the last five years, only 20.5 percent females (of the total working employees) occupy senior management positions. In contrast, the Chief Officers, Executive Head, Head, and Senior Manager positions are almost all held by men. This gender profile in the company is very similar to the Maltese labour market in general. Investigating how the performance appraisal system is processed in this company may explain the gap between men and women in management roles.

The company has employed the performance system for more than 11 years in relation to employees who are in occupations below and including senior management roles. Two appraisers are involved in the assessment process. One – the Direct Appraiser, DA - is direct superior of the employee under review, while the other – Confirming Appraiser, CA – is usually the head of department who reviews each appraisal report. The performance review procedure consists of three key stages. The first stage relates to the planning and allocation of targets or criteria to each appraisee. The second stage involves an interim review where a formal meeting is held mid-year and data logged in the system where the human resources management can monitor it. The final stage involves a second formal review where appraisees' achievements are checked against goals that were set at the beginning of year. The appraiser rates appraisees' performance based on this. The performance appraisal ratings in this company result in a financial reward for each employee who achieves the minimum overall score. Additionally, ratings are considered when evaluating for internal promotion opportunities.

The majority of appraisers in the company under study are men and 70 percent of appraisees who occupy supervisory and clerical roles are women. The way appraisers distinguish high performers from low performers will allow the study to explore how the assessment practice may be influenced by the potential of social capital to affect outcomes differentially for men and women (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital refers to social networks that hold homogenous groups together (Putnam, 2000). According to Bourdieu (1986), male appraisers may use the assessment practice to keep men featuring as high achievers, and thus perpetuate male hegemony in top positions, as Connell (2005) claims. Hence,

the study findings may reveal that increasing women's participation in the workforce does not mean they 'live happily ever after'.

1.30 Investigating the Maltese Financial Sector

In the last decade, the Maltese labour market has shifted from the manufacturing sector to the services industry with a high expansion in financial intermediation (UOM, 2013). The financial sector provides a good case study because although it has a high growth rate, it is also one of the sectors where the glass ceiling is evident for female employees (KPMG, 2015). Gender scholars draw on the 'theory of gendered organisations' to explain persistent gender inequality in the workplace (Acker, 1990).

By investigating the assessment process in a financial company, the study can explain whether it is women's lack of commitment or the perception of low commitment that is portrayed in their performance appraisal report that contributes to low roles for women. In this way, the study will give insight into whether women are free or restricted in proving themselves within the organisation. These findings can then explain whether the gender of division of labour should be attributed to a lack of agentic commitment or to social structure restrictions.

Women make up 51 percent of the workforce in the financial sector are and 52 percent of students attending the university's finance faculty. The Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) reports that Malta faces skills shortages in the field of finance especially in highly specialised positions (MFSA, 2015). Identifying

whether the performance appraisal system contributes to gender inequality can also help us understand if and why some skills remain under-utilised. Potentially, this study can explain the reasons why this sector is facing such a skills gap, especially when one considers that performance appraisal ratings are used in decision-making processes such as during recruiting and selecting practice (CIPD, 2009).

Various studies investigating performance appraisal have found that assessments have pro-male biases (Plantenga and Remery, 2006; Rubery et al., 1995; Shore and Thornton, 1982). In the face of this overwhelming evidence of gendered findings, the main objective of this study is to investigate whether PA contributes to gender disparity. In order for the study to highlight the extent to which performance appraisal reports present objective and factual results or contribute to gender disparity, the following three research questions, which are to be explained in more detail in the next chapters, are to be explored:

1. Which criteria within the performance appraisal system are the most highly valued by appraisers?

2. Are any exclusive practices applied within the performance appraisal process which maintain gender disparity in organisations?

3. How do appraisees react to the way the performance appraisal is processed?

To investigate the above questions, the researcher aims to examine the experience of appraisees within the whole PA process. This includes the allocation of criteria, the awarding of ratings and the feedback stage.

By interviewing both appraisers and appraisees, the study seeks to explore whether any local social norms through the appraisers' habitus are reinforced

within the evaluation system. The motivation for interviewing multiple key informants arose from the fact that the majority of studies related to the performance appraisal system that have been conducted in other country contexts are based on the appraisees' point of view only, or on the appraiser effect, but neglecting to examine both participants simultaneously in one study (Selden and Sowa, 2011; Levy and Williams, 2004). The study starts with the appraisees' interviews, from which data is collected and analysed. The data analysed is then used to frame a set of questions to interview both the confirming and the direct appraisers. By conducting interviews with both the direct and the confirming appraisers, the study may also discover and verify how informal processes such as norms and beliefs which are taken for granted may influence formal practice. Various gender-related studies were conducted in Malta, however the literature review did not uncover any study which specifically investigated the performance appraisal process. As such investigating the whole PA process from both the appraisees and the appraisers in a Maltese institution can inform the existing knowledge gap.

1.40 Research Plan

This research will identify women's experience of the PA system and how the PA process is conducted in a Maltese financial organisation, a growing sector which is represented by an equal number of male and female employees. If the study finds gender discrimination in the way women experience the assessment practice, the study may show that gender inequality goes beyond Kanter's

solution of equal representation of women and men in organisations. The thesis is organised into six chapters.

This chapter articulates the motivation behind the study giving an overview of its significance, especially in the Maltese context. Chapter Two focuses on gender theories which can lead to a better understanding of the subtle but complex dynamics of gendering, drawing, in particular on gendered organisations theory (Acker, 1990). The study will go on to analyse the performance appraisal system and take an in-depth look at the way appraisers implement it. Chapter Two will also review how appraisers may evaluate their peers according to their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) which is formed by the experiences of living in a society which promotes the role of the 'breadwinner'. Chapter Three will draw attention to the Maltese context, in relation to its labour market and the local gender context. Local social assumptions related to family responsibilities for men and women will be examined. This will help us understand the ideological practices related to the domestic and public spheres that may influence the way appraisers form their habitus and process the assessment practice according to their assumptions.

Chapter Four describes the methodology adopted during this study. This chapter explains the importance of the qualitative approach over quantitative reasoning in investigating women's experiences of the assessment practice. Here, a thorough description will be given of how interviews were conducted in order to collect experiences from respondents. Aware of the strong breadwinner mentality in Malta and the negation of gender discrimination practices in organisations (NCPE, 2012), the researcher shall also explain how she used interview techniques such as probing in order to extract gendered norms which are

embedded in day-to-day organisational practices. The selection of participants, transcriptions of interviews and data analysis techniques are then detailed in the same chapter. This is followed by a detailed account of the ethical process surrounding this study.

Empirical data is then presented in two separate chapters in order to answer three research questions explained in Chapter Two. Chapter Five discusses the findings related to how women and men experience the whole process of the performance appraisal including the allocation of criteria, the ratings awarded and the recommendations given. Here, the chapter explores which characteristics are highly recognised in the assessment system and whether there are gender differences in the way men and women experience the process.

Chapter Six analyses the meaning of the most highly valued criteria in Malta with an aim of revealing local social norms linked to these criteria. The way appraisers assess these criteria will be also analysed to explain how an appraiser's habitus may be formed according to the social context that may influence the assessment practice.

The study will conclude by synthesising the key research findings, and highlighting key contributions to the existing knowledge. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the implications of the findings, the limitations of this project and any future research opportunities that may follow this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Despite the increase in the number of women in the workforce, norms surrounding the division of labour persist. Kanter (2008) suggests that unless the proportion of women reaches critical mass, gender discrimination will remain. In her theory of gendered organisations, Acker argues that norms based on stereotyped ideas of male and female workers continue regardless of the composition of the workforce and the division of workers between male and female. These social norms may be embedded in the way human resources management (HRM) practices are processed in a way to promote workers who are considered to be committed. HRM refers to a collection of policies to organise work and manage people in the context of employment and is concerned with practices such as recruitment, selection, development, reward and performance management (Beardwell and Thompson, 2014). Mastracci and Arreola (2016) question the neutrality of HRM practices in organisations in the way that concepts such family-friendly policies are intended for women rather than men. According to Acker (2000), HRM practices are one of the ways through which organisations reinforce gendered norms.

This chapter is organised as follows: it starts with a review of gendered organisations theory, in order to understand how the gender division of labour and inequality are produced in organisations. The performance appraisal is a

system which categorises employees into high or low performers and rewards them according to this qualification. The way female employees experience the assessment practice may reflect underlying norms held by those conducting the appraisals (Nishii and Wright, 2008). According to Bourdieu (2001), appraisers may act in their habitus which is formed by the way they experience social norms. As such, gendered habitus is explained and contextualised by the constructivist thought from which it emerged. Applying gendered organisational theory alongside Bourdieu's habitus allows the study to analyse the ways in which unequal practices may be reproduced between men and women in the process of assessment systems. The researcher will therefore discuss the three main stages of the assessment system to understand the consequences the performance appraisal system has for appraisees and organisations.

2.10 Gendered Organisations

Although women have increased their participation in the workforce, gender parity has so far failed to bring about gender equity (Guy and Fenlye, 2014). Kanter (1997) suggests that inequalities result from a lack of women occupying high positions within organisations. However, in her interpretation, Kanter overlooks dynamic strategies embedded within the practices enacted in organisations. The theory of gendered organisations suggests that practices and rituals internal to organisations produce and reproduce disparities between women and men. This disparity is a logical consequence of social construction. Acker (2006) defines gendered organisations as workplaces where advantages,

and exclusions are patterned in terms of social order and gendered norms. In order to understand how these gendered norms operate, it is important to examine how biological differences are used to justify gendering in organisations.

The concept of gender is constructed as 'natural'- as reflecting the biological differences between the sexes (Stacey, 1981). Gender difference is attributed to the ideology that women are associated with the image of motherhood, while the ideal of the male breadwinner persists (Warren, 2007). The male breadwinner ideology impacts on how gender classifies society in which women are kept economically dependent of men (Walby, 1990). Even though more female participation in the paid labour market has increased, Winslow-Bowe (2009) explains how married male employees are given greater responsibilities than their female colleagues. This difference is based on the assumption that men are the main family income earner, even if this is not explicitly recognised when rewards are determined.

According to the breadwinner model, men's income is indispensable for the family, which means men must adapt to what the public sphere demands. Without family responsibilities, men can devote more time to organisations and are considered more committed to organisational demands (Acker, 2000). On the other hand women who are associated with motherhood are considered to be more dedicated to the family and household responsibilities (Crompton, 1997). Women may experience more career interruptions due to family responsibility (Becker, 1985), which in turn has an impact on the gender of division of labour. Desai et al. (2014) show how the structure of a man's marriage influences his gender ideology in an organisation. In their study they show how men in traditional marriages deny more promotion opportunities to female employees

than to male employees. Explaining gender in these terms indicates that men and women are considered to be two different employees in organisations (Mastracci and Arreola, 2016).

Although more women now enter the workforce, Acker (1990) suggests that organisations may contain an implicit preference for male workers through masculine norms and structure because of their higher commitment and fewer career breaks. Consequently, the gender division in organisations can be considered a by-product justified by women's essential biological qualities. This is how gendered organisation theory explains the social influence on organisational practices that generates the sexual division of labour. In this light, one needs to understand how organisation processes, in particular human resources practices can enforce the gender division within organisations.

2.11 Gendered Practices

Kanter (1977) explains that inequalities in women's career progression result from the inferior roles women occupy in the organisational hierarchy. However, Acker (1990) argues that this view assumes that the gender concept exists outside the organisational practices. Gendered organisations theorists predict that inequalities and practices within the organisations based on the stereotyped male and female worker will persist, regardless of the composition of the workforce (Metcalfe, 2008). When one looks at the roles women occupy in Malta, one may notice that women are segregated into lower roles from those occupied by men, irrespective of the increase of women in employment in recent years

(NSO, 2016) (NCPE, 2016). For example, since the introduction of free childcare services in 2014, there has been a more than 6 percent increase in the participation of women in the labour market. However the labour market continues to be gendered especially when considering that there is only four percent female representation on publicly listed company boards in Malta and only 5 percent of CEOs or equivalent are women (European Commission, 2016). Understanding the gender concept as evolving from biological sex to social construct, allow the study to consider gendered organisations as social process and that social processes manifest also in human resources management (HRM) practices.

HRM practices operate with rules, and favour typically masculine traits while devalue female traits. This is rooted in the tendency for organisations to develop processes based on what Acker refers to as the 'ideal worker' (Acker 1990). The ideal worker is framed around organisational devotion and commitment (Williams, 2001). Blair-Loy (2003) explains how motherhood is not considered to fit the devoted and unencumbered employee group. This may be attributed to women's biological characteristics and the perception held by management that women may experience more career breaks which mean they are discriminated against in the labour market (Becker, 1993).

The ideal worker may appear to be natural, through men and women's characteristics that qualify them for different roles. However in her theory of gendered organisations Acker (2008) argues that masculine traits are equated with greater devotion to the organisation which also serves to exclude women from occupying high positions. This control over women's progression may affect women's choices and abilities in showing their real contributions towards their

organisation. Kanji and Cahusac (2015) show how women's choices are restricted by their opportunities, and sometimes discordant with their attitudes and aspirations.

In contemporary organisations performance appraisal plays a central role in determining who progresses within organisations and who is subsequently allowed to shape HRM procedures (Metcalfe, 2008). This evaluative system is a tool used within performance management strategy (Beardwell and Thompson, 2014) which is synonymous with reviewing employee's performance in order to reward employees accordingly (Kondrasuk, 2011). However, some studies argue that the performance appraisal system portrays appraisers' perceptions of employees rather than employees' actual performance (Drazin and Auster, 1987).

The performance appraisal system is one practice in which organisational gendering can manifest and persist (Mastracci and Arreola, 2016). Recognising that the performance appraisal system can be gendered, this study acknowledges that male and female appraisees might be considered to be two different types of employee, in the way they contribute to organisational output and thus in the way they are awarded.

The main objective of the study is to investigate how the performance appraisal system contributes to gender inequality. Investigating performance appraisal practices, the study is able to understand how gender assumptions can be embedded within the assessment practices and explore how assessment practice may limit women's career progression within an organisation.

2.20 The Performance Appraisal

The performance appraisal (PA) system is designed to evaluate whether employees at various levels achieve the standards set for them at the beginning of the year (CIPD, 2016; Beardwell and Thompson, 2014). When the system assesses employees' output, it plays a central role in determining who progresses within the organisation as it provides information with which the organisation can make development and administrative decisions (CIPD, 2016, 2009; Kondrasuk et al., 2008). From the development perspective, the PA system reviews employees' past actions and behaviour to help the organisation diagnose training needs in order to sustain better performance from employees in the future (CIPD, 2009). Grote (2010) points out that the PA system has more influence on individual careers than any other management process. This is because the PA system can also keep employees motivated and appraisees can improve their future performance; in this way system plays a pivot role in determining life changes of the appraisees (Hind and Baruch, 1997).

Besides the development aspect, the performance appraisal system serves administration purposes. Appraisees' performance is recorded in the appraisal report. From this report, management extracts information about individual contribution and performance, which can be used for career progression and financial rewards in the form of bonuses (CIPD, 2017). Past PA ratings are reviewed as an extra merit, whenever managers are considering an employee for a new role or promotion during a selection interview (CIPD, 2017). Career progression leads to greater responsibilities and status, all of which may be influenced by an employee's past performance recorded by their superior. Some

organisations also link pay progression - such as bonuses, referred to as performance-related pay (PRP) - after assessing an employee's measured outcome against pre-agreed objectives. Madden (2012) claims that using a merit-based rather than a seniority-based system is expected to reduce the effect of gender biases. This is because formalised processes are assumed to mitigate biases (Morgen, 1994). However, Baron et al. (2007) argue that the performance appraisal system can be implemented in ways that obscure gender biases.

Acker (1990) suggests that organisations may provide opportunities for biases to promote masculine traits especially within informal paths for career progress and income increase. As mentioned above, the ratings awarded in the performance appraisal indirectly serve for career progression and financial increase. The way gendering is embedded within processes and framed around masculine characteristics (Connell, 2005; Acker, 2000), may also apply to the recognition of the high performers within the performance appraisal system in order to promote males in top roles.

Studies have found that evaluation processes lean towards overrating men (Plantenga and Remery, 2006; Shore and Thornton, 1982; Goldberg, 1968). Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) attribute this difference to sociobiological reasons, where women are less competitive than men. But this study, which was conducted under a laboratory setting, overlooked the gendered processes within organisations that may influence the way employee performance is assessed. For example, Coltrane (2010) claims that motherhood and domestic responsibilities may impact management's subjective assessment, which negatively affects women's career progression. Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) did not look into the actual experience of how women's performance is perceived

by their appraisers. Women are associated with domestic responsibilities and motherhood, while men are considered to be the breadwinner whose primary responsibility is to focus on public tasks (Desai et al., 2014). According to social constructivism, the association with motherhood qualifies women with caring characteristics (Oakley, 1974). Roles associated with caring attributes are considered low-status and are low paid (Mies, 1998). Bauer and Baltes (2002) have examined how men get more favourable ratings than women given similar levels of performance. Their study suggests that women who are evaluated by appraisers who hold traditional stereotypes of women will be at a disadvantage. As such when Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) state that women are less competitive than men, might have ignored appraisers' subjective judgements in the PA process. A better review of the way appraisers practice assessment process may highlight the way subtle values impact on women's progression and financial incentives.

2.30 The Role of Appraisers

The role of appraisers is mentioned various times within this chapter. In line with the rational goal model, appraisers have different tasks to accomplish within the PA system which mainly include planning, discussing, observing and monitoring. Planning is required to design performance targets according to the role the employee occupies, and match the assigned targets to overall organisational objectives. As part of their responsibility, appraisers need to discuss and define business goals matching them to the appraisee's role (Kondrasuk, 2011).

Designing targets according to the role occupied should, reduce gender bias as employees are assessed according to the targets irrespective of their gender (CIPD, 2009). During the set PA period, appraisers should observe and monitor their subordinates' performance to ensure that progress toward set goals is achieved (Folger et al., 1992). Appraisers' role is pivotal to the PA system as they have decisive power over their peers' career trajectory (Nishii and Wright, 2008).

An important factor identified which has a strong influence on the assessment practice relates to the extent to which appraisers may use social constructs in planning, discussing, observing and monitoring their subordinates (Best et al., 2005; Judge et al., 2003). Studies show how supervisors tend to evaluate their peers according to their own preconceived biases (Brown and Heywood, 2005; Gomez Mejia, 1989). According to Bourdieu (1972), habitus can explain gender stereotypes which can result in social inequality practices.

2.31 The Concept of Habitus

Bourdieu (1972) uses the concept of habitus to explain how a person's lived experiences affect his or her thoughts, disposition and, therefore, actions. This concept helps us comprehend and deal with society. According to Bourdieu, habitus is a structured and structuring structure, which can be seen as an individual's organised experiences and a generated set of non-reflective practices are reproduced. This means that people do not really think about the way they act because their actions are naturally part of who they are.

Bourdieu's work (1990) points to the dominated position of women in society not as something natural, but rather naturalized in our habitus through a gendered vision of the world. Habitus which is formed by internalised past conditions of experiences, can explain how individuals living in a breadwinner context such as Malta, may systematise the gender division (in which men and women are defined and distinguished) in their perceptions and actions to reflect that social order. Bourdieu's concept of habitus cannot be explained without referring to fields.

Fields are places of power relations where individuals are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with the appropriate field-specific rules. Rules are not formalised but rather tacit in nature (Wacquant, 2011). These rules are internalised by individuals to demonstrate appropriate practices and strategies to anticipate future tendencies and opportunities (Bourdieu 1983). Organisations as a social field may have norms and strategies which, according to Acker are gendered. These gendered norms which are framed around traditional gender role ideologies are considered natural, embedded in organisational practices, and reproduced by employees.

2.32 Appraisers' Habitus

Blair-Loy (2001) demonstrates how gender as a cultural model of division of labour remains a powerful constraint on the minds of supervisors. Rogers et al. (1977:21) state that 'even the most conscientious appraiser cannot help but be influenced by his prejudices'. This may be attributed to the habitus that becomes

embedded in response to the social sphere in which the individual acts (Bourdieu, 1990). A reconceptualization of gender in habitus terms may allow the study to investigate whether during the evaluation process, appraisers are guided by their habitus which is embodied through the way they have been brought up within the society, and from the way they have been appraised by previous supervisors.

Organisations are often portrayed as goal-oriented and competitive - criteria which are attached to typically masculine traits (Acker, 1990). Women are viewed as inferior employees whose characteristics mean they are assumed to be not competitive enough. Bourdieu (2001) outlines how double standards are applied in the evaluation of male and female activities in order to maintain the gender divisions. The same task performed by men may be considered difficult while insignificant when performed by women. Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997:545) demonstrate how men and women are assessed with 'shifting standards' and define ratings scales units within the gender category. Appraisers may be guided by their gendered habitus to assume that male appraisees should be considered with the high performers group while women whose performance is less valued within the appraisal, shall be portrayed in the low performer category. This is because female appraisees may be associated with motherhood and thus not competent to success as their male colleagues. Bennet (1987) shows how appraisers' ratings and recommendations provided to women are steered towards work deemed to be more suitable which offers fewer opportunities for advancement and is of low value. Applying habitus concept, Bennet's findings may be explained in a way that appraisers guided by their habitus, steer women career towards female category assumption which qualifies them to inferior roles.

The minority of women in managerial positions implies that the appraiser role is mostly occupied by men. Male appraisers may assume their behaviour and perspective to represent the organisational process which support hegemonic masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity emerge from the culturally idealised form of manhood (Connell, 2005). In fact, Bennet (1987) finds that women must explain and justify their performances against male norms and standards, to male assessors, within the PA process. According to Bourdieu (1986) hegemonic masculinity accumulates social capital which maintain social status.

Organisations are considered to be a marker of social capital. Bourdieu (1986:103) explains social capital as the sum of actual resources that a group or person accumulate by virtue of possessing a durable network of institutionalised relationships and recognition. Social capital is understood as non-economical capital, but immaterial assets accumulated through the performance of habitus. Social capital in particular social network and connections holds societies together through a network of mutual recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Norms of networks and bonds allow individuals to work together towards collective goals (Putnam, 1995). The accumulation of social capital through social networks and the person's ability to access this form of capital for socio-economic rewards are paramount. Bourdieu argues that social capital contributes to reproducing gender disparity and may also constrain change. Within organisations, social capital may be encouraged as a structural resource, whereby appraisers may facilitate certain actions for those who are within the social network and restrict access to those who do not fit within the network group. In his concept of distinction, Bourdieu (1986) shows how social order is

unconsciously inscribed in people's minds through culture values and classification.

Kanter (2008) suggests that as the proportion of women reaches critical mass in appraiser roles, masculine strategies may phase out. However, social capital strategies may be embedded within the organisational practices and processed by decision-makers to maintain the traditional ideal of how women and men should perform. Holt (2008) explains that social capital reward active participants and punish dissenters. In this way, social capital may serve to reproduce gender disparity, where appraisers, through the performance of their habitus, assess appraisees according to how the appraisees observe their prescribed gender roles within the performance appraisal.

According to the social model theory (Eagly, 1987), appraisers may ignore the targets actually achieved by appraisees and assess appraisees according to their social behaviour. Motherhood and family responsibility are socially assumed to belong to women and this may be viewed as interfering with achieving such criteria, while men may be perceived as being more committed to paid work. Following the social role model, appraisers may share the view that men who are considered 'ideal workers' (Acker, 1990) should also be recognised as high performers. Bevan and Thompson (1992) explored how women receive low ratings even when they perform well by male criteria. This may indicate that when women achieve masculine standards, appraisers may not want to promote them because they do not want to distort the organisational hierarchy, as suggested by Acker (1990).

Bourdieu explains how the gender division of labour is founded on social order functions, which as an immense symbolic machine tends to ratify the masculine domination reproducing the game of capital possession. Prendergast (1999) and Gibbons (1998) found appraisers can be influenced by male colleagues who support male norms, and dislike the inference that their work could be done by women. According to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), having more men as high performers within organisations may continue to reinforce the assumption that men are better at performing than women. In this way, gender segregation may be structured and taken for granted objectively in the sense of being shared and understandable that men should occupy high performer role and high positions in organisations.

The main research question of this study is to investigate how the performance appraisal system may contribute to gender inequality. The study will investigate how women and men who work within the same roles in a particular company experience the performance appraisal process in Malta. The researcher will thus be able to evaluate whether this system generates gender discrimination in the way appraisees' performance is evaluated through the different perceptions of their peers that appraisers may hold. Comprehending how appraisers evaluate appraisees seems to offer a potential rewarding contribution to our understanding of how habitus can disadvantage those employees who do not fit within the social field.

DeNisi et al. (1984) states that biases are more likely to arise from day-to-day behaviours and subtle norms involved in the PA process. A better review of the evaluation process conducted within a natural setting, may highlight how subtle gender dynamics may impact on employees' progression and financial

incentives. Hence, the evaluation process which include targets, allocation ratings and a feedback stage is further explained.

2.40 The Appraisal Process

In order to uncover the subjectivity within the performance assessment, one needs to understand that system is commonly based on a two-dimensional concept. This consists of technical tasks and interpersonal aspects of task performance (CIPD, 2017; Wisecarver et al., 2007; Baker et al., 1988; Distefano and Pryer, 1986). Technical performance represents the job knowledge and technical skill necessary to engage in the core business for the successful production of goods and services. Such tasks (referred to as targets within PA reports) are considered to be objectively measurable and involve a relatively low degree of discretion from the appraiser. These targets can be measured by the quantitative assessment indicators attached to them, such as sales figure targets quantified by the number of products sold. Although such quantitative measures are objectively measured, the assessed criteria may emphasise social and cultural meanings. Tasks chosen to be assessed and the weightings for each task within the assessment report may reinforce a typical gender or sex characteristic.

Women's role within the domestic sphere means they are considered 'carers', while men are considered workers (Grace, 1998). The significance of 'carer' against 'worker' may extend to suggest that women's contribution is insignificant within the labour market. Although tasks such as organising and report filling can

be measurable, may not be considered to generate profit for the company. These targets may be allocated to women rather than men or left out of the assessment criteria. Kanter (1977) notes that criteria such as being decision-making, which is considered masculine, is a prerequisite for managerial roles. Within the performance appraisal report, men may be allocated criteria that are associated more with masculinity such as decision-making, while women, who are considered 'carers', may not be allocated the same criteria. Although technical criteria are measurable, they may bring a form of gender bias rooted in the divisibility of female and male technical skills (Bender et al., 2012). Task criteria may therefore emphasise stereotypical gender traits, and may not be allocated in the same way for men and women even when they perform the same role. Mastracci and Arreola (2016) argue that women who may be capable for the role are disadvantaged because of assumptions of motherhood which consider them inappropriate to achieve high ratings. To alleviate this problem, and have a better picture of employee performance, organisations may incorporate interpersonal performance measures, which include contextual behaviour in accomplishing organisational goals (Kondrasuk, 2011; Prendergast, 1999; Gibbons, 1998).

Interpersonal tasks refer to behavioural skills which contribute to accomplishments in the organisational, social, and psychological environment, such as collaboration with other employees (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). Interpersonal criteria allow comprehensive judgments to be made about the performance of the individual's attitude or behaviour by measuring the quality of the employee's work action. Hence including qualitative criteria in the employees' assessment report gives the opportunity to evaluate responsibilities which are beyond the technical job know-how (Jawahar, 2007).

However, qualitative aspects of assessment in the PA system entail a substantial degree of subjective evaluation, which is often are not verifiable (Kondrasuk, 2011; Milkovic and Newman, 2002; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). Interpersonal tasks are difficult to measure objectively, and supervisors tend to evaluate subjectively according to their own preconceptions (Gomez, 1989). Given that men and women are considered to be two different categories of employee (Acker, 2000), appraisers may expect them to have different behaviours in achieving their criteria. According to social role theory, women and men are denoted by terms of gender hierarchy, so their behaviour is expected to observe this classification (Eagly, 1997, 1987). The types of social behaviour that typify women foster a pattern of assistance and facilitative behaviours. In contrast, men's accommodation to the employment role, especially top role occupations, promote assertive, and competitive behaviours (Crompton, 1997; Eagly and Steffen, 1984). The concept of social role model within the assessment practice refers to the way appraisers hold social role beliefs in relation to their peers' expected behaviour. Considering that men are more associated with the public sphere, appraisers may expect commitment from men but not from women appraisees. When women show commitment and competitiveness, appraisers may still rate them with low performance because they are not expected to achieve targets that are associated with men. As Bennett (1987) suggests, desirable traits in men might be considered undesirable in a woman, which points to the conundrum women face.

Both interpersonal and technical skills may contain gendered significance. Appraisers need to be selective in which qualitative and quantitative criteria to include in performance assessment, which aspects of the job to leave out, how

to measure performance against these criteria, and how to weight each outcome (Kondrasuk, 2011). Based on this literature review, this study is interested in investigated in furthering our understanding of which specific aspects of task performance; technical or interpersonal, appraisers apply to distinguish high performers from other employees. Consequently, the researcher can explore in depth how these selected aspects within the assessment process may be linked to the ideal high performer and local social norms. The evaluative process involves three key stages: goal direction; assessment of the agreed objectives; and providing feedback (CIPD, 2017). It has been documented that gender biases have been found at all three stages (Plantenga and Remery, 2006; Rubery et al., 2005; Nieva and Gutek, 1980).

2.41 Goal Direction

The first stage of the performance appraisal process involves appraisers allocating performance criteria to their employees. The chosen criteria serve as a frame of reference by which the appraisers can assess their appraisees' performance at the end of the review term. The idea is that the criteria also support appraisees as they know the basis on which their performance shall be measured within a stipulated period of time (Tziner and Latham, 1989). The selected criteria in the PA report system, need to be directly job-related to attain organisational and individual development (CIPD, 2009). When one peels back the selection criteria, the gender dynamics that play a hidden role in influencing its allocation may be revealed (Acker, 1990; Nieva and Gutek, 1980).

Each criterion selected within the performance appraisal report indicates its importance as recognised by the company. Socially constructed masculine traits such as leadership, assertiveness or initiative are associated with success and are therefore necessary attributes to progress within the organisation (Acker, 2000; Crompton, 1997; Walby, 1990). Appraisers may decide to exclude women when it comes to allocating these criteria that lead to career progression. Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997) report how managers allocate minimum performance standards for women because managers consider female appraisees to be not competitive or committed enough to achieve higher standards.

In gendered organisations, women may be perceived as not as competent as men. PA criteria such as working long hours or weekends tend to be more common in the male-dominated service sector than in the female (Rubery et al,. 1997). Here, appraisers may not include the criterion of working long hours to women because it is assumed that women will not stay after working hours. When performance appraisal reports are reviewed in light of career progression, and standards such as long hours are not evidenced in the report, this may result in a loss of promotion opportunities. Female appraisees may be allocated low-valued standards, such as report filling, which may not be considered to generate profit for the company. But even when women achieve these criteria, such tasks are not related to company success, hence they would not be considered essential in a case of an opportunity for career progression.

CIPD (2009) recommends that performance standards should correspond to individuals' predesignated levels and organisational effectiveness irrespective of the appraisee's gender. As suggested by Connell (2005) in hegemonic masculine cultures, appraisers may use gendered criteria to exclude women from featuring

as high performers. The goal direction stage serves as a map of values and standards which employees are motivated to generate in order to be rewarded accordingly. Organisations may use the performance appraisal to promote masculine traits as indispensable for company success, while excluding women from such standards. Representing organisational success with male traits may be a way to maintain gender order in the organisation. In order to explore whether the PA system contributes to gender inequality, this study will investigate the first research question below:

> 1. Which criteria within the performance appraisal system are highly valued by appraisers?

This research question allows the researcher to identify which criteria are commonly used to measure employee output. According to the goal-setting approach, appraisers should take care that the adequate resources and support are available to attain the criteria allocated (Beardwell and Thompson, 2014). Madden (2012) found that although women were allocated the same amount of commission generation in a stockbroking institution as their men colleagues, potential gender differentials in performance support such as staff support were discriminative against women. This may indicate that gender goes beyond the written criteria on the performance reports, and more in-depth investigation into the criteria allocation stage is needed. Hence understanding which criteria are highly valued within the performance appraisal system by appraisers will allow the study to identify the reasons for the importance of such criteria and whether gender connotation is linked with these criteria. If the study finds that the highly valued criteria are gendered, the researcher can then investigate how habitus guide appraisers in valuing highly these particular criteria, which may explain how

gendered norms are more tacit in nature and more influential than formalised practices as suggested by Wacquant (2011).

2.42 Award of Ratings

Once criteria have been allocated, appraisees' performance is evaluated and rewarded on the basis of the achieved targets. Ratings awarded serve for the employee, who builds an identity of worthiness, effectiveness and capability through the rating achieved (Gbadamosi and Ross, 2012). The ratings awarded in the PA system also serve as a guidance in administrative and strategic, tasks related to salary and promotion, as well as retention or contract termination (Boswell and Boudreau, 2000).

However, the award of ratings phase involves susceptibility regarding its transparency and reliability (Kondrasuk, 2011; Drazin and Auster, 1987; Neiva and Gutek, 1980). Various studies have found differences in the evaluation process for males and females (Mastracci and Arreola, 2016; Schmitt and Lappin, 1980). During the ratings stage, especially in non-verifiable criteria, there may be an opportunity for variation, with the consequence that in-built subjectivity may occur when assessing employees' actions.

Appraisers' subjective judgements influence PA ratings as a result of assessors' values (Brown et al., 2009; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). As mentioned previously, appraisers may apply shifting standards when awarding ratings to men and women. Women's performance may be assessed according to the social role whereby the same criterion may be rated differently due to gender

connotation (Biernat and Kobrynowicz, 1997). For example, flexibility used as a criterion in evaluation is considered to be a potential source of indirect discrimination between men and women (Plantenga and Remery, 2006). When appraisers are assessing their peers on flexibility, managers may rate women lower as they are socially assumed to prioritise family responsibilities over work even when their output is the same as that of their male colleagues. Williams (2004) demonstrates that because women are associated with motherhood, mothers can be discriminated against due to 'maternal walls' assumptions. This research also has the opportunity to investigate whether mothers and non-mothers experience the appraisal system in the same way as their male colleagues.

An important distinction in awarding ratings that this study needs to highlight is the way ratings are formulated, that is: the absolute and the comparative judgement rating scales (Aguinis, 2009). Specifically, all criteria require appraisers to formulate an absolute performance judgement. However it is possible to use a format such as a forced distribution format that involves the appraiser making relative comparisons amongst appraisees without the need to assign an absolute rating on a given performance dimension (Wagner and Goffin, 1997). One concern arising from the comparative rating scale relates to the way this distribution rating is employed, in particular when considering that organisations consider men and women as two different types of employee.

While women may be assumed to be low performers, men are considered the main breadwinners who need to provide income for their families. The importance of male income is still central to the discourse of masculinity whereby the man brings home a family wage. In fact, men get more favourable performance ratings

than women (Drazin and Auster, 1987; Neiva and Gutek, 1980). Some researchers, attribute this difference to the lack of competitiveness women show in achieving their targets (Manning and Saidi, 2010). This study was conducted in laboratory conditions, which may have ignored the perceptions and social associations that can exist within organisations. However, Winslow-Bowe (2009) reports how in particular married women may be perceived as being supported financially by their husbands, which justifies employers' offerings more to men.

The same line of thought may be extended to the way men are awarded higher ratings during their performance evaluation than women. Here appraisers may legitimate the way they provide higher ratings to men with the justification that men are the main income earners; hence higher ratings lead to higher bonuses and possible future career progressions. Additionally when women perform and achieve the same or better results as their male colleagues, men might fear losing their identity as male high achievers (Babcock and Laschever, 2003). In order to enforce gender disparity and reinforce hegemonic masculinity in organisations, exclusionary practices may be employed (Acker, 1990). This leads to the second research question for exploration:

2. Are there any exclusionary practices applied within the performance appraisal process which maintain gender disparity?

Investigating whether any exclusionary practices are applied within the process of awarding ratings, the study may reveal how women's choice to prove their worth are restricted. For example, Simpson (1998) found that criteria of long hours are exclusionary practices which control women's progression. In this way, women are excluded from achieving high-performer status. These exclusions

may be explained through masculine strategies in order to control women's career trajectory and keep them out from the possibility of featuring as high performers. This distinction between men and women may serve as a sign that men belong to the class of high performer in organisations (Acker, 1990).

The study intends to explore those criteria which are highly weighted within the assessment practice and the reason behind such importance. Socially gendered norms may exclude those employees who do not fit with the organisational norms from achieving important criteria. Subsequently, this study may reveal how full-time male and female employees in the same role and evaluated by the same assessment might experience the appraisal system differently due to restrictive practices. Youngcourt et al. (2007) recommends that appraisers communicate with appraisees and gain their input before making any final rating decision, because without feedback, appraisees experience no real control of their PA report (CIPD, 2009).

2.43 Feedback

Within the performance appraisal system, feedback is pivotal in determining what an employee needs to change in order to perform better. Through the review of past actions, improvement plans are designed to sustain better performance in the future. Regular performance feedback should identify those underperforming actions. Although feedback is beneficial for both the individual and the organisation, both the provider and recipient of this service are frequently dissatisfied with the outcome (Spence and Keeping, 2011; Latham, et al., 2008).

CIPD (2017) recommends that constructive criticism be passed on in terms of what might be improved, and ensuring effort is directed at value-adding activities in a neutral way. However, Smith and Rogers (2000) found that employees obtain positive reinforcement when they behave in ways considered appropriate to their gender's social identity role model, while getting negative feedback when they behave differently from or opposite to their gender image. Appraisers may base their feedback on their perceptions instead on facts which are backed up with evidence or justification. Women are viewed as less committed to work, while men's identity is built around high-value tasks (Crompton, 1997). In this aspect, even when male and female employees are assessed as performing equally well in male-related tasks, Nieva and Gutek, (1980) found that male employees success was recorded as being part of their abilities and competencies, while female achievement was reported to be due to luck.

Besides giving neutral feedback to both male and female employees and justifying the ratings by providing relevant comments, it is recommended that all appraisees, irrespective of gender, must have access to appraisal-related information (CIPD, 2009). However, feedback bias can result whenever women are perceived as direct competitors for high-level positions (Hagen and Kahn, 1975). Excluding women from high-performer status, can be attributed to differences in social power, deriving from beliefs and norms held by men who are in the dominant positions. Women may be given mediocre feedback (if any), as appraisers perceive that masculinity may lose its social status in the organisations whenever women are featuring as high performers. Thus, appraisers may not spend time recommending women on the best practices to improve. As a consequence, when underperforming actions are not identified and

or given adequate feedback on how to improve, these might limit the employee's improvement (CIPD, 2009; Kessler and Purcell, 1992). To this effect women cannot amend their behaviour according to expected standards and hence do not feature as high performers.

The feedback process in the PA system may also be influenced by appraisers' habitus while evaluating their employees. Investigating the three stages within the performance appraisal system may reveal complex interrelationships between the PA process and gendered habitus. This is further underlined when considering that with the new management philosophy of empowering managers, the PA practice may widen gender discrimination as highlighted by Bevan and Thompson (1992).

2.44 The Effect of the Appraisal Process

To mitigate the evaluator's biases, Fanga and Gerhart (2012) suggest that the PA report is reviewed by their superiors. The purpose of this managerial review is to audit the evaluation for fairness, consistency and accuracy, and to insure that the first evaluator has carried out their function objectively. However, the role of the appraiser is not limited to the assessing of appraisees. The way appraisers evaluate their peers may be viewed as a framework on which their appraisees can model their values and future actions.

According to Bourdieu (2001), any gender practices which are perceived as acceptable and naturalised through habitus can be reproduced. Wood and Marshall (2008) report how appraisers evaluating their subordinates have an

effect on modelling their junior appraisers. Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (1996) reveal how evaluators may have biases produced by spill-overs from previous practices. Subsequently, the study is interested in further investigating whether appraisers' assessment of their peers has any effect on the latter. As a third research question, the study shall explore:

3. How do appraisees react to the way the performance appraisal is processed?

The performance appraisal can guide appraisees as to what type of characteristics or behaviour they need to have in order to be recognised as a high performer. The highly valued criteria within the performance appraisal may serve as an ideal characteristic which appraisees consider to have in order to be considered a high performer. As such appraisees may build within their identities such characteristics as are considered to be naturally essential in order to be recognised as high performers by appraisers.

Additionally, appraisees may imitate their appraisers when assessing their colleagues. Here, appraisees may regenerate gender values through the way they experience performance appraisal and be guided by their habitus recognising masculine criteria as highly important for the success of the organisation. The study shall include both female and male appraisees and appraisers so as to examine whether female appraisers recognise the same characteristics in a high performer as male appraiser colleagues. If the study confirms this, it may indicate that habitus also guides female appraisers to generate social norms, without recognising that they are discriminating against women. By investigating the last research question, this study will understand

also the long-term implications that the performance appraisal system has for the reproduction of gendered organisations.

Conclusion

Female participation in the labour market has increased; however, the gender division of labour persists (European Commission, 2015). By increasing the ratio of women in top positions as Kanter (2008) proposes as a solution would merely iron out the restrictive experience women may face within organisations. Lewis and Simpson (2010) suggest the need to understand women's choices which are constrained and restricted by gendered organisational structures and procedures.

According to Acker (1990), assessment practice may apply ideal worker norms which promote masculine traits within the process. Women are considered to be different from men in that they have different biological functions which have been argued to restrict them to different social roles. Fulfilling the identities of mother and professional is considered competing (Sandberg and Scovell, 2013). On the other hand men as breadwinners need to progress in their career, hence they are more committed to the organisation. The PA process is often distorted by the underlying values held by appraisers while evaluating appraisees (Best et al., 2005).

Under the social constructivist approach, employee output may be assessed in relation to the social value attributed to males and females rather than assessing the actual performance ability. Investigating how appraisers distinguish high

performers from low performers, the research may find that social gender order is embedded in the performance appraisal process. Such biased processes may be normalised and taken for granted by management and employees. In this way gendered habitus may explain the way appraisers process assessment practice, which generates organisational social order.

Social order is constructed on symbolic cultural and social values. These symbolic values may support the exclusion of women from being considered high performers. Excluding women is sometimes legitimised using biological differences and the social roles associated to men and women. An understanding of masculine domination strategies and social capital has, helped the researcher to understand the need to investigate the persistence of gender inequality in organisations today. After reviewing the literature, the researcher understood how the gendered assessment process may indirectly support the gender pay gap, and how occupation segregation can disadvantage female appraisees.

This study is to be conducted in a financial Maltese company. Subsequently, the next chapter shall expand on describing the local context to explore how the main research question and the subsequent three study questions raised above, may be contextualised in a local banking institution.

Chapter Three

Study Context

Introduction

The concept of the performance appraisal has been reviewed in various studies, where the context may contain different norms from those in which this study is located. There is no indication that the performance appraisal process has been investigated through the lens of social constructionism in Malta. As reviewed in the previous chapter, organisational practices may be embedded with social norms framed around the typical male worker which makes gender inequality tenacious as suggested by Acker (2008).

This provides a compelling rationale for the chapter to present a detailed context in which to explore how the concept of gender may be constructed in Malta. Whilst providing background for the local labour market, the chapter reflects on the links between the Maltese labour context and the financial sector that propels competitive and dynamic demands. Through its analysis of the local financial sector along with that of the labour context, the study may reveal which criteria are considered important within performance appraisal to distinguish high performers. In this way the researcher can explore how local gender values and norms may influence the way performance appraisal is experienced by women in local organisations.

3.10 Background to the Concept of Equality in Malta

The concept of gender equality is entrenched in the local legislation through the Maltese Constitution's pledge to 'promote the equal right of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights' under the Article 14 of the Constitution of Malta 1964. The Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) Chapter 452, 2002 and the Equality for Men and Women Act also render gender discrimination illegal in human resources (HR) practices, including job recruitment, remuneration and employment.

Although gender equality is promoted in Malta through legal and policy framework, local attitudes, reflected in the gendered stereotyping of women remains strong (Cortis and Cassar, 2005; Abela, 1991). NCPE (2012) attributed gender stereotyping to cultural assumptions that still embrace Mediterranean traditional gender roles based on prominent patriarchal social structures and strong family traditions. These cultural values sustain the divided roles of the father as the main family provider in terms of financial needs, while encouraging motherhood (NCPE, 2012). In short, motherhood is constructed as a woman's primary role, whereas men are viewed as the breadwinners.

Lewis (2001) argues that the breadwinner model has been modified in different ways and to different degrees in particular countries. However, she claims that the breadwinner model is still far from being eroded (Lewis, 2003). In Malta, women have increased their participation in the paid market, which signifies the erosion of male economic power. Nevertheless, women's income is considered supplementary. Falzon (2006:18) argues that men's income is considered to be

the primary income of the family 'to earn their daily bread' while the income earned by women is considered to be used only for a lavish lifestyle. Female and male income dichotomy overlaps neatly with the male breadwinner ideology and the care-giving image of female. This ideology may reside in male superiority, in which women are dominated each time men give their wages to their wives (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). So much so that, Falzon (2006) in his local study, found that Maltese men feel threatened when their spouses have a higher status and better paid job than themselves. Consistent with findings in other countries, this could explain why women may be excluded from better jobs with higher wages in order for men to keep their superior classification in society (Walby, 1990).

Women's 'natural' traits and characteristics can sometimes be used to justify this gender classification. It is not infrequent for women in Malta, even those with a tertiary education background, to drop out of the labour force or shift their career orientation, for example, from accountant to teacher, in order to meet family needs. Camilleri-Cassar (2005:156) reports how female Maltese graduates 'were encouraged' by their husbands (whose earning commitment took priority over theirs) to reduce their full-time hours of work or exit the labour market 'to look after their children'. Hence, not only is women's income considered to be a secondary revenue, but housework is still considered to pertain to women (NCPE, 2012). This division of labour among the sexes reaffirms the breadwinner model where men's primary responsibility is that of paid public employment while women are taken for granted as the carer for the home and the family whatever their level of education.

One potential sustenance of the breadwinner role model in Malta may be the unequal sharing of family responsibility between men and women (NCPE, 2015). Recently, new family social policies have been introduced to get more women in paid employment (Budget Speech, 2013). Although the participation of women has increased, domestic work is not equally distributed between men and women. There is no equivalence between the increase of women in the paid sphere and the increase of men in the unpaid sphere (NCPE, 2015; Camilleri-Cassar, 2005). Household duties and child minding in Malta is still, to a large extent, undertaken by women (European Commission, 2015). This may indicate that increasing family-friendly measures in order to encourage women's participation in the labour market may reinforce the breadwinner concept. This is because family-friendly measures may be interpreted as giving the message that family responsibilities are specifically for women; in fact women are more advantaged than men, in being granted (women) more family-friendly measures (European Commission, 2014c).

As Desai et al. (2014) argue, traditional gender roles which emerge from the breadwinner model are still endorsed by organisations no matter how many women are in the workforce. These traditional beliefs limit qualified women employees' opportunity for promotion when compared with male employees. The local context, which is characterised by the traditional gender model, may influence appraisers when assessing women's performance. The breadwinner and motherhood association with men and women respectively make up gender as a social object that is subject to a dualism of division of labour. According to Eagly (1987), this division is based on social gender roles, which may be justified by traditional private sphere roles. Divisionary ideologies within organisations

may construct gendered practices linked to gender-role orientation. The study refers to divisionary strategies to explain how men and women are distinguished from each other on the basis that men fulfil work and public roles while women aspire to family responsibility. This rationale means that the concept of gender is not limited to visible differences between genders, but also relates to institutions that focus their attention on subtle and concealed gendering processes in organisations (Benschop and Doorewaard, 1998; Acker, 1992). Thus, to understand the way the performance appraisal system may contribute to the gender division, it is important to understand how local gendered values may be carried over to organisations (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000).

3.11 The Maltese Labour Market

Since Malta became a member of the European Union (EU) in May 2004, one of the most important social impacts has been the awareness of gender equality in the labour market. The country has introduced a number of considerable social policies over the past few years, to encourage more women to enter the labour market. These include more family-friendly measures in the workplace, the introduction of free childcare centres, tax credit family entitlements, the introduction of the directory of professional women initiative, longer maternity leave and new parental tax bands (NCPE, 2015; Budget Speech, 2013).

Despite these favourable social policies and the legislative framework towards gender equality, statistics show that only a slight improvement has been made. Malta has recorded the biggest increase in the employment rate in the EU;

however, the Maltese labour market is still characterised by a low female participation rate. In fact, the gender employment gap in Malta (which is the difference between the male and female employment rates) amounts to 27.8 percent, placing Malta in the first position when compared with other EU countries (European Commission, 2017), even though the total Maltese population is represented by 50.4 percent women and 49.6 percent men (Countrymeter, 2017).

If we analyse the local employment gap, we find that the overall female full-time activity rate has constantly increased from 36.4 percent in 2005 to 53 percent in 2017 (NSO, 2017). However, this growth is still well below the EU 2020 strategy, which aims to raise the employment rate for women and men to 75 percent by 2020. On the other hand, employed men in the Maltese labour market amount to 77.9 percent which represents 2.9 percent above the EU 2020 initiative. This employment gap is further evidenced when statistics on employment are analysed in more depth. The number of employed women in the 35-44 age group decreases from the preceding age group of 25-34. The employment rate of women aged between 25 and 34 years is on average 31.8 percent, while those aged between 35 and 44 is on average 24.5 percent. The latter cohort represents the prime family-forming age bracket for women (OECD, 2016). The same decline is also evident in women who have a tertiary level of education (OECD, 2016; Cassar-Camilleri, 2005).

When comparing local statistics with those of other European countries, Malta seems to provide a context in which the breadwinner model is supported in the labour market. In fact, the most common reason for inactivity reported by women is child rearing (NCPE, 2012). Analysing employment rates for men we can see

that the employment rate tends to be low for young men, but increases steadily for the ages of 25-39, and stabilises around 40-54 before declining as the retirement age approaches, forming the shape of an inverted 'U'. The inverted 'U' shape represents the way men are expected to work as an ideal worker (Falzon, 2006). In fact, Malta has the highest share of male sole provider households in the EU, amounting to 44 percent. When combining the male sole provider and male main provider categories, Malta maintains the classic strong male-breadwinner model, with two thirds of couples having either a male sole provider or male main provider (European Commission, 2014a). This type of family structure is referred to as the traditional marriage (Desai et al., 2014), where the male spouse's primary responsibility is to earn a wage for the family while the female's is to carry out family responsibilities (Crompton, 1997).

Men who are in traditional marriages are more likely to have unfavourable attitudes towards women in the workplace and perceive organisations with female leaders unattractive (Desai et al., 2014). Likewise, Bezzina et al. (2013) describe how managers in Malta believe that organisations with a high number of female employees operate less smoothly. Perceptions of the presence of women as unappealing may be extended to the political empowerment. EFILWC (2008) reports a high gender disparity score in decision-making positions. Only 2.1 percent of women are board members in listed companies, placing Malta last among the 28 members of the EU (European Commission, 2014b). In another local report, it was found that only 24.5 percent of women are employed in managerial roles in Malta (NCPE, 2015). Cortis and Cassar (2005) attribute local vertical segregation in organisational structures to the traditional roles ingrained in cultures. The patriarchy persistency, can be explained by its ability to naturalise

the distinctions between those who occupy different hierarchy positions. Maltese organisations still have the mentality that a woman's place is at home to take care of the family (NCPE, 2010). Masculine domination also justifies different positions which dictate different behaviours for men and women, including 'breadwinner' and 'carer'.

These socially constructed roles may manifest in local business organisations through informal rules, processes practices, behaviour, routines and symbols which promote the ideal worker (Acker, 1990). For example the average working hours in Malta is 38.5 hours per week (European Commission, 2015), where men tend to work full time with a lack of career breaks, and spend longer hours at work than women (NSO, 2012). Malta is traditionally considered to have a culture of long working hours (Zammit, 2009). Employers assume that employees will work extra hours on top of their standard working hours, with the result that women feel compelled to spend more time at work than at home (Camilleri-Cassar, 2005). In Malta men work an average of six to seven hours per week more than women (NSO, 2012). Considering the importance of time rather than quantity or quality of work done, one may ask how these social local norms are embedded or reflected in assessment practices.

The difference between women's and men's employment patterns is further evidenced when compared with other countries. Malta ranked 108th out of 144 countries in the 2015 global gender gap index (World Economic Forum). More in-depth analysis of this index, reveals that there is an unequal correlation between the level of education women have and the position women occupy in the labour market (EFILWC, 2008). In fact, 60 percent of the tertiary education population is represented by females (UOM, 2016). Female students tend to

pursue education for longer than male students. When comparing the high representation of females who have completed tertiary education with their low representation in top positions, one may also cite the employment skill gap phenomenon especially in specialised high occupations in Malta (European Commission, 2016). This may indicate that although women may have the skills, qualifications and ability to occupy high positions within an organisation, managers may not give them the opportunities to occupy such roles, as found by Desai et al. (2014) in their study in the United States and the United Kingdom.

In order to keep high positions in organisations occupied by men, who are not associated with domestic and family responsibilities, organisations may restrict women's choices in what they really want to achieve in their professional life. Buzzanell et al. (2005) found how professional women from different sectors working in United Kingdom who would have access for child-care facilities, still left their workplaces because they experienced struggles at work. Such experiences are also evident for women in Malta. Falzon (2006) describes how during board meetings 'the manager proudly presents me (a woman interviewee) as the only woman working in our company'. Companies which employ few women in high positions, may consider those they do as a sort of a 'token', and over-publicise their presence making women feel embarrassed in front of their male colleagues (Falzon, 2006:86).

These local practices seem to be framed around the breadwinner concept that may manifest in local companies' human resources practices. This may be attributed to the normative and hidden nature of organisational practices (Acker, 2006). Male representation is also prominent in the Maltese trade union sector even in the case of unions representing mostly women council members and

activists tend to be men (NCPE, 2012). Having more men in these decision-making roles may mean that gendered practices are continually reproduced, and hence women may continue to be disadvantaged, as suggested by Kanter (2008). Falzon (2006) reported how female employees face difficulty in getting promoted to high positions occupied by male colleagues. This may continue to endorse the fact that the hierarchy of organisations is founded on hegemonic masculine identity, where the participation of women in high positions may be seen as disrupting the normal hierarchal order, as suggested by Acker (1990).

As presented in Chapter One, the top roles in the company studied including those of appraisers are dominated by men. The way these appraisers live their experience within the organisation, framing their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) in the local gendered context, it may be no surprise that they apply practices in the organisation that generate gender inequality within the company. Habitus brings to light the fact that while women are free to make their own choices in terms of wanting to work in high-up roles, they are not entirely free to do so owing to factors of social capital that men hold (Bourdieu, 2001). Male superiors may emphasise the difference between men and women to obstruct women from high-positioned employment through exclusive practices in order to secure masculine structures of power and domination. Appraisers may employ the performance appraisal system as a way to distinguish male and female performance that reflects the Maltese local culture, excluding women from featuring as high performers.

Despite the number of constitutional and legislative safeguards that have been adopted to combat gender discrimination in Malta, significant differences between men and women in the Maltese labour market have remained and the

attitude towards gendered roles is changing very slowly (NCPE, 2015, 2006). Considering the low female employment rate and the gendered labour market, this chapter continues by exploring how such dynamics of gender may be manifested in the financial sector.

3.20 The Financial Sector

The Maltese economy is highly dependent on financial services (MFSA, 2015). The local financial industry includes banking, lending, insurance and investment funds. This sector experienced significant growth throughout 2013. Malta ranks highly as a leading European financial market which accounts for 12 percent of Malta's GDP (Chetcuti Cauchi, 2017). In the third quarter of 2015, employment in Malta's financial services sector amounted to 8,624 people, representing 4.8 percent of total employment (NSO, 2016).

The average number of female workers in the Maltese financial sector is 5,528 while the number of male workers amounts to 4,520. Female students in the Banking and Economics faculty at the University of Malta represent 51 percent, with more females than males continuing in pursue higher education including Masters and Doctoral programmes (UOM, 2017). Considering that an equal representation of men and women work in this sector, and more women than men achieve higher qualifications related to finance, one may assume that women occupy positions at least as high as those of their male colleagues. However, the Maltese financial sector is characterised as a gendered industry especially when one looks at the positions females occupy in this sector (KPMG,

2015; Mercieca, 1999). The financial sector seems to provide the same gendered pattern as the Maltese labour market.

This study aims to study a banking institution, which offers custodian banking, lending, wealth investment services and management of deposit accounts (FinanceMalta, 2017). The Maltese banking sector ranked 15th in the world of 140 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2015-16. This report was based on a survey which measured the soundness of the banking system according to local respondents' assessment of the health of banks' balance sheets. However, Benschop and Meihuizen (2002), explored how banking financial reports may be used to keep up traditional appearances of masculinity in their corporate identities in order to attract customers and investors. This study concluded that financial reports have a tendency to present stereotypical images of women and men; the classic male breadwinner occupying managerial roles and the female carer. Considering the local gender context and the high occupational segregation in local banking institutions (Falzon, 2006; Mercieca, 1999), the soundness of the local banking system may have been assessed by the local respondents guided by their habitus and basing their rating on gendered symbolic images within the financial reports.

Besides high vertical occupational segregation in the financial sector, a gender pay gap is also evident in this industry. The average male income is 26,155 euros per annum while the average female income amounts to 17,665 euros - a gap which has been observed to be widening (NSO, 2017). Indeed, European Commission statistics for 2011 show that the gender pay gap for those employed in the Maltese financial and insurance sector amount to 29.3 percent, which is

the highest figure for a gender pay gap in comparison with other occupational sectors in the Maltese labour market (European Commission, 2013). A local study found that a messenger role occupied by men is paid more than a cleaning job occupied by women on the basis that the former involves lifting bags of coins, despite the fact, that the cleaning job involved lifting buckets of water (Mercieca, 1999). This income difference does not originate from the physical, biological differences between men and women, but probably more from a patriarchal mentality embedded in people's habitus. This may stem from the fact that the cleaner's role is not considered valuable as a messenger. Unsurprisingly, it is claimed that education level and individual characteristics play only a minor part in the persistence of the GPG (NCPE, 2012; Falzon, 2006).

A lack of gender pay gap awareness may also influence gender disparity, especially when considering that salaries in the private sector including those of banking institutions are not made public. In fact, the perceived absence of gender discrimination is starkly evident in relation to income and promotion. Maltese employees are not even aware that questions related to status during an interview constitute illegal discrimination (NCPE, 2012). Furthermore, local employees even those working in banks, do not identify gender pay as a source of injustice and do not perceive any differences in pay among workers doing similar jobs at their place of work. Through gendered habitus, gender inequality may be invisible, naturalised and taken for granted in the realm of social life (Bourdieu, 2001). In fact, the NCPE (2012) reports how pay is attributed according to different grades or levels of seniority, which concurs with the misrecognition of biased power as suggested by Bourdieu (2001).

Various banks proudly communicate an emancipatory image (NCPE, 2015). Despite the myth of gender equality, discrimination may persist through the 'ideal worker' image which pervades processes and may contribute to gender differentiations. Besides gender disparity inside financial institutions, gender inequality practices are evident even outside of organisations. The services banks offer to customers are also perceived to be gendered. A local review reports that 96 percent of 602 male and female Maltese entrepreneurs believe that local bank institutions should offer the same support possibilities to both genders in order to assist more aspiring female entrepreneurs to set up their own business (NCPE, 2012). This academic evidence justifies an investigation into performance appraisal practice within a banking institution a system employed to assess individuals' output. As aforementioned in the literature review, two main consequences of the performance appraisal are: 1) the gender pay gap and 2) vertical occupation segregation. Both have become evident in the local banking sector. Thus, investigating the performance appraisal process may lead the researcher to understand how local socially constructed values may influence the way managers administer organisational practices.

3.30 The Performance Appraisal System in Maltese Culture

Employee output is assessed and rewarded through the performance appraisal (PA) system. French and Meredith (1994) suggest that such a system appears to be a means of limiting ongoing feminisation and can be used as a strategy against patriarchy by organisations. However, in a country with strong 'breadwinner' principles such as Malta, where women are associated with

domestic responsibilities, the study is interested in exploring how the performance appraisal is experienced by women when compared with their male colleagues in a banking company.

The financial services sector is characterised by new technologies and unstable markets, all of which create a fast-changing and demanding environment (Blair and Wharton, 2004). Since local banks offer a number of products related to investment, funds and fund administration, which are all dependent on fluctuating markets, the Maltese banking sector requires the same standards as other EU member states. Legal professionals, accountants and IT specialists are promoted to be part of the banking workforce, all occupations that are male-dominated (NSO, 2017). The banking framework demands high flexibility that is necessary for a dynamic financial environment (FinanceMalta, 2017). Flexibility-related skills are often associated more with men, who are consistent in their career pattern and unencumbered by family responsibilities (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Crompton, 1997; Acker, 1990). Given that the financial sector is viewed as a dynamic industry in Malta, the performance appraisal system may be processed in a way to maintain the image of masculinity and credibility. Within the performance appraisal system, the output is rated against criteria that have been previously allocated to the appraisee based on their performance appraisal report. The banking sector may demand certain criteria which it justifies using the sector competitiveness requirement, promoting men while disadvantaging women due to their social responsibilities.

While exploring ways in which women experience the performance appraisal system, the study may find an explanation of how women may be restricted in proving themselves. For example, not allocating criteria which are considered

important for the organisation to women, may hinder them from career progression opportunities. Local studies show how perceptions of traditional gender roles still plays a part in determining a woman's career choice. The NCPE (2007) found that the majority of employed women perceived obstacles to taking up decision-making positions. The study may find whether appraisers feel uncomfortable awarding high ratings to females because this may upset existing male dominant managerial hierarchies and, male investors, and because employees would resent being subordinated by a woman. Falzon, (2006) reported how a male subordinate decided to resign from work because he refused to take instructions from a female manager.

Banking institutions may maintain and reinforce the hierarchical gender order through gendering PA processes pertaining to the mandatory heterosexuality in top positions within organisations in order to preserve social capital. Hence the study may reveal difficulties female high-performers may have encountered in achieving their pre-agreed targets, and also explore whether appraisers use any exclusive practices to keep the local organisational hierarchy order unchanged, dominated by males. Although within the banking sector, roles may be performed by both men and women, appraisers may be guided by their traditional gendered habitus when evaluating their peers.

Conclusion

Various elements which form the context of this study were examined. In Malta, men are seen as the prime worker and breadwinner, whereas women are associated with housework. These local cultural values seem to be replicated in

the Maltese labour market. Although the participation of women in the market has been increasing, women in Malta are still considered the caring agent for the family. Maltese gender culture is polarised, where the gender division tends to be taken for granted as natural in organisations. In fact, the local labour market, and in particular the banking sector, is characterised by occupational segregation, where men still occupy the majority of high-position roles, while women are segregated in low positions with lower income.

Investigating the performance appraisal process in Malta, the study may contribute to knowledge of how local traditional principles may impact on the way women's performance is assessed. Findings may explain how the glass ceiling and occupational segregation remain in the local workplace (Bezzina et al., 2013). Hence through this empirical study, the researcher aims to investigate:

How the performance appraisal system contributes to gender inequality in organisations?

In order to understand how the assessment practice is processed, the researcher shall attempt to answer the following three sub research questions outlined below:

1. Which criteria within the performance appraisal system are the most highly valued by the appraisers?

According to the theory of gendered organisations, the performance appraisal process is conducted in a way that enforces the gender division in organisations. Local social gender principles framed around traditional gender role characteristics, may influence the way assessment criteria are selected, weighed and rated to each employee. Drawing on Bourdieu's analysis of social order as

explained in Chapter Two, masculine characteristics may be associated with organisational success. The highly recognised criteria may be associated with a masculine characteristic, which are then highly weighted within the PA report (Acker, 1990). The first research question allows the researcher to explore also whether gender connotation is linked to the most highly valued criteria.

2. Are any exclusive practices applied within the performance appraisal process which maintain gender disparity?

The second question relates to any exclusive practices that may be employed within the organisation. Desai et al. (2014) found that employed husbands in traditional marriages viewed the presence of women in the workplace unfavourably, especially in leader roles. This view is very similar to what Falzon (2006) found in his study in Malta. Both Acker (2008) and Bourdieu (2001) recognise masculinity strategies within organisations to maintain social hierarchy order and keep women within the division of labour. When women and men are working together, there might be instances in which women achieve their expected targets. However, according to Bourdieu, when women achieve the status of high performer, a status which may be considered more of a male quality, this could signify that masculinity's domination is at risk. Hence exclusive practices may be applied to exclude women from recognition as high achievers. If any exclusive practices are revealed, the study will identify invisible gendered processes and ways that the subordination of women is enforced within organisations.

3. How do appraisees react to the way the performance appraisal is processed?

The PA system guides employees in how they should behave within the organisation. The most highly recognised criteria are a message to all appraisees as to how they should engage their efforts. The high performer is a status the company rewards with high ratings which are then considered in the context of a potential salary increase and opportunities for career progression. Appraisees may thus adapt to these requirements and build their identities around recognised attributes. They may then recognise high performers, which can influence the way they assess their colleagues. This last research question will help us better understand how appraisers' actions may be imitated by appraisees which may explain how gendered norms are regenerative in the organisation.

To investigate the above-mentioned study objective, phenomenology perspective is considered to investigate the way norms embedded within the performance appraisal process symbolically enforce and reinforce gender disparity. The next chapter will describe the justification behind the qualitative method used in this study.

Chapter Four

Methodology

'These are the questions that should be asked up there!'[1]

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the Maltese gender context, highlighting how local social norms may guide appraisers in processing the performance appraisal system in a financial institution. As discussed in the previous chapters, although women's participation in the labour market has increased, several differences between men and women within organisations remain. Traditional gender roles may influence the way a woman can progress in her career within an organisation. A number of key areas were reviewed to analyse whether they have a significant impact on how managers may be embodied with social norms that reproduce gendered organisations. Hence the study shall investigate the evaluative process to understand how it may contribute to maintaining and reproducing gender inequalities. The findings will help us better understand any gender gaps that this study may reveal, and examine the current effects and the potential long-run implications of the performance appraisal system.

---

[1] This is part of a quote by an interviewee (Jane Doe) who was recounting her PA experience with the company's HR department. The interviewee referred to the HR department as an entity on the top role of the organisation. She continued by saying that HR representatives should ask questions similar to those asked by the researcher for this study.

Chapter Four will outline the three research questions to set out the theoretical position of this study. The researcher will continue by considering the ontology and epistemology surrounding the study's objectives. Then the researcher will discuss the qualitative interview method in particular, how respondents were sampled, and how the interview process was used in the data collection. The data transcript and data analysis techniques are then both explained according to thorough ethical considerations. This chapter will conclude by discussing the potential strengths and limitations of the research method and methodology adopted.

4.10 The Performance Appraisal's Role in Women's Progression

Acker (1990) and Bourdieu (2001) identify organisations as an environment in which gender disparity can be generated and reinforced through the practices that are processed in the workplace. As reviewed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, the gender disparity in organisations may be legitimised through the social roles that men and women have. This division privileges men over women for being able to fit more easily within the competitive and demanding labour market (Walby, 1990). The main objective of this study is to investigate how the performance appraisal system may contribute to gender inequality in Malta.

In order to understand how the assessment practice can limit women in their career progression, the study gives due attention to those who process the practice, those who experience the process and the environment in which performance appraisal is employed. In this way, appraisees can recount their

experiences and any differences found can be verified and explained by the appraisers to 1) identify which criterion within the performance appraisal system is the most highly valued by appraisers; 2) to explore whether women appraisees experience any exclusive practices structured within the performance appraisal system which support the reproduction of the gender division within the organisation; 3) to explore how appraisees react to the way the performance appraisal is processed.

As outlined, the three sub research questions following the main objective of this study have an exploratory nature which focus on the conceptualisation of the high performer within the performance appraisal process. The sub research questions show the value of the habitus concept that does not operate at the level of consciousness, but is reflected in the embedded social structures and performed in the way appraisers recognise high performers. Methodological implications follow from the exploration of this sort of conceptualisation.

A qualitative approach is necessary to comprehend social structures and gendered processes that are invisible and taken for granted (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Bryman (2008) also suggests a qualitative interviewing approach for feminist research because it gives a voice to minority groups (Bryman 2008). Although quantitative research can highlight patterns of gender disparity, a qualitative approach is more flexible, allowing the discovery of social relations that are enforced through day-to-day symbols and language. Drawing on Foucault (1972), Bourdieu explains how language can act as a mechanism of power, reproducing the gender division. Hence, questions for this research are best answered through interviews adopting a qualitative stand in order to understand how the gender division is taken for granted. The ontological and

epistemological considerations surrounding the research approach will be discussed next.

4.20 Philosophical Consideration in Research

'What is the nature of social reality?'

The answer to this question depends on one's ontological approach (Grix, 2002). The social world can be viewed from different ontological perspectives. Ontology deals with beliefs that reflect an interpretation of what constitutes reality. The constructivist ontology asserts that social reality is constructed on individuals' interactions and one's interpretations. The constructivist position is chosen because the study asserts that the existence of the gender division of labour exists independently of women's choice or will as suggested by Bourdieu (2001). Taking a constructivist approach, the study is able investigate the PA system beyond the performance appraisal reports in order to collect information about the way women experience the assessment practice and how their performance is portrayed in the organisations. This approach also consider the importance of those who process the assessment practice. As such the study conducts the interviews with the appraisers to explore how they recognise high performers.

Drawing on the literature reviewed, it is proposed that gender disparity is constructed through different meanings and associations with masculinity and femininity. This calls for an interpretivist epistemology. The main objective of the study and the three research questions are based on how social order influences the assessment process within the organisation. An interpretivist approach

allows the study to understand the meanings that appraisers attach to recognition of the high performer within the performance appraisal. According to Bryman (2008) a phenomenological stance may find surprising outcomes that are not evident at the surface.

Phenomenological knowledge goes beyond a description of what characterises lived experience of the social and is apprehension of the world as 'taken for granted' (Bourdieu, 1990:23). Through the interpretivist approach the researcher can explore through probing how one criterion within the performance appraisal can have various meanings. These different meanings may explain how gender meanings may have different interpretations which support the gender division in Malta. However, the interpretivist paradigm is criticised by positivists for being subjective. This limitation is acknowledged by the researcher, and therefore the study collected information through multiple key informants including the confirming appraisers, the direct appraisers and the appraisees. By using the triangulation method, data can be cross-checked to increase data credibility (Bryman, 2008). In fact during the interviews, the researcher found common themes voiced by participants which were verified by the appraisers. These cross-checked themes led to convergent assumptions and interpretations mitigating subjectivity.

In the interests of grounding the study in exploratory objectives and constructivist realism, Robson (2002) suggests a research method which can capture individuals' underlying motivation. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that qualitative research is ideal to get closer to subjects and to their experiences. Thus the study chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in which respondents had the opportunity to voice out experiences and actions. By using the qualitative

research method, the study obtained explanations by both appraisers and appraisees of the highly valued criteria and how these criteria may relate to the gender division. On the other hand, studies very often claim that investigation through qualitative research methods might be compromised due to researchers' involvement with their subjects (Bryman, 2008). Researcher self-reflexivity is associated with an interpretivist approach. Self-reflexivity requires the researcher to be aware of her influence and subjectivity that might have any impact on the research process.

During the whole study, a note book was used to point down personal issues including pre-, during and post-data collection concerns. Any personal concerns recorded in the note book were considered during the construction of interview questions and during the data analysis. The researcher is a female employee of the organisation being investigated, which makes her as an insider researcher. Hence, before this proposal was accepted by the University of Leicester, the researcher applied for a 42 month period of unpaid leave from the company, with the intention of distancing herself from the company and becoming more objective. However, positivists claim that researchers in a qualitative approach should be value free in order to be objective (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Considering that the researcher has her own perceptions and values, as does any human being, the study acknowledges that this research cannot be absolutely value free.

As an insider, the researcher had good understanding of the social setting and environment. However during the period in which the researcher was not actively employed in the company, some work processes had changed. There was also a high degree of employee turnover especially in the Human Resources department. The researcher may have been familiar with the culture and norms

of the workplace (Mercer, 2007), but the change of procedures and employee turnover could be said to have changed the extent of context familiarity. Interviews retained an element of flexibility and openness to new experiences. This allowed the study to maintain an exploratory perspective (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) which challenged inbred researcher assumptions.

4.30 Research Instrument Process

As a qualitative researcher, the author adopted a constructivist and interpretative approach. The study aims to explore how gender habitus may influence the way appraisers recognise high performers and how this process can be reproductive via the temporal. This section describes the research design and explains the choice of semi-structured interview method in order to understand the aim of the study and to answer the three research questions.

4.31 Research Design

Social assumptions in relation to gender meaning and associations are at the centre of the three aforementioned research questions. Statistical data cannot reveal the complexity and associations between the meanings that employees give to different facets of their experiences (Oakley, 1998). On the other hand, Mason (2002) suggests that qualitative interviews provide an opportunity to investigate each person's individual experience. Hence, to explore any difference

in the way male and female appraisees experience their appraisal system, the study depends on the appropriate research method that enables it to capture a naturalistic and interpretive experience of female appraisees. Semi structured interviews offer the flexibility to generate rich data (Bryman, 2008) that the study intends to achieve. In fact, qualitative interviews enabled the study to collect experiences which allowed the researcher to further investigate hidden assumptions behind the highly regarded criterion and the way in which practices are embedded in this criterion that exclude some appraisees from achieving it.

The study was conducted through the two-tier method. First the researcher conducted interviews with appraisees. From the data collected and analysed, a set of questions were constructed in order to interview both confirming and direct appraisers.

4.311 Appraisee Interviews

Initially the researcher formulated 50 questions, which she reflected on and discussed with other researchers before narrowing them down. Finally the researcher decided to retain 20 questions which covered five main topics (Appendix A). The aim was to keep interviews within 60 to 90 minutes and avoid fatiguing participants (Hermanowicz, 2002). Questions were built in such a way as to simulate a 'conversation with the purpose' of investigating any gender inequalities experienced during the appraisee's PA report (Oakley, 1998; Burgess, 1990:5). Besides the biographical questions, the interview guide was divided into five sections as described below:

1. *Performance Appraisal satisfaction level*: The first research question investigates how gender connotations may underlie the most recognised criterion within the performance appraisal system. To explore this question, the researcher decided to collect information about satisfaction levels with the appraisal system. Through the level of satisfaction, the researcher aimed to find out any differences between the way men and women feel about the performance appraisal system. Different responses may be attributed to various factors. Hence, the researcher kept the interview questions flexible with the possibility of probing in order to verify the second set of questions.

2. *Appraisees PA Experience*: These questions were formulated in such a way as to explore the actual PA experience of appraisees. Here the researcher aims to understand how each participant is allocated targets, awarded ratings and receives feedback over 11 years or less (depending the number of years each appraisee has been employed within the company). These questions serve to highlight any difference in the way men and women experience the evaluation process and understand whether any differences in response are related to any exclusion practices or due to different levels of commitment from appraisees.

3. *Appraisers' actions in the PA process*: This set of questions is intended to explore the most highly valued criterion and its meaning for appraisers. Questions aimed to discover how each stage within the PA process is experienced by each appraisee, and whether appraisees have experienced any particular situation or disagreement with their appraisers. From these questions, the researcher found that the assessment process is inconsistent in the way it is applied to appraisees.

4. *The most valued characteristic within the performance appraisal system:* Besides finding the common 'important' criterion, these questions also verified some cultural assumptions. A real scenario was given to appraisees, and they were asked how they would behave in a particular situation in which they had to allocate some of their achievement to their colleagues. This scenario explores the last research question of the study which includes appraisees' reaction to the way appraisers conduct their assessment. Here the study understood how gender values are reproductive over time and space.

5. *The organisation's contribution towards gender equality:* The intention of these questions is to understand organisational contributions to gender equality. Here questions aim to investigate types of support including training, communication and monitoring provided by the organisation to appraisees and appraisers. A lack of support provided by the company may support gendered norms and go unnoticed.

4.312 Preparing for the Interviews

Mindful of the gender disparity denial in Malta (NCPE, 2012) and that the interviewer is a woman, the researcher was aware that participants could answer the interview questions in the way that they thought the researcher wanted, with the result of collecting biased responses (Oakley, 1998). The researcher decided to conduct a pre-pilot test with a colleague with three specific questions during an informal meeting. When the researcher mentioned the term 'gender equality' the female respondent became defensive and evasive. Therefore, in the interests

of social desirability, the study was presented in a more generic way. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain that interviewing goes beyond the formal rules and requires technical skills. However, it could be claimed that the researcher intended to limit her participants' understanding of what the research aims to explore. The researcher was aware that deception is common in social interaction and can destroy future trust between researcher and researched (Bryman, 2008). Thus, the study purpose was described to respondents in a way to include other employees' inequality including age, status and race. Even the title of the Dissertation in the letter of informed consent was presented as:

'Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal' instead of *'Gender Equality in Performance Appraisal'*

The interview questions were also sensitively constructed avoiding the word 'gender' or other related words that can signify gender issues. Questions were originally constructed in English, however, the researcher opted to conduct the interviews in Maltese. By conducting the interviews in the native language, the interviewees felt more comfortable to use local expressions and the specific pronouns during interviews. Here the researcher had the opportunity to probe to the participants so as to understand any hidden gender assumptions behind the day-to-day expressions and specific pronouns which enforce gender disparity. However, using Maltese proved very challenging, because translating 20 questions into Maltese took about 15 hours, with the aim of, trying to retain the originally constructed sense. Care was also taken to eliminate Maltese words that may signify a particular gender, such as 'itih jew itiha t-targets' which means 'allocate him or allocate her the targets'. Such words could lead to a belief that the researcher was biased towards men or women. Thus the, plural was used

'itihom t-targets' ('give them the targets') to eliminate any referral to particular gender.

Semi-structured interviews allowed the use of techniques such as verifying questions, follow-up and probing questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Through these techniques the researcher had the opportunity to delve further into common themes (e.g. 'teamwork') which were raised by participants (Bryman, 2008). In fact the study found that the term 'teamwork' had different meanings to appraisers.

Previous research has found that employees and employers in Malta deny gender inequality in the PA system (NCPE, 2012). This denial according to Bourdieu (1990) may be attributed to the naturalisation of the biased processes within organisations through habitus. However, the probing technique allowed respondents to be reflective reconsidering their own assumptions and articulating their current feelings about equality (Marshall, 1995). Through the probing techniques used with appraisees, the researcher was also able to extract important themes on which questions for appraisers were formulated.

4.313 Appraisers' Interviews

The set of interview questions for appraisers was constructed after the fieldwork data had been collected from appraisees. Appraiser interviews initiated when almost all appraisee interviews had been conducted. Mindful that appraisers occupy a managerial role, extra care was considered when constructing the

appraiser interview questions. This is because appraisers may have less time to offer to the interviewer, and may be more diplomatic in their answers. Hence, the interview guide for appraisers was composed of nine open-ended questions. The decision to conduct interviews to confirming and direct appraisers proved very fruitful. In fact here the study verified data collected from the appraisees especially when the DAs recounted disagreement experiences with their CAs. The researcher also explored the ways in which appraisers base their assessment skills around social gendered values. Appraiser interview questions (Appendix B) were constructed on three particular themes.

1. *Experience as appraisers:* This theme was used as an introduction to put appraisers at ease. Open questions were constructed to encourage discussion. The answers obtained from this set of questions also covered particular experiences the participants had with the confirming or direct appraisers. Practices of exclusion were also mentioned by some appraisers which they had seen other appraisers apply to appraisees. The review mechanism within the company's assessment practice shed further light on how gender assumptions influence the appraisal process.

2. *Appraisers' gender beliefs and values:* The last theme was formulated after analysing appraisees' responses in relation to the way PA targets had been allocated, ratings awarded and during the recommendation. Here the most highly valued criterion was verified through appraisers' responses against the data collected from appraisees. In analysing data from this question in greater depth, the study also highlighted how the performance appraisal system can be processed in a way that keeps the social order enforced in the company.

3. *The Organisation's contribution to the performance appraisal:* These questions related to the support the company provided to appraisers. The study had the opportunity to explore how the lack of organisational structures such as training and communication support gendered processes within the evaluation practice.

During the interview process with appraisers, the researcher observed how the answers provided were more open and unguarded as time passed during each interview. After interviewing a good number of appraisees, the researcher developed experiential interviewing skills. Using more probing techniques and silence with appraisers enabled them to share their experiences and interpretations more comfortably by the use of the third person experience. For example:

> Monica[2]: 'Unfortunately there are many employees on reduced hours. I do not have anything against those working reduced hours, but they are not seen well by their colleagues who need to work more and compensate for them.'

Although the study did not mention employee working patterns, Monica, a confirming appraiser, claimed that employees who work a reduced-hours schedule are less beneficial to the company, because full-timers prefer not to work with reduced-hours workers. It is interesting how Monica justifies her lack of sympathy towards reduced-hours workers by saying that full-time employees have to compensate for them. Aware that reduced-hours workers may be seen

---

[2] Monica one of pseudonyms used during the interviews to keep the participants' identity anonymous.

as a disadvantage in Malta (NCPE, 2011), the study applied a criterion to select respondents/participants who worked on a full-time basis only.

4.32 Sampling

For the purpose of this study a Maltese financial organisation which has employed the performance appraisal system for the past 12 years was selected. There are several reasons for this. First, the financial industry provides a good local case study for gender research. Finance is a growing sector in Malta; there is an equal gender representation; and it consists of professional workers (FinanceMalta, 2015; NSO, 2017). However, in the local financial industry, various studies show that gender inequalities have been found (KPMG, 2015: Falzon, 2006; NCPE, 2006; Mercieca, 1999).

The study benefits by using a single organisation. All respondents are assumed to be subjected to the same organisational structure and work under a common set of employment conditions, regulated by the same human resources policies. Using one case study eliminates problems relating to multiple organisations criticism (Yin, 2003). Hence findings may be more comparable and negate the criticism of external validity. One drawback of using a single company in qualitative interviews may relate to generalisation. However, this is counterbalanced by the fact that the study interviewed different key informants from the same company including appraisees, direct appraisers and confirming appraisers. In this way, data collected has been cross-verified and investigated in greater depth.

The interview method was enriched by pointing to the appropriateness of participants for study. The researcher provided important information pertaining to prospective participants' receptivity in data collection. The target population for the research had to meet the following criteria:

- *Appraisees with over 10 years of work experience in the company.* This criterion intended to take into account the experiences of workers who had considerable experience of the PA system meaning their experience could be compared over a number of years. One appraisee had just seven years of experience at the time of study. The researcher decided to include this particular interview to compare with the other respondents with more PA experience. The responses of this particular appraisee were found to be more frank than the other participants' answers.

- *Male and female employees who work in branch network or departments.* This criterion was intended to investigate any differences between gender. It was vital that interviews were conducted with men and women to study any differences that might emerge from the information collected. The bank under study has branch network and also departments. Branch networks are spread over Malta and their function is to service customers directly. The departments' function are more specific to the nature of products offered such as lending and investment products. Integrate employees with different specialisation background may offer the study the opportunity to highlight any gender difference between departments and branches.

- *Employees employed full time with a minimum of 40 hours per week.* This criterion was inserted to find appraisees with an identical number of working hours. A difference in working hours could lead to any gender gap identified in the study being justified by differences in working patterns or differing numbers of targets to be achieved in appraisees' PA reports.

- *Employees who are actually working at the workplace on the date of interview.* This criterion was added to ensure that study participants included recent experiences in line with the date of interview.

- *Employees who have a direct influence and/or impact on the implementation of the performance appraisal.* For this criterion, only clerks, supervisors, managers and senior managers were considered for interview as both appraisees and appraisers. Executive heads and higher occupations were not considered in the sample target as they are not assessed by the same evaluative system. Thus findings can be compared within the same evaluative system.

The sample technique was chosen to generate a theoretical understanding of how the processing of the assessment system affects a peripheral group (full timers appraised by the performance appraisal system) and not to represent the whole population (Bryman, 2008). Interviewees were self-selected by contacting prospective participants through face-to-face and telephone invitation. The researcher was very careful not to interview any participants with whom she had previously worked. This was intended to keep a distance between interviewees and interviewer and mitigate the researcher's subjectivity and assumptions. Additionally, the researcher did not wish to have any interviewees participating

for the sake of good relations or obligation between the researched and researcher. The stratification purposive sampling employed allowed an adequate representation of occupational levels and gender. In this way, sampling has reduced the probability of biased findings and reflects a holistic approach (Mason, 2002).

As mentioned above, the study used a two-tiered approach whereby interviews were conducted with two main key informants within the performance appraisal system (Appendix C). Tier one involved the core group of this research consisting of 21 appraisees. This enabled the researcher to discover how the PA process applies to them, and understand how criteria are allocated, ratings are awarded and how recommendations had been provided over the past 11 years. Some appraisees were also able to discuss evolutions they have observed during their PA experiences.

Tier two consisted of interviewing eight appraisers to understand how they process the evaluation system. This tier of key informants included the direct appraisers and the confirming appraisers. Here the study aimed to collect information about those factors that appraisers consider while they are assigning criteria, awarding ratings and passing on recommendations to their appraisees. The way appraisers process the assessment system was analysed and cross-analysed with the appraisees' data, thus confirming that social norms are attached to the way appraisers conduct the performance appraisal system.

By using a chain of evidence from the three different key informants, the study counteracted one criticism of the qualitative approach in relation to the investigator's subjectivity (Bryman, 2008). This is because the researcher verified

respondents' information, limited the criticism of internal validity of the qualitative interview method and reduced respondents' biases (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By excavating data from three important key informants of the PA process, the researcher obtained knowledge about gendered norms which may be prominent in other organisations. Secondly, the cross-analysis gave a better understanding of how gender values may be reproduced.

4.33 Respondents and Company Access

After contacting the company to be investigated over the phone, on 18 January 2015, the researcher sent the supervisor's letter (Appendix D), a letter explaining the scope of the study (Appendix E) and a copy of the data protection and consent letter for each participant (Appendix F) to the company. The company accepted the one-to-one interview method, against a declaration of secrecy form which it provided. This form was completed and signed by the researcher on 12 February 2015, agreeing that the name of the company would not be mentioned in the study.

Since the researcher was on unpaid leave, neither the email system nor the email addresses of employees were accessible. The researcher therefore contacted the company's HR department to send an invitation to all employees on her behalf. An initial discussion with an HR representative appeared promising. However, no response was received after two weeks despite reminders via email and telephone. The researcher therefore decided not to pursue this avenue any further. This challenged the researcher's certainty and confidence as to the

outcome of interviews; the approach employees may take and whether they would accept and openly discuss their personal experiences with an unknown colleague.

With these doubts in mind, the researcher decided to approach the workplace directly (branch networks and departments) and contacted employees who might be interested in participating in the study. On each occasion, the researcher had the opportunity to briefly discuss the situation at the company, redirecting the conversation to the subject of the performance appraisal system. This allowed the researcher to establish whether the employees fully met the sample criteria.

Eligible candidates' contact details were noted down to fix an appointment to meet up and conduct the interview accordingly. The face-to- face method proved extremely effective as a first point of contact because it meant the researcher could observe employees' enthusiasm and interest in discussing the topic of the assessment system. The researcher collected 14 interviews through this method. The first interview was held on the 28 April 2015. However, in terms of time, this method proved very long. In the meantime, one of the participants invited the researcher to a Company Staff Party. This event provided an opportunity to network with other possible participants. Interviewees referred the researcher to other prospective participants. In this way, another 15 successful participants were confirmed in a very short time span. In total, the researcher had discussed in brief the objective of the study with 52 employees. 29 interviews, of which 21 were with appraisees and eight with appraisers, were conducted with employees who met the aforementioned sample criteria established by the research study. Contrary to initial misgivings, the study had a very good response, with all the employees approached accepting to be interviewed.

Interviews were conducted over five months, starting at the beginning of April 2015. Two unexpected themes of 'teamwork' and 'social activities' were repeatedly emerging from the key informants. During the time when the researcher was conducting the interviews, a formal circular was issued by the company understudy informing participants of performance appraisal in September 2015. This communication issued by the company was not welcomed positively by the majority of the employees with whom the researcher was discussing work-related issues. In fact, there were two interviews in which the researcher noted that participants were quite angry about this circular. This circular communicated some changes in the assessment system, in which majority of the appraisees felt were unfair. The researcher found it very difficult to conduct these two interviews since she had to redirect the conversation various times back to the intended study objective. These two interviews were discarded from the data analysis so as not to bias the overall findings. Up to this stage, the researcher had already conducted 29 interviews excluding the discarded ones. The researcher decided to discontinue the interviews because she did not want to distort the picture due to the 'recency effect' (Steiner and Rain, 1989:137). This decision was supported by data saturation since no other new themes were being gleaned from the interviews.

The interviews, the researcher found conducting all interviews, to be a life-learning experience. Although the researcher ensured consistency in her approach, it was noted that as time passed and more interviews were conducted, the interviewer's skills were improving in terms of effective use of probing. This has proven beneficial during the appraiser interviews, who were more diplomatic in their responses. Mindful of and responsible for the interview dynamics, the

researcher considered the interpersonal, communicative and emotional aspects of each interview.

Hence, she began each interview by informing the participant of the objective of the study, by highlighting points mentioned on the introductory letter. This also served as a checklist to comply with the ethical considerations. Furthermore, the researcher noted down anything relevant concerning participants' emotions. All participants responded to every question without refusing to answer any questions or probing, even though respondents were informed about this opportunity to quit or refuse to answer any intrusive questions. During the transcription process, the interviewer noticed that respondents, especially appraisees, trusted her with sensitive personal experiences. The researcher felt very satisfied and honoured with the trust and even positive comments received from respondents off and on the record; Andrew[3]: 'Err, a very interesting question'.

4.34 Interviewing Process

Before conducting the interviews, a pilot interview was carried out with two appraisees; one male and one female. These two appraisees were picked randomly with participants previously unknown to the interviewer to avoid any personal biases. The author did not notice any particular hesitation or compunction to answer any of the interview questions. The pilot exercise supported the fieldwork and data collection as it allowed the researcher to refine

---

[3] Andrew another of pseudonyms used during the interviews.

the interview guide used during appraisee interviews. Pilot participants suggested asking prospective interviewees to review their past PA reports before conducting each interview considering the questions the researcher asked regarding 11 years of PA experience. The suggestion was appreciated and when each interviewee agreed to participate in study, it was recommended they take a glance at their past assessment reports. The majority of appraisees brought almost all their past reports with them on interview day. Consequently, this allowed the researcher to explore the current practice of the evaluation process while, linking it to the participant's past experiences in a visible manner.

The pilot interviews, allowed the researcher to determine the ideal approximate length of interview without fatiguing participants, and to collect participants' reactions during their responses. Pilot interviews were transcribed and findings analysed and scrutinised. After listening to interviews attentively, two further biographical questions were introduced at the beginning of each interview to put participants at ease. The last question was also re-constructed first to verify the first question asked, and secondly to end the interview on a positive note (Hermanowicz, 2002).

In order to conduct interviews which capture reality by 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1990:5), the researcher used less formal questions to create an easy environment between the researcher and the researched. While preserving integrity and self-control during the interview, small jokes were helpful to encourage the interviewees to talk. This informal environment also helped appraisees to feel comfortable to discuss company's issues. Listening to the pilot study, the researcher also learnt to relax the pace of talk, refrain from finishing participants' phrases, practise silence and probing, to encourage participants to

talk. The pilot study proved fruitful in that it helped create a flowing interview style later on. The two interviews in the pilot study were not integrated into the main study sample, because as suggested by Arthur and Nazaroo (2003) when changes in the questions are required, it is better not to incorporate the pilot study findings into the main findings.

Being an insider researcher, worked as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, access to the company's employees was accepted within weeks, the dissemination of invitations was not supported. However, the researcher was able to attend a staff party, invited by an ex-colleague. The majority of participants were contacted through this network event. During this staff party six interviewees referred some other prospective participants for the study. Here the researcher felt that trust had been built between researcher and participants, especially considering the researcher did not know these participants before the interviews.

Interviews began in April 2015 and ended in September 2015. After each interviewee had agreed to participate in the study, s/he was asked to suggest a comfortable place to meet and conduct the interview. Most appraisers were met at their workplace in a private office, with very minimal disturbance from their mobile devices. Some researchers suggest that seeing participants at their workplace may offer information which provides an ethnographic dimension. However, interviewing in public places other than their offices may have made interviewees feel freer to talk about their own opinions separate from the organisational goals (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Thus, the majority of the appraisee interviews were conducted outside the workplace and a private meeting room was pre-reserved in a local hotel. In fact, one particular occasion,

an appraisee said 'it is better to go outside, because even the walls here have ears, hahaha!' when he was asked to choose a location for interview. Booking a private meeting room was very costly. However, it avoided noise pollution that could have affected the quality of the recording, while guaranteed participants' privacy.

4.35 During the Interview

Each interview began with some general conversation and after a thorough explanation of the study, both participants and researcher signed the informed consent form. The audio recording was then switched on (Hermanowicz, 2002). An interview guide was used to record the date and duration of each interview conducted. However, additional probing was employed, especially during appraiser interviews. Further probing enabled the researcher to dig out information while maintaining a conversational style following a linear and organic conversation (Cook and Waters, 1998). The generous degree of freedom given to informants was balanced with the control of data direction by means of probing noted on the interview guide. The guide ensured that all questions were covered and also showed the preparedness of the interviewer while the interview remained flexible. It was envisaged that interviews would last an hour so that in-depth data could be obtained without exhausting either party. However, the actual duration of the interviews varied from 52 minutes to circa 2 hours. The researcher noticed that appraisee interviews were the longer interviews with an average duration of eighty nine minutes. The decision to conduct interviews in

the Maltese mother tongue put participants at ease and aimed to capture important discourse without losing any meaning (Mason, 2002).

While interviewing participants, the researcher noticed different emotions in interviewees including (r) reflective, (h) helpless, (a) angry, (uf) unfairness which were recorded on the interview guide. The use of code letters helped the researcher remember such feelings without making the participant aware of his/her own expressions.

> Jane Doe: 'I have seen people unfortunately have a forced break down, as they were treated unfairly in the PA'

This quote was noted in the interview guide as 'uf' and 'a'. Jane Doe made this statement with tears in her eyes. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to investigate naturalised habits and norms within participants' performance appraisal experience. Data collected converged on a number of themes that constitute the vertebrae of the analysis and write-up (Mason, 2002). Interviews remained interesting even after all intended questions had been asked. Some participants talked about their experiences more openly after the recorder was turned off. The interviewer dedicated time to listening to participants until they felt it was time to leave, as she was aware of how the interview might have made them reflect on their life within the organisation. Warren et al. (2003) suggest keeping the audio recorder ready as interviewees can give important information after the recorder has been turned off. However, for ethical considerations (Wiles, 2012) and to keep the interview as natural as possible, it was decided to leave the conversation off the record. Yet, the researcher made notes in the interview guide about statements that were considered to be relevant

for the study. One important statement shared by an appraiser after the recorder had been turned off was, that 'unfortunately women in Maltese society are still considered the less important contributor in organisations'. Another male appraiser confessed during the time when the recorder was off that the best performers he had seen in his experience as an appraiser were married women in their mid-thirties/forties and without children.

Interviews aimed to foster a good rapport with respondents since one of the basic tenets of qualitative research is that good-quality data should be produced within a relation of trust between researcher and researched (Mason, 2002). Face-to-face invitations complemented by an explanation of their importance to the study, proved very effective. This helped make interviewees feel as though they were experts in the subject and partners of the study. The researcher believed that this also led to a high response rate. The only two employees who were contacted via electronic mail, did not answer the study invitation. When other interviewees were asked about how they would have reacted to receiving the researcher's invitation by email, they all said that they would have ignored the email.

4.40 Data Transcription

After obtaining permission from all participants, interviews were audio recorded, saved to computer and backed up on an external hard disk owned by the researcher. When each interview was concluded, important notes on each interviewee's behaviour and any hunches about emergent themes raised from any relevant observations during interview were recorded in a diary note. This

proved very effective, especially during analysis of the data collected (Bryman, 2008) because common themes were more easily unearthed.

The researcher chose to transcribe interviews verbatim herself after each interview was conducted. For each hour of interview, circa seven to nine hours of transcription were dedicated. Audio recordings were heard several times over and diary entries read for a clearer understanding of concepts and themes. Transcriptions aimed to capture interactions such as ironic comments, stutters and pauses. These were also cross-referenced with notes taken in the interview guides and research diary. Although it was very time-consuming, the task offered great benefits. During the data transcription the researcher was able to develop an analytical framework which emerged out of similarities and differences between different participants' information. Transcriptions became daunting as the number of interviews increased. However, the researcher was curious about finding new things in each transcription, which helped keep up her enthusiasm during this stage.

Transcriptions were written in the same language used as recorded during the interviews, using a bilingual mixture of Maltese and English. Separate scripts were used for each respondent to make it easier to make notes while transcribing and develop any emerging themes. Due to time constrains and not to lose any meaning in translation, only the quoted statements in this study were translated in English. Transcriptions were then copied into another folder on the computer to enable the researcher to retain an original copy of the transcriptions while analysing the data using another copy.

4.50 Data Analysis

Qualitative interviews amounted to 29, which resulted in a significant amount of data collected. The notes and themes jotted down during the verbatim writing proved effective during the data analysis process. At first, the NVIVO system was considered. However, due to some uncertainties about bilingual interviews and due to the obligation that the researcher felt towards her participants, the study was analysed manually. This allowed the researcher to remain close to the data collected and ascertain that all important themes along with the non-verbal cues recorded remained integral. This ensured nothing relevant would be omitted from the study.

The transcripts were re-read with the aid of audio to listen again to each interview. A key word index guide was used to manage themes, indexes and concepts used within all transcripts. Similar keywords describing the same concept were noted and the most suitable themes related to the literature were used. Some keywords such as 'teamwork' and 'socialisation' were observed to be connected. The connected themes were written in brackets nearby. Through the transcripts, some statements fitted within more than one theme. For example, data related to 'team-activities' fitted under both 'teambuilding' and 'socialisation'. These were noted by writing the other theme in bold.

The keyword index guide also included the participant's pseudonym alongside the question number (near each key word), which has been proved useful and time-saving, highlighting common, repetitive and strong themes of the 29 transcripts. Analysis was conducted by the researcher at two different times of

day to remain concentrated and without getting bored. The researcher's concentration is normally higher in the morning, so the recordings were listened to attentively and themes assigned accordingly at this time of the day. In the evening, the researcher would copy the most interesting statements from the transcripts and transfer them to another file organised by theme. Each copied theme statement was then accompanied by the participant's pseudonym and question number to know the exact location of a statement's source. This systematic procedure proved adequate for data comparison. Data which was planned to be quoted in the main study was highlighted in bold italic text.

Although appraisee and appraiser transcriptions were analysed separately, the same method was used. This made it easier to cross-reference themes. Important quotes attached to strong themes were then inserted in a matrix composed of participants' pseudonyms and the emerged themes. The matrix served to balance data findings including strong themes without inserting too much quoted material or leaving out important quotes (Bryman, 2008). A small number of other themes emerged from the interviews. Although this number was small, these marginal findings, helped emerging gender practices such as the importance of female behaviour during team activities (to be discussed further in Chapter Five and Six).

Coding is sometimes viewed as fragmentation of text with the possibility of losing context (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). However, through the re-reading exercise, the multiple coding exercise during the study and the thematic matrix, the researcher organised the massive data collected into theoretical ideas with the intent not to lose any meaning. Through thematic analysis, the three research

questions were identified: firstly, the high valued criterion; secondly exclusive practices were acknowledged; and thirdly the appraisees' reactions.

4.60 Ethical Issues

Aware of the fact that this study relates to human beings, ethical issues were observed continuously throughout the entire academic journey (Phillips and Pugh, 2010). From the first day of the proposal until the writing up of the study, relevant literature regarding performance appraisal and gender relation studies was reviewed. This supported the researcher in keeping her well informed and aware of recent issues concerning the study in order to produce a study which considered the recent and current context. Ethical principles were adhered to prior, during and after the data collection phase, in which due diligence was exercised according to Diener and Crandall's (1978) framework and the British Sociological Association guidelines.

Prior to the commencement of the field work, the University of Leicester's ethical review form was approved after the company to be studied agreed to participate. When participants were invited to be interviewed, they were all informed that the company had given its consent, but they were also informed that this study was not being undertaken on behalf of or in collaboration with the company they worked for. Potential participants were sent an introductory letter (see Appendix G) providing them with a thorough explanation of the objective of the study regarding employee equality before each interview. The researcher included only

those participants in the study who were willing to speak out about their experience, which included all the respondents.

To avoid socially desirable responses and thereby obtaining a distorted picture (Bryman, 2008), the word 'employee' was used instead of 'gender' in both the introductory and the informed consent letter. The omission of the term gender was considered neither harmful nor unfair on the participant. The word employee was considered by the researcher to be a simple generic description without specifying a type of category of discrimination. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed of the eligibility criteria according to which they had been selected, the probability that their statements may be quoted in the study and the possibility of future use by external researchers (CLMS MI, UI). Once informed consent was duly signed by each participant, the researcher asked participants' permission to record the interview and to take down important notes. Both audio recording and note taking were agreed to by all the participants.

Bryman (2008) argues that questions about performance could invade privacy. Thus, all participants were also informed that they were free not to respond to any question they felt was intrusive, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Aware of personal experiences that respondents might reveal during the interview, the researcher reassured them that their identity would not be divulged. Each participant's name was replaced by a pseudonym that was chosen by the participant him/herself. The reason was to make the study feel less invasive (British Sociological Association, 2017). These pseudonyms were used throughout the writing up of the study, whenever individual cases were discussed. Some interviewees mentioned real names of their colleagues while

describing particular experiences. Even these names were changed in the transcription stage to protect third parties.

Participants' occupations were not alluded to, as certain occupations are atypical. Referring to specific occupations could increase the risk of identifying participants during data collection, presentation of findings and/or in any future reference used by other researchers (Mason, 2002). To adhere to the company's access condition, and not to harm the company in any way, the name and the specific details of the company were understudy not disclosed. This is because, due to the limited number of financial companies in Malta, certain details could make the company easily identifiable.

Appointments with participants were scheduled according to interviewees' preference of time and place. All interviews were held in a private meeting room either in a local hotel or within their workplace. The interferences that occurred in four meetings, were from participants' mobile phones. However no interferences were substantial enough to affect the interview dynamics. Only one interview was very difficult to hear from the audio recording due to the inaudibility of the participant's voice. The study required the participation of both genders to investigate whether and how the performance appraisal system might discriminate against one gender. Howarth (2002) shows that male response are low in gender studies; however, in this study the responses rate was high from both men and women.

The first face to face contact and the explanation of the importance of their contribution to the study, helped to build a good rapport between researcher and researched. This was evident in the length of each interview and the rich data

that was collected. Trust was also built to the point that the majority of appraisees encouraged the researcher to voice their experiences not only in the study but also with the company chairperson. However, aware that deception could destroy any future trust in a relationship, the researcher did not promise or give false hope that any findings or conclusions made in the study, would lead to the implementation of new practices in the company under study (Bryman, 2008). Here the author explained to all participants that she had no decision-making power to change or implement company strategy (Bell, 1997).

Ethical considerations continued after the data collection, when factual results were presented at the end of the study. Audio recordings and their transcripts, were securely stored in password-protected electronic files and documentation safely filed in a locked cabinet. Two years after the submission of the thesis these shall be destroyed, a procedure which was communicated to all participants before each interview (British Sociological Association, 2017).

The process of data collection and the information sources were documented to enable future users to understand what was accomplished and verify that the work met all appropriate standards. This study also reflects on the methodology limitation to enable other researchers to consider these in future studies (British Sociological Association, 2017).

4.70 Limitations

All aspects of the study were meticulously thought out to carry out a comprehensive study. However, there were some limitations to methodology.

Originally, the study intended to employ a three tiered-approach and include an interview with the human resources representatives of the organisation understudy. This was intended to verify with the representatives of the company the information collected from appraisers and appraisees about the company's support provided to appraisers. After the lack of support in the dissemination process of the researcher's invitation, the researcher felt that persisting in including HR department representatives as study participants would be invasive. This choice proved to be for the best, especially after the circular that the company issued about a particular PA concern at the time of the study. If the interview had been conducted with HR representatives, responses may have been biased through social desirability due to the representatives' role in the company, and to defend the circular the department had issued.

Conclusion

This chapter explains how research was carried out using an interpretivist approach and qualitative research method. The study strived for in-depth exploration through qualitative research by using multiple data sources. By transcribing and manually analysing the data collected, the researcher felt closer to participants. The focal point of the methodology was to identify the way the performance appraisal is processed and whether social norms may supports gender disparity in the organisation. The study's research design revealed important interrelations between activities engaged in by appraisees and by

appraisers. The role of the organisation within the performance appraisal process was also explored through further probing of appraisers.

As an insider, the researcher aimed to mitigate any personal biased interpretation, with the use of multiple data sources. Confidentiality was assured at all times, and researcher felt trusted by the appraisees which was evidenced by the amount of unique and personal data collected and by the high response rate. This trust built between the appraisees and researcher obliged the latter to report the findings to the best of her ability. The findings that emerged from the study based on the research process described in this chapter, will be discussed in the next two separate but connected chapters.

Chapter Five

The Characteristic of the High Performer

Introduction

As described in Chapter Four, qualitative interviews were conducted with appraisees, direct appraisers (DA) and confirming appraisers (CA). All participants were actively involved in the performance appraisal (PA) system at the time of the study, which ensured that data collected also reflected recent experiences. The aim of this research is to explore how women experience the assessment performance system and explain any difference between male and female's experience in this practice.

Findings in this chapter are presented using mainly quotations from respondents' interviews, accompanied by a series of prompting questions. During the face-to-face interviews, the researcher was able to question each participant using interview techniques to bring out his or her experience of the PA system (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this way, the researcher can identify criteria or dominant criterion most valued by appraisers and highlight any differences between the way men and women experience the most important criteria.

After identifying criteria important for appraisers, the study will explore how these are measured and whether there are any gender assumptions related to these particular criteria. The appraisees' level of satisfaction with the performance appraisal process will be compared. Comparing the appraisees' satisfaction level

will help determine whether there is any gender disparity in the way men and women experience the important criterion.

5.10 Highly Valued Criteria

Gendered organisations are attributed to daily working practices and assumptions that can appear to be gender neutral but are grounded in a male model of work (Martin and Collinson, 2002; Acker 1990). By finding a common characteristic(s) or attribute(s), the study can investigate whether the meaning of that particular characteristics have any gender connotations through further probing.

To explore which criteria are highly valued within the company, the researcher decided to ask appraisers to mention the type of characteristic(s) and attribute(s) that a high performer within a banking organisation should possess. The company understudy employs an assessment form which assesses both technical and behavioural standards. Technical task performance represents the skills and knowledge required to engage in the core banking business to produce banking goods and service such as lending products. Considering their quantifiable nature in measuring skills targets, technical tasks are also referred to as 'tangible tasks' - this study use both terms interchangeable. Behavioural task performance is sometimes referred as 'interpersonal tasks'. These tasks nurture the socio-psychological environment within which the core business operates, such as collaboration with other employees (CIPD, 2017; Kondrasuk, 2011).

Assessing both behavioural criteria along and technical job criteria, in an evaluation system in order to get a fuller provide of the employee's performance (Kondrasuk, 2011: 67). From the answers appraisers gave, the study found that although the tangible criteria are recorded in employees' performance appraisal reports, the behavioural section is more highly valued by evaluators.

> Simon: 'Behaviour is very important and the biggest part of the performance appraisal report should be behavioural. Because, I believe if behaviour is good, the rest is good. For me, the performance appraisal should be all behavioural. What the brain does, the body concludes! So your behaviour is your performance!'

Simon, an appraiser for the past eleven years considers tangible targets to be less important than the behavioural section within the report. Kondrasuk (2011) recommends that both the behavioural and the technical be considered equally however Fletcher and Williams (1985) suggest that the behavioural section is vital because appraisers pay attention to how quantitative output is achieved.

> Luke: 'I believe that behaviour affects production, that's why I give it more importance over the production section. Behaviour for me is number one'.

Like other appraisers interviewed, Luke claimed that the behavioural section is more important than the technical skills section. This indicates that, contrary to Kondrasuk's suggestion (2011), the company under study gives more weight to the behavioural section when assessing employees.

Hence the researcher felt the need to further investigate whether the highly recognised criteria fall within the behavioural section. As mentioned in Chapter Two, one major criticism of behavioural criteria is that they tend to be subjective.

Karl, an appraiser for the last four years, claimed that it is very challenging to evaluate appraisees on behavioural skills. On the other hand, Stephen, an appraiser for years, explained how he assesses appraisees' behaviour despite the subjectivity of this section.

> Stephen: 'I think although behaviour is subjective, you can still see it. Sometimes it is more difficult for the appraisees themselves. For me your behaviour is your attitude to work. Attitude is very important for me.'

Here, Stephen states that the behavioural criteria are difficult to measure by the appraisees themselves. But that, as an appraiser, he is in a position to 'still see' appraisees' behaviour through their attitude to work, and easily assess behaviour. The study aimed to find out which factors Stephen and other appraisers see in appraisees' behaviour to award them high ratings and distinguish high from low achievers.

> Josette: 'The confirming appraiser [CA] is not always with the appraisees. In my experience as a direct appraiser [DA], I have seen CAs basing their ratings on good personal impressions. These good impressions impact positively on the ratings given, even if he [the CA] does not know what the appraisee is doing in reality.'

In the above claim, Josette, who has been a direct appraiser for the past six years, highlights two essential points. First she makes a distinction between the role of confirming appraisers and that of direct appraisers. Here it is important to explain the system used within the company. The company employs two appraisers for each appraisal evaluated: the confirming appraiser (CA); and the direct appraiser (DA). CIPD (2017) states that the objective of the CA combined

with the DA is to reduce any personal biases that may influence the objectivity of the appraisal report. The confirming appraiser is responsible for checking all evaluations of employees made by the subordinate manager, making sure that the direct evaluator has carried out their function objectively and without bias (Fanga and Gerhart, 2012). During the interviews, it became evident that although direct and confirming appraisers are employed, the ultimate decision about the rating of appraisees remains in the hands of the latter. This was further confirmed during the interviews when the appraisers described divergences that direct appraisers had experienced with confirming appraisers during the assessments.

> Stephen: 'We [CA and DA] have an exchange [of ratings]; maybe I see someone as A, A+, and someone else sees him as A-. We discuss. But in the end I go with my rating. I exercise my authority as a head [CA] and I say "Pippa, I want to award her this rating."

Stephen has been employed as an appraiser for the past 10 years. In these last four years he has been a confirming appraiser. In the statement above, he explained how he discusses with his managers the overall final rating of each appraisee. However, he confirmed that when there are some divergences on ratings to be awarded with the direct appraisers, Stephen ultimately goes with his ratings. This was further evidenced by other appraisers.

> Monica: 'in the end, I am the CA here. So I do it my way'.

Monica is currently a confirming appraiser, having been employed as a direct appraiser for three years. She confirmed that the ultimate ratings awarded to her peers are decided by herself as a CA, especially when there is disagreement

between her rating and the direct appraisers. Her statement agreed with other confirming appraisers participating in this study. Although Cameron (1981) suggests that employing a second appraiser reduces 'carelessness biases' that an appraiser may have regarding particular appraisee, this study found that second appraisers are not auditing the performance appraisal of the employees. The ultimate decision remains in the hands of the confirming appraiser who has the higher authority. According to the appraisers participating in this study, the role of the direct appraiser in this company is simply to fill in the performance appraisal report. The relationship between the CA and DA sheds light on the importance of the behavioural aspect in the PA system. After exploring the fact that the confirming appraiser is the decisive role and the subjectivity surrounding the behavioural section, the study can explain how subjectivity is carried forward to higher authority. While the role of appraisers will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapter, the researcher will now investigate the most highly valued criterion in the behaviour section for confirming appraisers.

To return to Josette's statement above, she also claimed that confirming appraisers are seldom present within department, due to business exigencies. When other direct appraisers shared the same criticism, the researcher became interested in investigating the ways in which confirming appraiser 'see' appraisee behaviour in order to rate them, especially in the subjective or non-quantifiable targets that are preferred over the tangible criteria. She decided to delve into Josette's statement. Josette also highlighted how a 'good impression' that appraisers have appraisees has a positive effect on the appraisees' performance rating.

This highlights the need to explore two main concepts. What type of behaviour do appraisers want to see in order to award high ratings to appraisees? Where do appraisers get their impressions on each appraisee from, if the confirming appraiser is rarely present in the work office?

5.11 Identifying the Right Behaviour

The researcher asked specific questions to both appraisees and appraisers to understand and verify which ideal behaviour is required to be considered a high performer. During the interviews, the researcher focused on making each respondent comfortable enough to describe which attitudes or behaviours are highly valued in the assessment system.

At first, the informants gave various concepts about the important factors that one must possess to be awarded high ratings in the PA system. One concept that was mentioned included the importance of the role an appraisee occupies, which brings with it automatically high ratings.

> Amber: 'The role one occupies is important for the performance appraisal ratings.'

Michael added:

> 'The performance appraisal system is a cycle. For example, when I started working at the bank the advances department [lending department] was manned by the best people. A few years later, the sales department was

very important to the bank. Now, the company gives priority and focus to the risk department.'

Amber and Michael, who have been appraisees for the past 11 years, described how certain departments were seen as more essential than others over time. Michael explained how in the past 18 years, the department's importance has changed over time. Each important department will then be staffed by high performers. This may indicate that the importance of typical attitudes or skills will vary according to the role or department an appraisee occupies. Certain elements of the high performer may differ and change depending on the context within the organisation.

However, after further probing, informants listed particular qualities that employees should possess to have the right attitude. Some said that one needs to be able to sell, to be a 'yes man', or 'go in and out of the manager's office'. Another strong and common theme mentioned by all appraisees interviewed was the factor of the degree to which the appraiser 'likes' the appraisee (the 'like' factor).

Katrina: 'I don't think it is fair, err … the ratings system does not work. It is more a manager's system for whom he [the appraiser] likes.'

Katrina has been appraised ever since the PA system was launched 11 years ago. She claims that this practice is unfair, as the evaluation system bases its ratings according to whom the appraiser likes most and not according to the employee's output. These likings or preferences in the PA system were further confirmed by all direct appraisers especially when they were discussing their

experiences of not agreeing with the confirming appraisers during the evaluation process of their peers.

> Joseph: 'I experienced a disagreement between my rating [DA] and the confirming appraiser's rating. This was an example of the influence of the 'like' factor. Perhaps it was not her fault [appraisee], but it was something to do with her relative who used to work with the confirming appraiser in the past.'

Joseph, a direct appraiser for the past 11 years, states that he disagreed with one of his superiors in a particular year. He noted that one of his appraisees was a hard-working female employee. The particular confirming appraiser had a negative experience with a relative of the appraisee in past. This experience influenced the overall rating of this particular appraisee negatively despite her performance (according to Joseph) being excellent. One may use the 'like' factor as an excuse to justify the low rating in the PA system. However, the researcher wanted to investigate this like factor in greater depth, especially when considering that the behavioural section may be used to award ratings according to the confirming appraiser's subconscious preferences. These 'likes', which are abstract and subjective, may allow gender to play a role.

> Simon: "Behaviour is subjective and here preferences become clear. Yes because, productive [criteria] are factual figures. If you do not agree, just check the numbers and figures, err perhaps even the way I look at it and the way you look at it are different.'

Simon, who has held both a direct appraising and a confirming appraising role, declared that when he was a direct appraiser he disagreed with his confirming

appraisers. Simon prefers the behaviour section over the technical criteria, and he admits that most differences emerge in the former section. Here, Simon's argument contradicts Stephen's whereby the latter stated that he can see appraisees' behaviour and assess it accordingly. According to Drazin and Auster (1987), rating behavioral criteria may depend on subjective meaning. Simon explains that such disagreements can be attributed to the different interpretations each appraiser gives to the appraisee's behaviour. Hence, 'seeing' becomes very relative and subjective. The study further verified this subjectivity and disagreement through appraisees discussing their performance appraisal report. They declared that as appraisees, they had noticed some interplay between the technical and the behaviour section in their past PA experience.

> Emma: 'In a particular year, in sales I achieved mark 4 [out of 5]. However, the appraiser still gave me a low mark [as an overall final mark]. He did not give me a 4, because in the end he amended the behaviour section and adjusted it as he wanted. Because the manager can play with numbers there.'

Emma's comment concurs with the majority of appraisees interviewed. She stated that the behavioural section is the part where appraisers can make adjustments to reflect the overall mark that the appraiser wants to give. Emma, like Katrina, had expected the behaviour section to be rated in line with the technical results achieved. However, in both cases this did not happen. Emma confirmed that how much an appraise likes an appraisee is portrayed in the behavioural section, and this has a direct effect on the overall final mark.

After finding out the ways in which appraisers' preferences for their appraisees are reflected in the behavioural section of the PA report, one may conclude that appraisers prefer the behaviour over the technical section because they can modify ratings according to their likings. Hence, the study was interested in finding out which concept lies behind the preference or 'like' factor. When the researcher asked participants about the behaviour that appraisers value highly, various themes emerged. However, one interesting concept which was commonly and regularly brought up in every interview was teamwork. Teamwork is specifically listed in the appraisees' assessment report under the behavioural section for female and male appraisees.

5.12 Teamwork

From both the direct appraisers and the appraisees, the teamwork criterion emerged as the most important theme that confirming appraisers value highly within the assessment system.

> Monica: 'Some tasks, we include them [in the assessment report form] ourselves. For example, when a person does not have a valid reason for not participating in a team activity but chooses not to come because it is held in the evening. Social activities are important. We can talk outside work, it is very important. So I introduce team activities as one of the KRAs/KPIs [criteria].'

Monica, a CA for the past six years, was discussing how she processes the performance appraisal practice. She stated that although the assessment report

is a standard form, she makes sure the criterion of team activities is inserted in the appraisees' assessment report.

From Monica's and other participants' interviews, the study reveals that teamwork and social activities are interlinked in the company understudy. Monica's statement explains how she can talk and know her appraisees better during social activities. Social activities are vital for Monica as she can form her opinion on her appraisees. Monica's statement may justify Stephen's statement when he said that as an appraiser he 'sees' his peers' attitude, even though he is seldom at the department. Monica further commented:

> 'Social activities are very important for the company especially for the clients. Because when we go out, customers can see you as a team, and they tell you, "oh what a great team you are. That's why I am loyal to you".'

The importance of these activities also seems to be linked with customer loyalty. As stated by Monica, customers can see the department team as a collective outside the work context, which can lead customers to build a good opinion of the team. Because Monica re-emphasised how significant the link between teamwork and social activities was, it was essential for this study to analyse this link in more depth.

> Pamela: 'Now if we are doing an activity day for charity, there is a certain amount of work that one needs to be involved in, and a certain amount of preparation is required before. If you come, then the work can be distributed better and so, in this instance, yes [it affects PA ratings]'

Pamela, an appraisee for the past ten years, claimed that activities are something she attends regularly. Here, Pamela justifies the low ratings given when someone

does not attend social activities. In this particular case, she explains that when a team member misses a social activity, the work performed during the activity needs to be carried out by the remaining members, and she considers this unfair.

Michael, another appraisee for the past 11 years, also agrees with Monica and Pamela. He says that these social activities outside the work environment are important because at work, it is impossible to know each other considering the work-load one has during the day. Thus social activities help team cohesion and performance.

Teamwork which is included in the assessment report, emerged as a major theme in the majority of the interviews. However during the interviews, the study found that social activities within each department was the standard measurement with which appraisers assess their peers on the teamwork criterion. Social activities are seen as an employee's responsibility to build team cohesion and customer loyalty. Hence, if an employee does not attend social activities, s/he deserves to be given a low rating under the teamwork criterion. During these events, confirming appraisers can 'see' and thus rate their peers on the highly recognised assessment criterion of social activities, even if appraisers are rarely at the work office. Confirming appraisers may get their impression on their appraisees, from the amount of events they participate in and how they behave during these team building activities. During the interviews, participants mentioned teamwork, team and social activities. However, the study found that it is the assessing standard, i.e. social activities which is the most important characteristic for appraisers.

Therefore, the researcher felt it necessary to develop a clear understanding of what appraisers mean exactly by social activities.

Joseph: 'Not everyone assesses in the same way. For example, for a lot of people, teamwork means that you achieve your own targets, so he is a good teamplayer. Teamwork and flexibility entails everything, including when you have a person working after hours to organise an activity - by doing this he is strengthening teamwork. Here, you have someone that after working hours is organising activities in his own time'.

Joseph a direct appraiser for the past 11 years, stated that the meaning of teamwork in the company is not constant and every appraiser assesses this criterion in his or her way. The teamwork criterion is typically viewed as an indicator of multitasking, a high degree of interdependent worker productivity and collaboration within and across teams (Taormina and Gao, 2009). Nevertheless, Joseph explained that teamwork is about organising social activities after working hours to strengthen the team. Joseph's statement confirms all appraisees' comments when they stated that social activities are the way appraisers rate the teambuilding and teamwork criterion within the performance appraisal report.

Jane Doe: 'you got activities that you have to attend and it is from 7.00 in the evening till 11 at night. It's a must!'

Researcher: 'If you do not go, how it is this reflected in the PA system?'

Jane Doe: 'Oh yeah, it is part of the teambuilding. Yes it is.'

Jane Doe, an appraisee for 11 years, discussed how social activities that appraisees need to attend, form part of teambuilding under the behaviour section. These activities are organised after working hours, and those who do not attend are rated low in the behavioural section.

Andrew: 'Teambuilding activities err, I agree with them, I don't mind having them [teambuilding criteria]. I organise them and I understand everyone. I understand that social activities need to be enjoyed by everyone, perhaps an element of sports. Perhaps there are those who cannot make it because of family. I don't believe it should be penalised because, again it's down to the assessor. If I [as an appraiser] know an employee who did not come [to a social activity] has a valid reason, for example a situation that does not permit her to come, I take this into consideration, and appraisers need to consider such a situation.'

Andrew, a male appraisee for the past 11 years and a parent of two children, likes teambuilding activities. Andrew's statement raises a number of issues which the study was interested in investigating further. While Andrew finds no problem with organising and attending each teambuilding activity, he also admits that not everyone may be able to attend these activities. Specifically, Andrew stated that family responsibility is a 'valid reason' for not attending social activities, in which his statement was referring to women as a type of employee that needs to be excused from such a criterion when being assessed.

Following this finding, analysis of the meaning of 'valid reason' and 'family issues' within the performance appraisal system is necessary.

Jessica: 'In one particular year I was awarded a very low mark under the team spirit criterion. He [the appraiser] gave me 200 marks [out of 500]. When I asked the appraiser the reason for the low mark, he told me that I was not participating in the regular after work-activities. Just to let you know, in that particular year, my father-in-law was terminally ill. He

[appraiser] knew about my situation and that I could not attend every social activity each month. Even though my tangible goals were all above 400, the low mark of 200 [in the behavioural section] lowered my overall mark to read 340 [out of 500].'

Here, Jessica, recounts how a particular family circumstance negatively influenced her ratings within the performance report. In this case, Jessica could not attend because she had a particular 'family' situation that involved illness. Interestingly, Jessica describes how a low mark in one part of the PA report pushed down the total final mark. In that year she achieved the tangible targets well beyond her expected goals, but the behavioural section was rated low. Jessica's statement confirms the importance of the teamwork criterion in the behaviour section because its weighting in the report overrides the other criteria's weighting. In this case, a low rating awarded for teamwork lowered the overall rating. Additionally, Jessica's statement demonstrates how, contrary to Andrew's statement, appraisers do not always 'consider such a situation.' Jessica's case shows how the appraiser did not consider her family situation a 'valid reason' for not attending activities regularly, and she was thus awarded a mark that was lower than average or less than she was expecting.

From the analysis, the researcher concludes that teamwork is measured by social activities, which are heavily weighted within the performance appraisal report. Participants who referred to teamwork and social activities interchangeably suggested that absence from such activities may be considered as a lack of commitment to the team and organisation. This lack of commitment impedes the achievement of a high rating irrespective of reason an appraisee

may have. In view of this, the study will analyse whether there is a significant difference between male and female ratings in this particular criterion.

5.20 Appraisees' Experience within the Assessment Process

As stated in the Methodology chapter, questions were specifically constructed to elicit any differences in the way men and women experience the three stages of the PA process: the allocation of criteria; the rating awarded; and the final comments provided by the appraisers. The researcher intentionally ended the interview with a specific question related to how satisfied appraisees were with the PA system. This question was used to verify answers provided by appraisees in the first question of the interview. This question gave appraisees the opportunity to reflect on their experiences discussed during the interview. In this way, the study could collect more robust data from the rich and verified experiences.

The answers collected from the level of appraisees' satisfaction with the performance appraisal process, provided different reactions from appraisees. The study also found differences between the three stages of the PA process. As mentioned, the company understudy used both behavioural and task standards to assess appraisees. Thus, questions on the criteria allocation and how ratings are awarded, were further segmented in order to explore whether there is any difference between the way men and women experience both the behavioural and the technical sections. The data collected was analysed, controlling the gender variable. Interestingly, after concluding the data analysis,

results showed a sharp difference between the behavioural and technical sections, and a pronounced gap between male and female satisfaction responses.

After our discussion of your situation within the PA system, how satisfied are you on a scale of 1 (minimum)-5(maximum) with each of the following stages of the PA system, backed up with a reason of your rating:

- *Allocation of technical targets*

- *Allocation of behavioural targets*

- *The awarding of ratings for technical targets*

- *The awarding of ratings for behavioural targets*

- *Receiving recommendations (in the last part of the PA form section)*

Here appraisees had to rate each bullet point from one (1) (least satisfied) to five (5) (most satisfied) and justify their rating with comments. These ratings with the participants' comments portray the appraisees' experience within the behavioural, technical and recommendation sections. In the process of analysing data, the study also analysed whether the highly valued criterion of teamwork has any effect on the way employees experience the assessment practice. Following analysis of the information collected for this question, the chapter will provide a breakdown of the findings segmented into the three main sections within the performance appraisal report.

5.21 Behavioural Section

This question was responded by 21 appraisees. Of the male participants, 90 percent said they were satisfied with both the behaviour criterion allocation and their behaviour ratings.

> Guido: 'Here, there are [appraisers] who turn them upside down, according to how he sees you, and no one notices. Most of the adjustments in the PA, will occur here, as the appraisers cannot do this anywhere else. If these may be a bit more measurable. But here, I have always been satisfied. This system is good because, here you [as an appraiser] can change them as you like. Hahaha I always did fine and so I rate them 5 out of 5.

Here, Guido like other appraisees contributing to this study, admitted that appraisers are inconsistent when allocating behavioural criteria and in rating appraisee behaviour. He said that appraisers may play with the behavioural section in order to award ratings that the appraisers want to award to their peers. He also stated that such adjustments go unnoticed because there is no measurable standard on which behaviour can be quantified. Verifying Simon's previous statement that behavioural differences can be attributed to how appraisers 'see' their peers, Guido may also indicate that the behavioural section is embedded with appraisers' subjective norms. Despite the inconsistencies exposed here, this specific question found that the majority of male respondents were happy with the behavioural section. Only one male appraisee stated that he was not satisfied, in particular, with the behavioural rating section.

John: 'I give the behaviour section 2 [out of 5]. It is not my case because I don't have anything to complain about there. But it may be that, there will be an appraiser who does not like you; it's not my case again, but if in future there is a person who wants to give me low ratings. There is no one who can prove this. So that's why I give it a 2.'

John rated the behaviour rating section 2 out of 5. He ranked this section low not because he had experienced negative or low ratings for his behaviour, but knowing that this section is very subjective and could be adjusted or used against him in future. Another male appraisee made the same observation.

Andre: 'In my case I rate them 5, because in this section I never had a bad experience. Bit heck, it could turn against me in the future. But for now, in my case, I give it 4.'

While Andre said that he always got high marks in the behaviour section, the fact that assessment practice is without proper monitoring means it can be very subjective. The behavioural section could be used against him in the future, thus he rated the behaviour section 4 instead of 5.

While 9 male respondents out of 10, were very satisfied with the behavioural section, the responses of female appraisees portrayed a totally opposite reaction. In the first stage of the behavioural criteria allocation, 63 percent of female appraisees were dissatisfied when they are allocated their behavioural criteria. When they were asked how satisfied they were with the ratings awarded in the behavioural section, 82 percent rated this very low.

Katrina: 'These [behavioural criteria allocation] are useful, but they do not need to reflect after-hours social activities. It's not always the same, so I give it 3 out of 5.'

Researcher: 'And, how would you rate the behaviour section from 1 [the least] to 5 [the most satisfied] when your appraiser awards you behavioural ratings?'

Katrina: '2 because here [the behavioural ratings part] they lessen ratings and twist things as they want. Yes, they reduce and reduce marks, and you cannot do anything!'

The above statement reinforces some aspects that were highlighted by other participants. Katrina rated the behavioural criterion allocation part with an average mark of 3 because, on the one hand, she believes that interpersonal skills are important to be assessed by the company (this was recounted by other female appraisees); but on the other hand, knowing that social activities have an important influence on the rest of the behavioural criterion, Katrina rated this section 3 out of 5. As regards behavioural ratings, Katrina showed her dissatisfaction by giving this 2 out of 5, because here ratings awarded to her did not mirror the effort she puts in to achieve the technical criteria. In this particular statement the researcher observed that Katrina felt helpless as she knew that the ratings in the behavioural criteria were not within her control.

Emma: 'I rank the behaviour rating section 2 or less because, it is not a real picture. As a performer, I achieve 3 or 4 in sales [technical section] but then he [the CA] will adjust the behaviour [score] to give the rating he has in mind'

Emma reconfirms Katrina's claim. She adds that the overall rating is predetermined, thus the behavioural section is adjusted accordingly, irrespective of the factual figures achieved in the tangible section (as stated above by Jessica). Following the findings concerning the importance of social activities for confirming appraisers, Emma's statement may indicate that the overall predetermined rate depends on the perception that the appraiser has built of the appraisee during social activities.

> Guido: 'Before the head [direct appraiser] does the KRAs, he already knows how much Peter or John [fictitious names] are going to be rated at the end of the year. He tells you "I see you're worth 380 marks and not more", so it is irrelevant how you do or perform in your PA. Without seeing in black and white. His argument is that he knows what I have done during the year overall. "But I think that in my assessment you do not deserve more than 380". Now he will start from the objective figures because there he cannot change, and he can adjust the subjective part accordingly'.

Guido describes how appraisers rate appraisees, starting from the technical criteria and continuing to award ratings in the behaviour section where adjustments are possible. Interestingly, Guido reconfirms the concept of 'seeing' which was mentioned by Stephen, the confirming appraiser. 'Seeing' as described above regards the impression or perception that confirming appraisers get of appraisees during team activities organised within the department. However, Guido's statement suggests that appraisers award ratings based on the worth they personally ascribe an appraisee. This links to Vroom's (1964) suggestion that the rating awarded in the performance appraisal symbolises each employee's worth in terms of productivity. Nevertheless, findings suggest that in

this company, appraisers first 'see' the worth of the employee from social activities and then rate them accordingly.

From the data collected, the researcher concluded that the behavioural section is very often adjusted for men and women. This specific question revealed that male appraisees obtain high ratings in this section. On the other hand, only 18 percent of female respondents indicated they were satisfied with the ratings they obtained in the behavioural rating section. Only Pamela and Laura were satisfied with both the behavioural criteria allocation and the behavioural ratings.

> Researcher: 'And, how would you rate the behaviour section?'
>
> Pamela: '4'
>
> Researcher: 'Why 4 and not 5?'
>
> Pamela: 'Because my ratings were always good there, but there it's not a measurable thing.'

Although Pamela has always been rated well in the behavioural section, she reconfirms that this section is not quantifiable, which may indicate that she knows that this section can be adjusted according to appraisers' subjectivity. After analysing control factors such as age or status, it was found that these two female appraisees not only attended activities, but organised them themselves. Pamela is a young single appraisee while Laura is a mother.

> Laura: 'I organise the logistics, book the venue, collect the money, do whatever it entails to organise such activities.'

Laura is a mother of two and enjoys taking care of organising these social activities. These findings may show that participating in social activities and

organising social activities are two different roles for women in this company. Hence, social activities and the roles of Pamela and Laura will be further investigated in the next chapter. While the study found a strong difference in the way men and women appraisees can experience the behavioural section, the findings contrasted those found in the technical section.

5.22 Technical Section

The technical section includes those technical skills, necessary to engage in the core business for the production of goods and services. This section is considered to be objectively measured and results can be easily verified from quantitative indicators such as sales figures.

When male participants were asked about the technical criteria all were dissatisfied with the allocation of technical criteria, especially when they received the amount of targets expected of them at the beginning of the year. A common statement was that the targets relevant to the technical criterion were always increasing from one year to the next without any scientific or objective justification. Appraisees demonstrated their negative experiences, mainly with targets that included the sale of banking products and control of financial costs under the technical section. 10 out of 11 female appraisees interviewed agreed with this comment. They backed up their low rating with the reason that in a bank there are uncontrollable factors such as a downfall in the economy, which make it more challenging for them to achieve these criteria.

Amber: 'Because there is nothing scientific when it comes to business goals. These need to be reviewed quarterly and not just by dropping an added percentage on top of the previous year and because of this I question the whole process. If I had to rate this part of the system, I would give it 0.'

Under the technical section, it was interesting to find that appraisees experienced different levels of satisfaction between the allocation of technical criteria and the rating they were awarded for it. In the allocation of targets/criteria, male and female appraisees agreed that the added targets expected of them were unreasonable. However, when appraisees were asked about the allocation of ratings for the technical section, five female appraisees and only one male were satisfied with the technical ratings.

Katrina: 'At least there is something measurable, and you know what is expected from you. Even though each year these targets increase, at least you know that you need to open 10 accounts, for example. Here no one can contradict you on how much you have achieved. Facts are facts!'

John, an appraisee for the past seven years, was the only male appraisee satisfied with this part of the PA system. He rated it 5, because, 'ratings here are what facts say. No one can manipulate there'. Of the female appraisees, 45 percent were satisfied with the technical ratings process and agreed with John's justification. The findings may indicate that more men than women prefer behavioural criteria which are more subjective than the technical.

Three of the five female appraisees who prefer the technical section to the behavioural part added that the tangible section of the PA system gave them a

sort of satisfaction from the actual figures obtained which the behavioural section lacks. These appraisees felt proud and assured, when talking about this part of the PA system. Here, this study may contradict Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) who stated that while men might choose to compete, women 'shy away from competition'.

> Jessica: 'I rate them 4 because the mark given reflects the output accordingly. You know ahead what is expected of you, unless there are any unforeseen circumstances which you can't control during that year, such as change in economy or other personal things. That's why I don't give it 5. I wish that the PA report comprised more tangible criteria.'

Here Jessica commented how the performance appraisal system should focus more on tangible criteria, which better reflect her actual effort. Jessica's statement concurs with Hind and Baruch (1997) that women prefer to use more objective and real data within the assessment system. Investigating the performance appraisal process by segmenting the behavioural and technical section, the study reveals how men and women experience both the behavioural and the technical sections differently, as well as even the allocation of criteria and the awarding of ratings in these sections. However, the study found that the feedback section of the performance appraisal report was overall the same experience for the majority of participants.

5.23 Recommendations Section

The last phase of the performance appraisal report consists of providing written information, feedback and recommendations to individual employees on their performance. Feedback can indicate how employees can improve or develop their skills in order to advance in their career. The majority of appraisees stated they were dissatisfied with this section because they very rarely received written comments. Only two male and one female appraisee said that they were satisfied with the recommendations section.

> Otaner: 'I give it 4 because I am satisfied especially in the past eight years.'

> Andrew: 'I always received them, except two years where I had no comments. But it gets a bit repetitive, always saying the same strengths from one year to the next, thus it comes a bit stale, thus I give it 4.

Otaner and Andrew have been appraised for the past 11 years, and they stated that appraisers have given them feedback in most appraisal reports over the years. Both say that they use their free time to organise social activities. Pamela was the only female satisfied with the recommendation section. Pamela has been an appraisee for the past ten years, is single and has no family responsibilities. She likes to organise social activities regularly. The researcher found that organising social activities positively affected the ratings awarded to two female appraisees, as well as the appraisers' final recommendations. This study is therefore interested in investigating this point in greater depth after comparing the overall appraisee satisfaction responses.

5.24 Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Assessment Process

Appraisees' satisfaction levels with the whole performance appraisal process are as follows:

Table 1: Technical/Behavioural/Recommendation Sections Satisfaction.

Performance Appraisal	Female Respondents percent of female interviewees		Male Respondents percent of male interviewees	
	Positive Ratings	*Negative Ratings*	*Positive Ratings*	*Negative Ratings*
Behavioural Section				
Allocation of Criteria	36 %	63 %	90 %	10 %
Ratings Received	18 %	82 %	90 %	10 %
Technical Section				
Allocation of Criteria	9 %	91 %	0 %	100 %
Ratings Received	45 %	55 %	10 %	90 %
Recommendation Section				
Feedback Received	9 %	91 %	20 %	80 %

From Table 1, one may notice that under the behaviour section, which is considered the most important by appraisers, only one male appraisee (John) was dissatisfied. This was not because John had been awarded low ratings on his past performances. His dissatisfaction was attributed to uncertainty about

future appraisals due to subjectivity that may affect him negatively. Not all appraisees felt uncertain about the subjectivity that the behaviour section offers:

> Guido: 'When it comes to ratings, the head of department comes and tells you, "We will see at the end of the year. You know that I will compensate you."'

Here Guido was discussing the unreasonably high tangible targets allocated to him. Interestingly, Guido's statement highlights the way his appraisers reassured him at the beginning of the year. This put Guido's mind at rest because he is given the impression that if he does not reach his technical targets, the appraisers will still give him a good overall rate. Based on the earlier analysis, this could be interpreted as meaning that when Guido did not achieve his tangible targets, his appraiser adjusted his behaviour ratings in order to give a higher overall mark.

> John 'If you do not deserve a rating of 3 [out of 5], they [appraisers] will give you 3. I went through this myself. The [appraiser] told me to my face that he gave me 300 instead of 275, as I had not achieved my sales targets. But this was something that is done for everyone.'

John shared the experience of being given a low rating in the technical criteria because he had not achieved his targets, but the appraiser adjusted the behavioural section to give him an overall final rating of 300. The interesting comment here is 'But this is something that is done for everyone'. John is under the impression that everyone experiences the same ratings leniency as he did, as it is a company norm to top up ratings. However, such positive adjustments in the behavioural section were not evident in the case of women appraisees in this study.

Maria: 'Once the appraiser gave me 2 in the technical ratings. Because in order for the appraiser to award you 3, you must achieve a 3 in all the technical criteria. Appraisers do not take an average balance, so the appraiser gave me a 2 because one technical target was not achieved.'

Here Maria explains how in a particular year she had a number of sales product targets expected of her. In the end, of that year she achieved six out of seven product (measurable) targets. As a result, she had a mix of ratings of 4, 3 and 2, but the appraiser decided to give her 2 in the overall technical section and an overall rating of 3 in the behaviour section. Thus, Maria's total overall PA score was around 270 (out of 500) that year. Maria's experience was similar to Jessica's mentioned previously.

These findings show how the behavioural section (which is the 'number one' as suggested by appraiser Simon) is always adjusted. The difference between positive and negative adjustments may justify the difference in satisfaction levels between male and female employees as represented in Table 1. The study reveals that, while adjustments made to male appraisees' scores were positive, the majority of female appraisees received downward adjustments in the behavioural section when compared to the factual results achieved in the technical section. For this reason, some female participants prefer the technical section over the behavioural criteria within the PA system. This is because they claim that the technical criteria are quantifiable and ratings are based on factual information. From the behavioural section and from the recommendation section within the performance appraisal process, the researcher found that the criterion of organising team activities had a positive impact on the way appraisees, in particular women, experience the performance appraisal.

The study found that women tend to be less satisfied with the social activity-assessment criterion. The researcher therefore asks whether this lack of satisfaction is related to non-attendance, as some interviewees declared, or is it related to the way appraisers perceive or 'see' women at the social activities.

5.30 Perceiving is Believing

When the workplace environment is ambiguous, social influence is more likely to effect the organisation (Rice and Aydin, 1991). Although some appraisees stated that non-participation in social activities brings low ratings in the teamwork criterion, from the data collected, it became immediately clear that the majority of appraisees find the teamwork criterion in the performance appraisal system very ambiguous.

> Guido: 'In behaviour there are things like team spirit. How can they [appraisers] calculate that?'

Guido admits that 'team spirit' is subjective, and he does not know how he is assessed on this specific criterion by his appraisers.

> Nicole: 'Men and women who cannot go to activities are shown in a bad light. Social activities are not strictly part of the criteria in black and white, but are rated automatically in the behaviour section, because your image is built during the activities that are organised regularly after work. […] Teamwork, refers to how active a person is in social activities outside work.

Nicole, an appraisee for eleven years and a mother of one, explained that even though social activities are not mentioned in her performance appraisal report, appraisers perceive absent appraisees in a 'bad light'. The fact that Guido does not know how the teamwork criterion is measured, and that Nicole does not have the standards written on her report, this could indicate that appraisers lack clarity in order to practise their subjectivity. Acker (1990) states that ambiguity may be intentional in order to enforce gender disparity. Subsequently, the researcher is interested in investigating how ambiguity within the PA can relate to the low level of satisfaction female appraisees feel with the assessment system.

> John: 'There are people who, because of family responsibilities, find it difficult to attend social activities and this issue exists within the company. If a person never attended then she has an issue. But I think if you never come it will impact negatively on you. I always go, I do not have any problem, but I am aware that after-hours social activities have an effect [in the PA system]. In fact, this issue comes up frequently and is part of the assessment that you as a team member, need to give your share.'

John, a single and the youngest of the participants, highlights various important points. First, he reaffirms the way appraisees are classified as good or bad performers in the assessment ratings according to their participation in organised activities. Interestingly, he also explains how social activities and family responsibilities contrast with one another. John's statement that 'family responsibilities […] I do not have any problem' gives the impression that having family responsibilities can make it challenging to meet the social activities.

Andrew: 'There are some with family responsibilities who cannot attend social activities.'

Employees who have family responsibilities seem to be considered low performers. Andrew's statement indicates that it is difficult for employees with family responsibilities to participate in social activities, so they are awarded low ratings. In view of this, even the 'ideal worker' within gendered organisations theory (Acker, 1990) views family responsibilities as a problem for organisational commitment. Andrew continues:

'In an egoistic way, it never affected me negatively, so it is not something that affected me, so I never say that teambuilding criteria should be eliminated from the PA.'

Andrew states that although he is a father of two kids, his PA ratings for social activities were never low. Knowing that not everyone can attend, he still wants the teambuilding criterion to remain in the PA report.

Joe: There are people who do not come to any because of family. I do not attend these activities regularly but then the manager should know this and not penalise me on that, but I don't know. I have never been given a bad mark for this criterion. But then you can't not introduce them [social activities in PA criteria] because of one person.'

Joe an appraisee for the past eleven years confirmed that those who are not participative in activities are most likely those with family responsibilities. Joe is a father of two kids, and states that he does not always attend such activities. However, he was never awarded low ratings in the social activities' section. He says that there are other employees who do not attend these activities regularly.

In his case he does not have problems attending because his wife who take care of his kids. Joe like Andrew knows that not everyone can achieve this criterion, but he still wants it as an assessment standard.

From the findings, two important points emerge. First the study may indicate that family responsibilities seem to negatively affect women's performance ratings. Men whose wives take care of the children have restrictions in attending thus they receive high ratings in their performance appraisal. A second important finding relates to the fact that although some female appraisees attend social activities, they are still rated low in the behavioural section.

> Emma: 'Once I had an experience. We were three relationship officers; the other two had good marks and I got a low mark. I do not talk that much. The other two are male both full time and do no overtime, we all go to activities but they are more social than me in these activities.'

Although Emma is a mother, she attends activities regularly. However, in one particular year she had the opportunity to notice the ratings difference (because appraisees do not divulge information about their ratings between colleagues as per their appraisers' instructions) between her mark and those of her two male colleagues in which her rating was the lowest. The only difference that she could attribute this low mark to was the concept of 'being more social' during team activities.

Social, social activities and participation in these activities seem to have an important role in the performance appraisal process. However, these themes may have different consequences for female and male appraisees. Social activities as assessment criterion is not always written or specified in the PA

reports. The lack of clarity within the teamwork criterion may explain how the disparity between attendance of activities and ratings received continues. The study therefore decided to explore which factors appraisers value highly during the social activities besides the attendance in order to understand the differences between men's and women's ratings.

Conclusion

This aim of this chapter was to find out which criterion was the most highly valued within the company under study. Although technical and behavioural criteria are used, the most important section in the PA report is the behavioural section. Besides an element of subjectivity in this section, the informants recounted how their overall final rating was adjusted in the behaviour section, rendering the technical targets achieved irrelevant.

The popular concept of teamwork was found to be the champion criterion valued by appraisers. When analysing what 'teamwork' meant for the company, it emerged that, this criterion is assessed according to participation in teamwork activities, referred to as 'social activities', which are attended after working hours. Analysing the satisfaction level of the appraisees, it became evident that there was a sharp difference between men and women in the way they experience PA ratings in the behavioural section. Consequently, it was important to investigate whether differences between male and female satisfaction were attributed to attendance at such activities. The findings show the social activities assessment criterion involves an element of subjectivity. Family responsibilities emerged as

an element that might clash with social activities organised after working hours. The majority of women, even those with no family responsibilities, were found to be negatively affected within the teamwork criterion rating despite attending such events.

The study also found that even when women attend social activities, they are rated low. This may indicate that the difference between men and women's satisfaction in PA ratings is not due to women's lack of commitment. One female appraisee justified her low rating by saying that she was not 'so social' at events. Here, the study detected that gender differences which affect women negatively are brought through the way appraisees participate in events - men seem to be more sociable than their female colleagues. The next chapter aims to understand the meaning of sociability in Malta in order to explain the difference between male and female ratings in the behavioural section.

Chapter Six

Segregating through Sociability

Introduction

When male and female interviewees were asked about their experience of assessment ratings, their responses varied significantly. The study findings indicate substantial differences between men and women's experience in the ratings system. This divergence relates to the way male appraisees tend to be more satisfied with the ratings awarded to them for the team-work criterion than the majority of female appraisees. Following this response, the researcher investigated how appraisers assess the team-work criterion. The previous chapter analysed how this criterion is measured according to participation in social activities. By exploring the differences between the way men and women appraisees experience ratings, this chapter focuses on the meaning of 'sociability' in Malta in order to understand whether social activities have any local gender connotations. In this way, this chapter shall attempt to answer the last two research questions: 'Are there any exclusionary practices applied within the performance appraisal process which maintain gender disparity?' and; How do appraisees react to the way the performance appraisal is processed?

This chapter will compare the roles of women and men during formal social activities to explain the gender difference in ratings. This shall also enable the study to discover how assessors use social activities to distinguish high

performers from low performers. Appraisees' reactions are then analysed to understand how the performance appraisal system may shape their behaviour.

6.10 Sociability in Malta

As part of an anthropological study conducted in Malta, Mitchell (2002) found that the local context is highly notable for sociability. This may justify the importance ascribed to social activities as part of the assessment process within local organisations. But the previous chapter revealed that men and women experience performance appraisal ratings differently. Male and female appraisees experience the way they are assessed on social activities differently. According to Levy and Williams (2004), social variables may play a role in determining the motivation of appraisers in assessing a particular criterion within the performance appraisal system. Hence, the study is interested in understanding whether local appraisers are influenced by the meaning connected of sociability, and in how this meaning impacts on the assessment of each appraisee.

Brandes (1980) shows how sociability is a symbolic ritual which produces considerable insight into Mediterranean communities. This symbolic ritual consists of friendships which yield to domination and subordination realities in society. These realities, according to Driessen (1983), are linked to daily sociability that widens the ideal and actual sexual division of space and labour.

Otaner: 'Three times a week we [Otaner and his male confirming appraiser] go out together after working hours to watch a football match and have a good laugh together without mentioning work.'

Otaner, an appraisee for the past 11 years, describes how the relationship he has with his appraisers goes beyond work. He states that he sometimes organises social activities with his appraisers at which they can have fun together, watching and discussing football games. According to Driessen (1983), sports such as football which serve as an excuse for an outing, also contribute to public male sociability in Mediterranean societies. When Otaner was discussing his performance appraisal experience, he further linked such outings to the ratings awarded by his appraiser:

'PA ratings were always awarded in the right way and I was happy. Sometimes I was also awarded 5 marks [5 out of 5] in the behaviour criteria.

Researcher: 'Who was the appraiser?'

Otaner: 'The appraiser was one of the appraisers, we discussed football together. Hahahaha and we used to go for dinner as a male group'

Here Otaner describes how he was 'awarded in the right way'. When the researcher asked which appraiser it was who gave him high marks, Otaner replied that it was a male appraiser he used to socialise with about football sports. Otaner appears to endorse Nye's (1993) claim that socialisation creates friendships that support social integration in which an individual may benefit from career advances. He explains that 'the right way' is to compensate sociability with

high ratings. However, Otaner's statement may indicate that sociability may excludes other people who may not form part of the same particular social group.

> Andrew: 'Although we talk openly about our differences yes, there is a personal influence that we can't do anything about, which I can't deny. This was related to a hobby, which I see in one way and he [CA] sees in another way. It was a hot potato, a hot argument which was raised frequently. When I try to see what has gone so wrong, I can't find anything else, because I always worked that way and it was effective, so 100 percent it was that issue.'

Andrew is an active green ranger in his free time. He comments how, as an appraisee, he had always been rated very well in the behaviour section except for two consecutive years. During this period Andrew's confirming appraiser (CA) was an active animal hunter. Andrew claims that they used to discuss this issue during social activities. He describes how the performance appraisal ratings under this particular CA were the lowest in 11 years. He cannot attribute this difference to a change in performance, which he says was the same as in previous years.

Andrew's statement may show that appraisees must have similar interests to their appraiser in order to be awarded high ratings. Andrew says that, although he had performed similarly to other years, his confirming appraiser rated him low in the behavioural section. When he considers the justification for this low rating, the only reason he can find is related to the hobby he had that was in opposition to the interests of his CA. Mitchell (2002:84) explains how those who enjoy the same interests show solidarity between one another. He refers to this as

'reciprocal sociality', which relates to the exchange of male reputation by which male allegiances of small but intimate groups '*klikkek*' are constituted by their members with similar interests. The study may indicate that these intimate cliques are formed around specific characteristics.

In the above statement, Otaner also mentions 'a good laugh' during the social activities organised. He is referring to sharing jokes and stories during their outings. Pitt-Rivers (1977) states that socialisation includes men who have 'grazzia'. These men are those who can contribute a warm cherished ambiance quality. The meaning for the male 'grazzia' – *likes* – is the power to entertain and provoke laughter. This element of entertaining within the working environment was also mentioned during two particular interviews.

> Michael: 'Grazzja [liking] is a complete package: friends, character. Because they [CA] are assessing your behaviour with your colleagues and in the workplace. If I stand up from my work station and tell a joke and they [colleagues] laugh, they say "how sweet of him". But if I [CA] pass from the corridor and you are always head into the ground and we are two officers with the same grade, perhaps I will take those 5 marks more than you do'.

Michael describes how his entertaining character makes the working environment better. He justifies the extra points awarded to him by his appraisers by the fact that he is making a difference in the company with his jokes. Men who are sociable, witty and entertaining are considered to be in a homosocial group where metaphors, word play and jokes are highly praised within cliques (Mitchell, 2002). When analysing the entertaining character within the assessment

practice, the study found that having this kind of character qualifies employees as high performers within the PA system.

> Guido: 'My character is a bit entertaining. The feedback that I receive from my executive head is "it would be nice to have four more like you".'

Guido's statement confirms how entertainers are highly valued within the appraisers' group. One particular appraiser, who is a male executive head, declared to Guido that it would be ideal to have more employees with these entertaining characteristics. From Guido's and Michael's statements, the study shows how employees occupying management roles may prefer employees who have entertaining characteristics and similar interests to them. Being sociable and making witty and humorous conversation, is seen as 'sufficiently masculine' (Mitchell, 2002:84). This may indicate that appraisers distinguish high performers from low on masculine attributes performed during social activities.

> Michael: 'Socialising and talking about common interests affects the PA system. If you are a manager's friend this has an influence for sure. It helps even when you talk with your manager about your personal things, because you may be justified for the action you have taken.'

Michael mentions both sociability and having interests in common as helping to build a strong relationship between appraiser and appraisee which supports him with high ratings and explains 'reciprocal sociality' dynamics referred by Mitchell (2002). Michael is discussing how a personal circumstance prevented him from achieving his technical targets. In this case, his appraiser who had similar interests and used to socialise with him after working hours, awarded Michael the highest ratings for the behavioural section. When adding the high behavioural

section ratings to the low ratings achieved in Michael's tangible targets, his overall ratings were still on the high side for Michael. This ratings leniency also occurred in John's case (mentioned in Chapter Five), where he had a positive adjustment when he did not achieve his technical targets. However, the previous chapter found no positive adjustments when women failed to achieve their technical targets.

After analysing the positive adjustments in the behavioural section, the study found that positive ratings leniency is found more in the cases of appraisees who have an entertaining character and similar interests and lifestyle to their CA. Katrina, an appraisee for the past 11 years, explained how these positive adjustments may be linked to cliques, which are formed around similar lifestyles.

> Katrina: 'For example, appraisers who do not have kids or family responsibilities, do not want to hear about these issues and this leads to "klikkek" forming.'

Katrina refers to "klikkek" as cliques formed within social activities. She explains how cliques attract people with similar lifestyles to those of the appraisers – who are reciprocated by high ratings. Appraisees need to have similar lifestyles to their CA, besides attending social activities, in order to achieve high ratings within the performance appraisal system. When Mitchell (2002) refers to the small and intimate groups which reciprocate sociality, he explains how male reputations in particular are exchanged within these sociability events. One may ask how women can benefit from such sociability exchanges especially within the performance appraisal system.

Sociability, a skill which is considered highly in Malta, was found to be an important assessment criterion for the organisation understudy. The study also found that appraisers prefer appraisees who are entertaining and have similar interests to them. These characteristics enable cliques to form which are shaped by hegemonic masculinity, as suggested by Mitchell (2002). Neither female nor male participant mentioned any female entertaining character within social activities or working environment. Furthermore Otaner's statement specifically referred to men within these social activities groups. This raises a question in relation to how women are considered within these social activities. Hence, one may ask whether social activities are important for the appraisers because it is an opportunity to get to know their appraisees better, as stated by some confirming appraisers in the previous chapter, or to enforce a masculine domination ritual as per Driessen's view (1983). To answer these interrogations, this chapter will examine what happens during these social activities in order to understand the role of women within them.

6.20 Socialising or Classifying

The previous chapter revealed how, in contrast to men, 82 percent of female interviewees were not happy with behavioural ratings received. To explore the way that sociability may be a ritual enforcing an identity of masculinity, the researcher decided to analyse male and female appraisees' experiences within these team activities in greater depth.

Michael: 'I encourage the bank to increase such social activities. If we eat out as part of a bank activity, I do not like to sit beside my usual colleagues. I prefer that activity to be a standing up event, so I can mingle. That is how you can really get to know your appraisees.'

Michael, an appraisee, has always been rated positively in the behavioural section. Although he admitted that there are people who cannot attend, he kept on saying that social activities need to be increased. He also described how these activities should be organised as standing up events to encourage more talking among employees and to managers. He continues by stating:

'Appraisees are afraid of him [the manager] or they are not comfortable to talk to him [CA]. I hate this.'

For Michael, it is not enough for appraisees to attend social activities in order to get a good performance rating. He emphasises appraisees' responsibility to talk to their confirming appraisers, reconfirming the importance of the social and entertainment element in the social activities organised. This may help us understand Emma's previous statement better, when she stated that because she is not so 'social'[4] during team activities, her PA rating had been lower than she had been expecting (based on the technical targets achieved that particular year, and compared to the performance of her two other colleagues). The importance of socialising during these activities was also verified by Simon, a direct appraiser. He claimed that the environment outside work is an ideal place for an appraiser to know their employees. Chatting and joking helps support appraisers when assessing their peers even though appraisers are seldom at the

---

[4] Here Emma refers to the fact that she is shy and not an entertaining person like others.

department, as declared by Josette a direct appraiser. This may confirm Kacmar et al. (2003)'s study that those appraisees who communicate with their supervisors are more likely to receive the highest performance ratings.

However, from the interviews and previous statements quoted, the researcher found that appraisees need to be selective in what they discuss during social activities. Andrew declared that when he used to discuss his hobby with his confirming appraiser during social activities, his ratings were very low, which he attributed to his contrasting interests with those of his CA. A different lifestyle may have a negative effect on appraisees' ratings. Having found that the majority of interviewed female appraises were dissatisfied with the behaviour section, the researcher was interested in investigating whether there is any relation between the level of dissatisfaction with the assessment process and women's lifestyle or behaviour during the social activities.

6.21 Women's Attitude during Social Activities

Even though the majority of female appraisees declared that they attend social activities organised after work hours, only 18 percent were happy with their rating in the behavioural section. It was the perception of the participating male appraisees that female employees were regularly absent from social activities. They claimed women do not attend these activities because of their personal and family commitments, especially if a mother has no one to mind her children.

> Andrew: 'There are some employees who, because of their family responsibilities cannot attend social activities.'

Andre: 'There are some targets that can't be achieved because of the appraisee's role in society as a mummy [mother].'

Both Andrew and Andre, appraisees for the past 11 years, state that family responsibility is the reason why this criterion is not achieved by some employees. John, another appraisee, specifically stated that family responsibility is considered a problem within the company. The two statements; 'role in society as a mother' and 'family responsibility is considered a problem in the company' are both important quotes that require further investigation in the light of social activities and sociability. This is especially important when we consider that male appraisees used female pronoun (during the interviews) when stating that some appraisees do not attend social activities. Thanks to the first bio questions asked during the interview, the researcher knew that Andre was a father of a six year-old boy, hence she further probed him:

Researcher: 'You are a working dad. Is that the same thing?

Andre: 'No, because I have my wife who takes care of my son. I am like a bachelor. But sometimes I have to take leave for my kid's errands.

Researcher: 'Is this reflected in your PA?'

Andre: 'No, because it is part of my leave entitlement. But, the PA affects women more.'

Here, Andre distinguishes between the role of father and mother, indicating that men and women are considered differently within the performance appraisal system, in particular under the social activity assessment criterion. Despite women and men working in a similar role and having the same criteria, they are perceived differently due to their roles of 'mother' and 'father' in society. Mothers

who work in organisations face difficulties from the fact of motherhood (Harkness and Waldfogel, 2003). Difficulties are entrenched in stereotypical thinking in which mothers are caught between the prescriptive image of the ideal mother and that of the ideal worker - referred to as the 'maternal wall' (Williams, 2004:17). The prescribed image of motherhood may explain the way male appraisees frequently perceive women as being absent from social activities (as we will see) because women have family responsibilities which they have to take care of after working hours. In addition, Mitchell (2002) identified sociability and reciprocal sociability as two criteria on which the Maltese hegemonic male identity is based. According to Connell (2005) hegemonic masculinity is a practice that legitimises men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women due to their associated social roles and gender order.

Even when women work full time and attend to social activities, the same as their male colleagues, men may perceive women as absent, since they assume that women's primary role in society is to take care of the family. This may be explained by the way men may think that women who have the role of 'mother' do not need to attend social activities. Men who know about the benefits that sociability may bring attendees may assume that women do not need high ratings because their primary responsibility is to focus on their family and not their professional careers. This reasoning is confirmed by some male appraisees, including Andre and Michael, who mention that there are employees (always using feminine pronouns) who have family responsibilities which restrict them from attending social activities. After the findings concerning how male appraisees consider women at social activities, the study will continue to analyse how appraisers perceive the role of women in these activities.

To return to Katrina's statement, she says that certain conversations during social activities are not welcome. Her statement reveals the concept of cliques in social activities. The dynamics of these cliques are formed on conversations related to lifestyle that appraisees and appraisers have in common. Andrew mentioned his opposition with his appraiser, when he was awarded low ratings. Katrina recounts talking about her family with her appraisers; the latter were not interested in family-related conversations, hence she had to shift topic. When analysing the data, it was found that appraiser interviews verified appraisees' information about how the family concept clashes with the performance appraisal system. As stated above by John, an appraisee, the company sees the concept of family as a problem like in UK organisations. Cahusac and Kanji (2014) show how professional women lie about having children in order not to identify themselves as part of a subordinate category within the organisation.

> Stephen: 'If in terms of flexibility and teamwork I can never find you [when I need you] so I can't reward you, if I never find you. But you may tell me, 'I have a family'. Heck, I am very sorry, I ask you for flexibility because then it is not fair on a person who has a hobby and he is always there.'

Stephen, a confirming appraiser for the past four years, mentions flexibility with teamwork concept. However, the researcher decided to continue pursuing only the teamwork criterion and consider flexibility for future analysis. Stephen explains how someone with a family may diverge from the company's ongoing demand. This is because when the company demands employees' extra time for socialising, those with family responsibilities are very often absent according to Stephen. Joseph (DA) who states that for him a high performer is 'someone who organises after-work activities in his own time', confirms Stephen's view. This is

in line with Perron (2009)'s claim that managers consider only those who have time after working hours and are there for the company to be high performers. Stephen's claim may explain why the concept of family is seen as a problem in the organisation.

According to Stephen's statement, family responsibility and having a hobby are both considered to be part of an appraisee's lifestyle. Thus, whenever appraisees fail to attend social activities for family reasons, it is right to rate them low. Stephen explains that if he rates those absent from social activities for family reasons highly, this would be discriminatory against those who have a hobby. However, Stephen's statement reveals an important concept that contradicts some findings of this study. Although for him family responsibility is considered a hobby, some appraisees declared that they cannot discuss family-related issues during social activities as one could any other hobby. Taking into account Andrew's experience of his hobby which conflicted with his appraiser's interests, Stephen's statement could imply that family-related topics contrast with appraisers' own lifestyles. This could be related to the fact that the majority of confirming appraisers are men who, according to the principles of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), need to keep domestic responsibilities separate from their masculine image.

Stephen's statement also indicates that having family responsibilities may diverge from company demands because this means employees are not available after working-hours. However, the majority of female appraisees interviewed declared that they regularly attend activities. Additionally, Joe an appraisee declared that he does not attend regularly to social activities, but he was always rated high in the behavioural section. This suggests that women may

be assessed on the way appraisers perceive them as a different category of worker which is considered less committed to the organisation. According to Benschop and Miehuizen (2002), male employees in banks are generally seen as organisational insiders, whereas women are often considered organisational outsiders.

The sociability assessment criterion may serve as a formal ritual which produces a male identity within the organisation, as suggested by Driessen, (1983). When female attend social activities and they discuss family issues, this space may be narrowed and the dividing line between masculine and feminine tends to get blurred. In line with gendered organisations theory (Acker, 2006), men and women are considered as two different categories, where men are viewed as 'ideal workers'. Men who are perceived to have less family distractions can commit more towards organisations than, women can. Hence male appraisers try to distinguish themselves through the way they discuss life-styles, excluding family issues in order to maintain their unencumbered image (Acker, 1990) and dominant identity (Connell, 2005). So, the researcher needs to further understand the role of women within social activities and how women can get high ratings for this criterion.

6.22 Women's Ideal Behaviour at Social Activities

The only 2 out of 11 female appraisees who expressed satisfaction in their behavioural section ratings were Pamela, a young, single appraisee, and Laura,

a mother of two. They have been appraised by the company for ten years, and attend social activities regularly after work.

> Laura: 'As a criterion, I have "*to get involved in teamwork activities, enhance understanding of external department awareness services.*". Even if I did not have these criteria, would still join in. I organise the location, collect the money, do whatever is needed to organise such social activities.'

During the interview, Laura showed her performance appraisal report to the researcher, indicating some criteria allocated under the behavioural section. Laura is a mother and has a close relative who can mind her children when attending social activities. Not only does she attend regularly, but she also organises activities and gets involved in tasks such as booking locations, choosing activities and collecting the money to organise such events. In fact, she continued by saying 'I dedicate myself to these outings', as though taking care of these events were part of her primary responsibilities.

> Pamela: 'At least I have to participate in three activities. For me it's a bonus, because I always go. So hahaha.'

While Pamela was explaining some of her measurable targets by the amount of social activities she needed to attend, she also stated enthusiastically that she organises social activities. She prepares events and ensures that everything is well-organised during these activities. Within the same statement, she stated that she had this specific criterion in her report, making her targets easier to achieve. This is because apart from attending social events, she likes to organise them.

At this point, it is essential to discuss this gap between the satisfied and dissatisfied female appraisees. For Pamela and Laura, the social activities criterion is a 'bonus' in their PA system while for Julia, Amber and the other female appraisees this criterion is not fair. The study found that the difference between satisfied and dissatisfied female appraisees under the behavioural section was grounded in the fact that both Pamela and Laura organise social events as well as attend them.

Women and men are attributed different social roles according to social role theory (Eagly, 1997). Women are associated with motherhood and caring traits as part of their gender identity. According to social role theory women should behave in the same way as their gender group, in which they are considered to be facilitative. Hence besides attending these activities, women appraisees should organise and take care of social activities. This may be one of the reason why only women who organised events were rated highly. Social role theory argues that beliefs that appraisers hold about the sexes are derived from observing the role performance of gender. Based on social role theory, female appraisees who do not organise work events may be perceived as lacking in the caring responsibility attributed to them, thus they are considered non- performers.

On the other hand, men need to socialise after work hours according to Driessen (1983). According to social role theory, men, who are considered the main breadwinners in Malta, have an obligation to maintain their indispensable income for the family. Those who are awarded high ratings may benefit from an income increase and greater opportunities for career advances in the company. As part of the male ritual, sociability can bring benefits for men in relation to high ratings,

especially) those appraisees who belong to the same group or clique (Mitchell, 2002), who have similar interests and lifestyle.

The study found that appraisers use double standards framed using the social role model when assessing their peers on the highly valued criterion. According to Bourdieu (1986), the significance of social activities can be seen as a system of classified and classifying practices. The way social activities function within this organisation may indicate an implicit behaviour to maintain an already established gender hierarchy. Appraisees may attend the number of social activities as necessary in order to achieve high rankings in the teamwork section. However, it seems appraisers assess women and men's performance differently, employing different standards within the performance appraisal process. Women who try to perform similarly to their male colleagues are classified as non-performers according to their social gender role.

When women organise social activities, they are extending their domestic responsibilities to social events. While these appraisees are rated highly because they are behaving according to their expected sex category, they are also reproducing gender disparity. According to hegemonic masculinity, domestic responsibility affirms women's subordinate status. Those women taking care of social events are thus perceived as a different category of employee during social activities who are unable to separate work from home. This may indicate that appraisers award high ratings to these women because they are also reinforcing gender disparity.

Sociability as a classifying practice (Bourdieu, 1986) is supported by the use of double standards when assessing men and women in this company. Women and

men are attributed different social roles according to social role theory (Eagly, 1997). Social role theory argues that beliefs that appraisers hold about the sexes are derived from observing role performance of gender. Based on social role theory, female appraisees who are not facilitative and do not organise work events may be perceived as lacking in the caring responsibility attributed to them, thus they are considered non- performers. The chapter will therefore continue by investigating how these classifications are framed by the appraisers' beliefs.

6.30 Gendered Assessment Criterion

According to Acker (2006), the performance appraisal process may contain hidden gendered practices that produce the gender of division in organisations. This study investigated the three main stages of the performance appraisal system. It revealed that the most highly valued criterion within the assessment practice is assessed through social activities. Although both men and women have the same criterion within their reports, the study found a difference in the way women and men experience the assessing standard. This difference creates a gender ratings gap. The study is now interested in understanding how appraisers may acquire gendered norms that influence the way the assessment practice enforces the gender division and how appraisers may continue enforcing gendering.

6.31 Through Habitus

In Malta, sociability is a masculine ritual which is enforced by men who attend social events in the public domain (Mitchell, 2002). Female appraisees are perceived as absent from social activities organised within work departments and branches at the bank. The perception of absent women may indicate that gender remains as a cultural division of labour in the minds of appraisers. Bourdieu (1990) explains the gender division through habitus, which becomes embedded and guides appraisers in the way they assess appraisees. Michael reveals how important company management considers social activities within the company.

> Michael: 'Once I had a new manager and at the end of the year he commented in my report that I was not a good team player. Overall he gave me a good rating 395 [out of 500], but I still did not like that comment, because if you wish to apply for the post of head in the future, a lack of team spirit means that they [HR] might think that I am not a good performer in the company.'

Michael an appraisee for the past 11 years, explains that when he had a negative remark regarding teamwork, he did not accept it because it would have negative consequences for his future progression. This means that social activities (the assessing standard for the teamwork criterion) are not only important for getting to know colleagues, but also for career progression. According to Bourdieu's habitus concept, appraisers may frame their habitus around the perception that sociability is a male ritual, whereby appraisers tend to believe that men can socialise after work, and this is reciprocated by high ratings in their PA report.

The study found that appraisers assess their appraisees through double standards attributed to traditional associations about male and female characteristics, as suggested by the social role model (Eagly, 1997). Female and male appraisees should conform to the social gender role built on the breadwinner model and motherhood traits during social activities. Only those women who organise and take care of activities are awarded high ratings in their behavioural sections. On the other hand, male appraisees need only to socialise after work to get high ratings in their performance appraisal reports.

This may indicate that appraisers prefer social activities as the most important assessing criterion within the performance appraisal, because through their habitus, they know that sociability is a male custom that reinforce male domination through practice and classification. Banyard (2010) claims that women who try to behave like their male colleagues are viewed negatively. In the study, women who try to socialise like their male colleagues are awarded low ratings, because they are not observing their gender social role. On the other hand, appraisers award high ratings to those women who carry their caring traits into social activities. By extending their caring traits, women are reproducing the social gender gap and reinforcing their subordinated position even in social activities. Through their gendered habitus, appraisers are rewarding these female appraisees highly, because the latter are supporting hegemonic masculinity and the gender division.

The gendered habitus was further evidenced when the researcher analysed how appraisers use the normal distribution of ratings system.

Katrina: 'On a very recent occasion, I was given very low marks, that is 3 [ratings from 1-5]. For me, it was low because I was expecting a better mark considering that all the tangible goals were above 3. When I asked for an explanation, they [the appraisers] told me that they couldn't give me a better mark because the HR department says that in that particular department, for example, three people must achieve over 360, two people over 380 and one over 400. So, if you deserve that mark, you can't have it, because it is already allocated to someone else.'

Katrina, an appraisee for the past 11 years, is describing usage of a scientific method referred to as the normal distribution curve for distributing ratings. Appraisers assume an implicit method that says that appraisees follow a statistically normal distribution which includes few high and low ratings, while the majority of appraisees are awarded average ratings. Appraisers sort their appraisees' performance along the curve, ranging from high to low ratings. Katrina explains that although she achieved high ratings in her objective or tangible goals, the overall final mark was lower than those of the tangible marks because her expected rate had been awarded to someone else in the department. From her interview, Katrina stated that she regularly attends social activities but does not organise such activities. She falls within the average range within the distribution curve because she achieved her tangible targets, but she does not behave according to her social role. So Katrina is not awarded high ratings in the behavioural section and cannot be considered a high performer. The study could not confirm the use of the distribution curve for PA ratings with the HR department; however, a direct appraiser mentioned this rating system.

Joseph: 'During the year, they [HR] send us emails to ask us [the appraisers] how we are going to distribute the ratings to our appraisees according to the average distribution curve.'

Here Joseph, a DA for the past 11 years, indicates how the company used to instruct appraisers to award ratings according to the average distribution curve. He states that the company has stopped using this system. However, various appraisees stated that appraisers still substantiate ratings presented with this method. This system justifies Guido's statement below.

Guido: 'Before the head [confirming appraiser] rates employees, he already knows how much Peter or John is entitled to in ratings at the end of the year. He tells you "I see you as a mark of 380 and not more". What you have achieved in your PA criteria is irrelevant.'

Guido reconfirms the concept of 'seeing', which was mentioned in the previous chapter by Stephen one of the CAs interviewed. Stephen said that although it is difficult to measure behavioural criteria, he can observe appraisees' behaviour through their attitude to work. The study found that CAs are rarely in the work office, but appraisers 'see' whether their appraisees behave according to their social gender role during social activities and award them accordingly. Guido's statement shows how, without analysing or seeing any factual figures obtained by appraisees, appraisers sort their appraisees into pre-determined performance categories along the distribution curve (Guralnik et al., 2004). Following the way appraisers perceive men and women as two different categories within the social activitis, the study shows how the pre-determined categories are based on the way males and females should behave during activities after work hours, which

guides the appraisers in distinguishing between high and low performers. When appraisers ignore the tangible results achieved by appraisees, the study can confirm that appraisers categorise appraisees through their gendered habitus and sort them accordingly along the normal distribution curve. Bourdieu (1986) claims that gender beliefs are externalised into actions that may lead to reproduction of the gender structure. The chapter will continue to analyse the way gendered habitus can be reinforced through time.

6.32 Exclusionary Male Strategies

Mitchell (2002) observes that men have the responsibility to strike a balance between domestic and social activity responsibilities in Malta, which is not evident for women. Whenever men socialise outside work, they are reproducing hegemonic gender models. The inclusion of women in social activities may produce a contradictory image in structuring male sociability (Driessen, 1983). Bourdieu (1986) has pointed out that the process of gender reproduction in modern society is based on exclusion and class separation. Katrina highlighted that 'socialising is only allowed after working hours' when it is difficult to attend especially for those who have family responsibilities. Under the local breadwinner model, family responsibility is perceived to belong to women (NCPE, 2011). The study found that when interviewees were mentioning employees who are absent from these social activities, they referred to the female category, justifying their absence by their role as 'mummy' (mothers). Attending social activities after working hours can be seen as equivalent to spending long hours at work. As

suggested by Simpson (1998), long hours at work are a way to keep women from being perceived as committed workers. Organising social activities outside of working hours may be a way to exclude the participation of women from social activities and restrict in them from achieving high ratings in their performance appraisal report. However, Jane Doe further pointed out that:

'There are certain departments which are allowed to do teambuilding during office hours. We got emails saying "we are not going to be in the office for two days, in case you need to contact us you can reach us on these numbers". So it is good for some departments to go for teambuilding during office hours.'

The decision to organise social activities after working hours may be intentional to keep women from achieving their targets in the performance appraisal. This view is reinforced when we consider the importance of this criterion within the assessment system. Appraisees such as Andrew and Andre know that not everyone can attend such events. However, they encourage and protect the social activities criterion.

Joe: 'But you can't not include them [social activities in PA criteria] because of one person.'

Joe states that this particular criterion should continue to form part of the assessment. By contrast, some female appraisees mentioned that social activities are unfair. Joe, Andre, Guido and other male appraisees who have no issue with this criterion declared that they attend activities regularly and they have always been rated satisfactory in this area. This may indicate that male appraisees promote social activities because they know that these events are

part of a male ritual which brings them high ratings. Excluding women from these activities means that women are automatically awarded low ratings. Considering the application of the normal distribution curve, men will have more chances to get the highest ratings, when excluding women from achieving this important criterion. This strategy can reinforce the male status as the high performer within the organisation.

Even when women attend social activities, they are excluded from the intimate groups formed during these events. Katrina highlighted how during social activities appraisers want to chat and socialise with their appraisees who have common hobbies, but excluding family matters. The majority of women in Malta spend most of their leisure time at home doing family errands, while the average male spends most of his leisure time after working hours either playing sports or another type of hobby (European Commission, 2008). Considering that women may not have any hobbies, it is more difficult for women to be considered a member of the appraisers' cliques. Through reciprocal sociality, men will have a higher likelihood of being awarded high ratings as they may enjoy the same interests as their appraisers considering that the latter are mostly men.

Referring to the cliques formed through social events, another important practice of exclusion was revealed by the study.

> Michael: 'A particular branch manager used to emphasise that these things [informal outings with appraisers] are not allowed. If this goes on now I do not know about it. It could do. But he [the appraiser] emphasised. "Now if you want to go out with Frans [fictitious name] don't say it". But this things happen and I think it affects the 5 or 10 marks in the PA system.'

Here Michael raises another concept of sociability. He declares that within work branches some appraisees organise social activities informally with appraisers. These informal activities are amongst cliques that even Katrina indirectly mentioned when she discussed how she had to shift her conversation from family issues. Like Otaner's previous statement, Michael describes how, within the departments or branches, informal events including small group of appraisees very often form of male members who have similar interests as appraisers. According to Michael, the confirming appraisers know about these activities, and instruct organisers and participants to keep them secret.

The study indicates that, by keeping these activities informal, organisers apply silence and informality to exclude those employees who do not conform to the similar lifestyle or characteristics of cliques. The study did not find any women participating in or organising these informal social activities. Neither did the male appraisees who mentioned these informal activities reveal any female presence during these events. Men may exclude women by not inviting them to join their informal group after work because they know that these informal activities may result in mutual obligations and loyalty that may help them progress in their career (Acker, 1990). Putnam (2000) suggests that such informal contacts are crucial for maintaining social networks. As Arthur et al. (2011) suggest, informal activities may also provide social capital benefits. In this case, informal events can bring high ratings which result also in career progression to group members.

Michael's statement also explains how appraisers instruct the organisers of these events to keep such informal outings secret if they want to continue doing them. This indicates that appraisers are aware of the influence that these outings may have on the appraisees' performance ratings. No informal outings mentioned or

organised by female appraisees or female appraisers were found in the study, which the researcher could investigate in more depth.

However, the role of silence during the appraisal emerged prevalently in other interviews as well. Without knowing others' ratings, appraisees cannot compare the relation between effort and reward in comparison to other appraisees.

> Amber: 'Once I discovered that one of my colleagues, who does the same work as I do, was rated better than me. I was going to accept my rate, but when talking to this colleague, he told me that he had a much better rate than I was awarded. I went to my appraiser for an explanation as I was doing the same work as him but I was worse in the sense that he had an assistant while I was doing the same amount of work alone, so doing a double job compared with him. When the appraiser became aware that we, as appraisees, had discussed this between ourselves, he was surprised and started shouting at me that we should not continue to discuss these issues. These were supposed to be confidential. Then he changed my mark to reflect the same mark as that of my colleague. When I asked him to justify the difference, the appraiser told me that it was because he [her male colleague] had only been in the company five years. I have been 18 years in company, so my salary is much higher than his. Thus to compensate between my high salary and his low salary they gave him a higher rate. But this does not make any sense!'

Amber, an appraisee for the past 11 years describes an experience she had in comparison with a male colleague who was awarded higher ratings than her, even though her targets where double those allocated to him. During her

interview Amber stated that social activities are not fair, and she does not attend team building activities regularly. The only justification the appraiser gave Amber for a low rating was that it was, to compensate for a lower salary. Amber also states that when she was given the adjusted rating, the appraiser behaved in such a way as though he was doing her a big favour. Amber's statement indicates how a lack of information about the ratings can enforce biases can go unnoticed. Acker (2006) states that silence may be used intentionally as a masculine strategy to promote males as high performers.

> Maria: 'This could be a tool used, because if you ask me about my rate, I shall tell you. I have no problem saying it, because the rate awarded to me is fair and I can justify it. So, I do not know why there's this whole secrecy!'

Maria states that it is not a problem for her to divulge her ratings in a formal way. Her statement may agree with Acker's claim (2006). Thus, besides the cultural symbolism that sociability has for masculinity, silence may also be used within informal activities and the rating stage to reinforce the gender division.

High performers within the performance appraisal system are assessed on their gender role behaviour within social activities instead of on the employee's actual performance. Although women are given a formalised performance appraisal report that communicates to them what is expected of them, because of exclusionary and divisionary gendered practices, women are limited in proving their actual performance. As suggested by Kanji and Cahusac (2015) women are not free to make their own choices in organisations. This is because all the appraisers interviewed who are mostly male may apply their gendered habitus

within the HRM practice and restrict women's actual performance from being portrayed in their PA report.

Only one female confirming appraiser was interviewed in this study. She confirmed that she also values social activities highly. She did not indicate in her interview that she attends or organises any informal activities, but no male appraisees mentioned any female CAs' presence in their informal outings. Due to the limited number of women occupying the CA role, the study recommends future studies to further investigate how female confirming appraisers may or may not use exclusionary and masculinity strategies through their habitus. The chapter continues by investigating the effect the performance appraisal process has on appraisees' behaviour.

6.40 Appraisee Behaviour

So far, the study has established how habitus guides appraisers in the way they assess female and male appraisees in terms of their social behaviour role during social activities. The next stage is to analyse the effect the PA system has on appraisees' performance and behaviour.

> Josette: 'You may have an appraisee who knows how to present himself. He gives the appraiser [CA] the impression that he [appraisee] is very good, although he may disrupt the team. When there is this type of relationship with the CA, the latter is not always with the appraisees. So the appraisee may ignore the DA and build a particular relationship with the CA directly in order to get what he [appraisee] wants.'

Here Josette, a DA explains how some appraisees know about the mechanism of biased decisions. Appraisees also know that the final ratings are awarded by the confirming appraisers. Josette explains how appraisees (emphasising male appraisees) try to build a direct bond with their CAs especially during social events, ignoring the DA role.

> Amber: 'I remember a person who, whenever he saw the CA, would make him a coffee, talk about football. Then when he comes to work, no production. And I am trying to figure out how to get new proposals. He used to say, "I am not so good on the phone and contacting new customers."'

Amber states that appraisees are aware that their appraisers want to have people around them talking about similar interests such as sports. Knowing the importance that sociability has for appraisers, appraisees intentionally socialise in the way their appraisers would like to socialise in order to be compensated with high ratings in the PA system. The reciprocal sociality concept is intentionally used by appraisees to build a relationship of committed solidarity with their appraisers who consider them to be in a high performers group, instead of using committed solidarity to strengthen the teamwork spirit. Amber's statement agrees with Josette's in that the latter declares that the CA may have a good impression of an appraisee even though the latter may harm the team. From these findings, the study can conclude that appraisers in this company prefer social performers to organisational performers.

> Andrew: 'Without wanting to, you build a relationship with the manager, especially if your work station is beside his [CA]. Those appraisees who

sit beside the appraisers are more able to be their [CAs'] reference point. My word is given some weight. For example, not everyone discusses the PA draft before he [CA] actually passes it [PA] to you'.

Andrew, an appraisee for 11 years, describes how it is beneficial to him to be seen attending regular social activities and conversing with his appraiser. Here Andrew is describing his relationship with former CAs and explaining how he was used as a reference point within the branch, even on matters related to other employees' personal issues such as discussing internal transfers. This privilege was not granted to Andrew when he had the CA whose hobby conflicted with his own interests.

Appraisees know about the importance of social activities and they reconsider how they need to expend their efforts to achieve their final ratings within the PA system. Following these findings, the study shows how appraisees are assigned high ratings not because they achieve their actual ratings, but because they know how to behave in order to achieve them. Subsequently, the researcher is interested in analysing how the appraiser's action might affect appraisee behaviour in the long term.

6.41 Reproducing Gendered Practices

The study explored another interesting finding via probing appraisees with a particular question during the interview: *'If you had extra sales accomplishments and you had already achieved rating 5, to whom you would give the extra achievements?'*

Guido: 'I would give them [the extra points] to a friend of mine, who I feel at ease with and can talk to more easily. Someone I can chat to about other topics than work, such as sports, perhaps we go out together after work.'

Guido, father of two girls stated that he would give his extra sales to a colleague who had similar interests including sports, always referring to a male colleague. The similarity in interests between Guido and his colleague built a strong relationship that is reciprocated by the exchange of the extra ratings.

Michael: 'I give extra sales to my friends. My friends are those who have a similar character to mine and those who I click with. We can understand each other. But this element will always remain.'

Earlier Michael stated that social activities should be done in such a way that appraisees and CAs can socialise better. In this statement, Michael further confirms his statement by his action. He gives the extra points to a friend and someone who can understand him and socialise with him. His friends are those who have a similar character, thus someone who is entertaining and a spontaneous entertainer. Michael, like Guido, prefers to give extra sales figures to someone, he can chat to easily about similar sports interests. Considering that women rarely have a hobby due to their domestic responsibilities, implicitly both Michael and Guido prefer male appraisees over female because men can socialise better together and understand each other through hobbies.

Andrew: 'When I reached my 5 target [the maximum target], besides considering the effort of the receiver, I admit that my preference is for someone [wiehed] I have a good relationship with. Relationship are

subjective – they depend on hobbies, if we go out as couples not as department, on outings [informal social activities] where we have common interests, such as sports events. Yes, PA depends on things outside work!'

Andrew reconfirms 'liking' factor, similar interests, hobbies and informal outings outside work which strengthen the relationship between him and his favourite colleagues to whom he give his extra targets. During this discussion, Andrew declares that 'my preference is for someone', using a masculine pronoun. This statement confirms that hobbies are more associated with men than women in Malta. It also confirms that PA ratings depend not on factual output but on relations built outside the organisation.

The only female who achieved more targets than was expected of her was Pamela:

'I went to my manager and he told me to give the extra sales to John. John is a friendly colleague who used to help us in the teambuilding activities, also.'

Contrary to the male appraisees, when Pamela reached the maximum band and had extra sales, she chose to go to her appraiser to distribute the extra sales according to her appraiser's decision. The extra points she had obtained were given to a male colleague who used to organise social activities. Analysing appraisees' behaviour, the study found that appraisees imitate their appraisers' actions, reproducing gendered processes. Pamela agreed to give the extra targets to someone who organises social activities according to her appraiser's suggestion. Unconsciously, she continues to reinforce gender-biased practices within the performance appraisal system. From these findings, we can conclude

that future appraisers will reproduce gendered practices through their gendered habitus built around Maltese social roles. In this way, organisations support gender disparity by providing a space in which gendering is produced and reinforced. The study is therefore interested in understanding what the company is doing to monitor and limit appraisers' biases.

6.50 The Role of the Organisation

Organisations are one environment in which cultural images of gender may be reproduced (Acker, 1990). Organisational values can be reflected in the way a PA system is structured. Looking at which employees the PA system is employed on may indicate some of the organisational values. According to Rubery et al. (1995), organisations may employ the evaluation system on roles that are considered worthy of merit. Contrary to what Rubery suggests, the company under study employs the assessment system on employees including clerks, supervisors, managers and senior managers, as appraisee Maria states. The rationale for assessing employees' performance reveals the organisational intent to recognise employees' output, including those who occupy lower positions. However, since this study has uncovered gender disparity, this part of the chapter will investigate how the company monitors the practice carried out by appraisers.

> Simon: 'When they [HR] presented this system to us [appraisers] the PA system philosophy was never ever expressed from day one'.

Simon has been both a direct and a confirming appraiser for the past 11 years. He was with the company when the PA system was first launched. He states that

the assessment's purpose was never properly communicated to the interested parties. The lack of communication within the organisation was also found in the ratings systems, where Julia specifically compares the communication about the ratings as 'the last secret of Fatima' (The Three Secrets of Fatima in Catholicism, a Maltese saying used to describe something secretive). Even the informal social activities are kept secretly from the whole department. It seems that silence is a practice which may be used within the company to keep gender biases unnoticed. Simon also claims that inappropriate communication, brought inconsistencies which led to various interpretations of what the performance appraisal meant to both appraisers and appraisees.

Simon: 'The role of the confirming appraiser was given little importance'

Interviewing both direct and confirming appraisers allowed the study to find that although the company employs a confirming appraiser (CA) and a direct appraiser (DA), confirming appraisers are the ones who make the ultimate decisions on appraisees' ratings. Simon's statement relates to the low importance given to appraisers and is confirmed by the lack of training provided to appraisers. This was discovered after appraisers were asked to describe the process by which they had begun appraising their peers.

Karl: 'The first year was very difficult, no real training, there is the manual [handbook] downloadable from the internal system. But this came without any type of training. The manual is based only on points [ratings] and not how to handle interviews'.

Karl, a direct appraiser for the past five years, describes his first year as an appraiser. He felt it was especially difficult to appraise in his first years without

any instruction from the company that could guide him through the process. Other appraisers also indicated that training was never provided, and if provided, training was inadequate. The company's training focuses on 'how to fill in the appraisal report' as commented by Simon. So how do new appraisers start appraising their peers?

> Josette: 'When I became a Manager, the confirming appraiser came to me and told me, "Now you need to do this [performance appraisal]!" That time, the CA did not show me anything and neither did the company. All he [CA] told me was "try to do something similar to what is already here and start from there."'

Josette, a DA for the past six years, recounts how she started assessing her peers without any training, but by simply taking over the existing assessing method and replicating it. She tried to build her own evaluation system and fill in the report by copying other appraisers. In this way, Josette reproduced the same processes that other appraisers had followed. This shows another way how gendered habitus and norms within the PA system are transferred to and reproduced by other junior appraisers.

> Stephen: 'I took the role without any type of training. I was dumped into it, and I made my own system.'

Stephen, a CA for the past six years, stated that he started assessing his peers by constructing his own system. When appraisers find themselves in ambiguous circumstances, it is more likely that social influence will impact on the way they process the assessment practice (Rice and Aydin, 1991). Hunt (2000) suggests that specific training on gender can mitigate gender reproduction. Considering

that traditional breadwinner values persist in Malta, appraisers' habitus can influence more appraisees' career and enforce the gender division especially considering the lack of training provided by the company to the appraisers. Appraisers assess employees on the way they think is fair according to their habitus.

The study found how gendered habitus is regenerative in the way appraisees distribute their extra targets to their colleagues. By exploring how gendering can be reproductive through divisionary and exclusionary practices, the researcher is interested in understanding whether the company uses any evaluative system to control these strategies found in the study.

> Monica: 'No one is monitoring this system. Because I am here [I know my way of assessing]. Now there are some who are not fair and use it [the PA system] against [appraisees].'

Monica, the only female confirming appraiser, declares that the PA system is not audited by other parties such as human resources representatives, declaring also that she knows the way she assesses in a fair way. Confirming appraisers may award ratings to their peers according to their habitus and interpretations, without anyone monitoring their final decisions. Monica reports that she has seen other CAs who have processed the PA system unfairly. Guido, an appraisee, confirmed that the PA system is not monitored by HR to see whether any biases are being applied within the assessment system.

The lack of communication and monitoring procedures and the limited training provided by the organisation can lead to uncertainties, in which social influences such as gender may impact on the employment processes (Rhoades and

Eisenberger, 2002; Rice and Aydin, 1991). This study found that the performance appraisal system is processed according to appraisers' gendered norms in a company that consents to gendered habitus influencing the way formalised practices are processed.

Conclusion

Appraisers rate their peers mainly based on their perceptions, very often using the normal distribution curve. Appraisees are sorted along the curve according to how appraisers perceive appraisees' behaviour during social activities. The concept of the high performer is shaped by the social activities assessment criterion. Using Mitchell (2002)'s anthropological work, the study could link the gendered meaning that the concept of sociability has in Malta. Living in a breadwinner context, appraisers form their habitus around gendered norms which guide them in assessing their peers according to the social role model during social activities that are organised.

The study shows how sociability is a male ritual which is reinforced by exclusive and distinctive practices to keep women out of these male social spaces. All social events are organised after working hours when women are assumed to be taking care of their family and children. During social activities, conversations relating to the family are not enjoyed by appraisers. Masculine sociability refers to the separation of work and the home, thus the concept of family and family care is not welcomed during social activities. The dynamics within the social

setting, then, form invisible barriers for women that make it more challenging for them to achieve the high-performer status than it is for their male colleagues.

Women are very often perceived as absent from these activities. Through a more in-depth investigation, the study found that 90 percent of female appraisee participants attend, out of which 82 percent try to socialise like their male colleagues, but they are still awarded low ratings. Only those women who extend their caring characteristics to organise social activities are rewarded as good performers in relation to their social role. Almost all male appraisees interviewed, attend these activities, but all of them are satisfied with their behavioural section ratings. Those males who have similar interests and entertaining characters obtain the most positive benefits from the appraisal system. Although men and women appear to have the same assessment criterion, double standards define the rating scale category by which appraisees are awarded according to their social gender group role.

The way appraisers assess their peers, has a reproductive effect, whereby appraisees implement the same practices with their colleagues as they are assessed by. This reproduction of the gender division acquired by their previous experiences is evidence of how appraisees are influenced by regenerative habitus. Considering there is a preference for male high performers in organisations, men will benefit from social capital while women still have limited opportunities to prove themselves as high performers. The study also revealed the way an organisation's passive role in the training and monitoring it provides can leave gendered practices to be enforced and reinforced. Silence and lack of communication may be used as exclusionary practices to keep women from featuring as high achievers.

Consequently, one may conclude that in this company, women's performance is not portrayed according to actual output, but to the behaviour of women during social activities in accordance with observance of their social role model which is presented. Double standards which assess women and men on the same criterion reflect the stratification that differentiates the breadwinner male from the subordinate image of women in the Maltese social hierarchy. This study can conclude that social habitus is more powerful than formalised practices in organisations. The next chapter will analyse the consequences of these findings and highlight research areas that would be beneficial to investigate further in the future.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis has been to explore how appraisers assess women and men's performance when they are working in the same role within a Maltese banking institution. The study highlights the importance of investigating the performance appraisal process within the context of an individual organisation without neglecting the broader social context. The concept of the high performer is permeated with local social symbolic ideologies. Analysing gendering in organisations through a focus on one organisation alone is too simplistic. Including how social norms and orders are produced and reproduced through employees' habitus contributes to the understanding of how appraisers unconsciously distinguish high performers according to the social gender order.

This chapter will first discuss the contribution that this study can provide towards current Maltese gender equality initiatives. New findings that can support existing literature will then be explained in relation to three broad aims of this study, namely: the high performer; the reproduction of the gender division of labour; and the consequences of the performance appraisal system, with special attention given to the organisational outcome. The chapter will also put forth recommendations to the organisation under study, based on the findings discussed in the previous chapters. The final section of the chapter will present the study limitations and conclude by suggesting future research based on the results.

7.10 Contribution to Local Initiatives

Although Malta increased women's participation in the labour market, figures are well behind the Euro 2020 gender equality strategy. At a time when local initiatives are facing the challenge of increasing women's participation in the labour market in particular in top roles, this research explored the variation and depth of such a challenge by analysing the experience of working women and how their performance is assessed and presented in one organisation. The study was carried out in the fast-growing Maltese financial services sector where there is an equal numerical distribution of male and female employees. This environment offered an opportunity to examine how gender inequality goes beyond the increase of women in the workforce.

Applying gendered organisations theory (Acker,1992), in particular regarding the way gendered norms can be embedded in organisational practices allowed the study to show how gender is 'done' in organisations (Wilson, 1996), through an in-depth investigation into organisational processes. The performance appraisal system was analysed using multi-key sources, with the study finding that it is not necessarily the criteria listed on the reports which appraiser use to distinguish between high and low performers. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore how related informal practices are applied within the assessment process, and how this generates differences in the way female and male appraisees experience their ratings. Further investigation revealed that the most important assessment standard against which appraisers assess their peers is rooted in their subtle habitus (Bourdieu, 1972), emanating from the breadwinner model. Appraisers are guided through their gendered habitus which

may have been ingrained during their lived experience which is structured around breadwinner principles. The study found that, for appraisers, the distinction between high and low performer assimilates the division between breadwinner and housewife.

This indicates that although various social incentives have been introduced in Malta to promote gender equality in the labour market, effort still needs to be made to acknowledge the powerful embodied habitus formed through one's private and public life, which guides the way management perceive women and their performance. From the data collected and its analysis, the study concludes three key findings. A discussion of the implications of these findings and how these conclusions were reached will follow.

7.20 Key Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

The main objective of this study was to investigate whether the performance appraisal system contributes to gender inequality. Three research questions were examined in order to explore the main aims of the study. The researcher found that the most highly valued assessment criterion for appraisers was teamwork, which is assessed in terms of participation in social activities which are organised outside of working hours. This criterion is experienced differently by men and women. This is because the meaning of sociability is linked to masculine local rituals. Those women who attend these activities and behave like their male colleagues do not perform according to their social gender role and so are not rated highly. Only those female appraisees who perform according to

their social roles - that of the caring woman - are considered to be high performers. When women do not achieve the highly most valued criterion, this may indicate that women are not good enough as their male colleagues and lose future career progression opportunity.

The study also affirmed the second research question, which relates to whether there are any exclusionary practices within the PA processes. As well as exclusionary practices, the researcher found that appraisers use double standards to assess their appraisees. This indicates that instead of distinguishing between high and low performers within the performance appraisal, appraisers are guided by distinctive norms to distinguish male performers from female performers, categorising them into two different types of employee.

The last research question investigated how the gendered performance appraisal affects appraisees' behaviour and reactions. Through the way appraisees experience their assessment practice, they tend to replicate the methodology when assessing their colleagues. By answering the three sub research questions, the study addressed the main research question to conclude that the performance appraisal process contributes to gender inequalities. As a result of these findings, the research provides three further contributions to the knowledge answering the questions below:

- In what way do appraisers recognise high performers? *By assessing behaviour according to social roles.*
- How are gendered processes reproductive? *Through regenerative habitus.*

- What are the implications of the performance appraisal system for appraisees and for companies? *Painful and expensive.*

7.21 Assessing Behaviour According to Social Roles

As set out in Chapter Five, appraisers recognise high performers through the way their appraisees behave during social activities. The importance of sociability as the most valued assessment criterion is rooted in the local lexicon of hegemonic masculinity (Mitchell, 2002), in which men need to socialise after work to contribute to their masculine self-image (Driessen, 1983). The study findings concerning the importance of sociability shed light on the gender ratings gap found when appraisees were rating their satisfaction levels with the behavioural section of the assessment. Men attending the company's functions and maintaining good relationships inside their organisation are more likely to advance in their career as suggested by Bradley et al. (2000). Those male appraisees who have entertaining characters and similar hobbies to those of their appraisers appear to benefit from higher ratings.

On the other hand, women appraisees are very often perceived as absent from these activities, even when they attend. Social activities in Malta are generated through social practice in order to enforce the gap between the ideal and the actual sexual division of space (Mitchell, 2002). While men are seen as the breadwinners who socialise after working hours in order to get reciprocal benefits, women are locally perceived as carers for their family. The only female appraisees who are satisfied with their assessment ratings are those who

organise and handle the social events' logistics. A plausible explanation, is that appraisers give high marks only to those women who extend their assumed social responsibilities to social activities outside working hours. As reviewed in Chapter Two, appraisees must behave according to their social gender role to be considered high performers. So women appraisees who socialise in the same way as their male colleagues are perceived as they are not performing as they should.

Here the findings show that although women and men are allocated the same criterion, appraisers apply double assessment standards when evaluating their peers as suggested by Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997). Male and female appraisees are considered to be two different categories (Acker, 1990). According to the social role model (Eagly, 1997), each appraisee needs to behave according to his or her gender category. The study also found that appraisers very often use the normal distribution curve prior to analysing any factual results obtained by their peers. The ratings distribution system requires appraisers to discriminate between high and low performers by assigning fixed positions within ratings categories (Blume et al., 2009). One concern arising from the comparative rating scale is the social role model. Findings show that appraisers sort their peers along the performance curve according to how appraisees behave during social activities. Considering that sociability follows male ritual patterns, appraisers are embodied with the disposition that men need to socialise while women need to continue with their caring responsibilities after working hours. In view of this, habitus guides and informs appraisers in distinguishing between high and low performers as a result of their observations of gender-category behaviour during social activities.

The gendered local context offered a unique opportunity to understand how the sociability assessment criterion is also applied through gendered strategies of distinctions and exclusions (Bourdieu, 1986). Sociability in Malta which depends on the masculine class social structure, replicates social order through limitations and inequalities (Mitchell, 2002). Based on this cultural meaning, the study argues that social activities are organised after working hours when women are perceived to have domestic responsibilities and thus unable to attend. This results in their exclusion from the social sphere.

Additionally, appraisers differentiate between men and women when women try to attend these activities like their male colleagues and to socialise with them. Appraisees' lifestyle is one of the divisionary strategies that was revealed from the data collected. During social activities, appraisers wish to surround themselves with entertaining appraisees who discuss their hobbies and sports interests with them, and do not want to hear conversations relating to family issues. This concurs with Cahusac and Kanji (2014)'s findings that women need to be secretive about having children, who are viewed as a problem in UK organisations.

Based on what Katrina and other appraisees reported, the study argued that family responsibility is considered to be a 'problem' within the company because family is considered a distraction for employees. This study extends to Acker's (1990) accounts that companies prefer an elite organisational worker who is unencumbered by family responsibilities. Appraisers were found that they do not wish to associate themselves with family conversations as these may blemish their unencumbered reputation within the social environment and negatively affect their role in the organisation. In line with these findings, family can be

considered as a distraction in a way that hobbies or sports are not. For example, if a particular employee is injured while playing a sport, appraisers do not necessarily consider this to be a distraction from work. This may indicate a double standard applied to the evaluation of lifestyles in addition to that applied when appraisers rate their appraisees.

The study found that female appraisees who have no family responsibilities are also dissatisfied with ratings awarded. This suggests that the lifestyle a woman has may in fact be irrelevant because for the organisation women are associated with family care. This association can also extend to the way women's performance and contributions are perceived. Men with partners and children do not seem to be awarded low ratings. Here the performance appraisal system assesses women and men's performance according to prescribed male and female roles during social activities. Hence one can conclude that employees' performance is assessed outside of working hours and outside the premises. This also indicates that caring traits and motherhood associated with women are extended outside the domestic sphere. It is a question of 'once a woman you are a woman always and everywhere'. Considering that the breadwinner model is still strong in Malta, gendered habitus is difficult to change and increasing the number of women in the workplace is only a cosmetic repair for gender inequality. The way gendered habitus guides appraisers to determine high and low performers in accordance with how appraisees should behave during social activities sheds light on how social norms are naturalised in managers' actions during the processing of other HRM practices in organisations.

7.22 Regenerative Habitus

Bourdieu explains how habitus is harmonised and naturalised in individuals' actions from their own experiences which become regenerative without recognising that they are not impartial. At the micro level, appraisers play a crucial role in constructing and reconstructing organisational norms (Acker, 1990). The semi-structured interviews conducted with multi key sources enabled this study to better understand how appraisers' habitus shapes the identity of the high performer within the organisation's assessment processes. The analysis of findings reveals how appraisees allocate their extra ratings to colleagues perceived to be entertaining and social, and with whom they share interests. Bourdieu claims that habitus is regenerative from one generation to another. Based on the findings, and interpreting them through Bourdieu's claims, one can conclude that appraisees reproduce gendered practices through regenerative habitus constituted over the course of their experience within assessment practice. This was concluded after the researcher analysed how appraisees assess their colleagues in the same way as they are assessed by their appraisers.

The regenerative habitus was further evidenced when the study discovered that the only female confirming appraiser that participated in the study also favoured the sociability assessment criterion. In her statement, Monica explained how she assesses her peers in a similar way to how her previous confirming appraiser had assessed her and her colleagues. When appraisers generate gendered distinctions when assessing peers, they are also forming part of the appraisee's habitus, which becomes natural and normalised. As women learn how to behave

in the workplace, they may rely and reinforce roles learned outside the workplace which are assumed to be natural for their biological sex. Monica, the only female confirming appraiser in the study, showed how she performs gendered habitus within the organisation, discriminating against women and thus reinforcing gendering and male social capital in the organisation. Here the study suggests further research in a context in which more female confirming appraisers are employed. The way the female confirming appraiser has experienced the appraisal system herself, she may carry gendered norms which guide her in assessing appraisees by applying discriminative practices without recognising biased processes.

Habitus cannot be seen in isolation. Sociability serves to build local personal networks which are important to advance one's career (Mitchell, 2002). All male appraisees view the sociability assessment criterion as representing a positive contribution, measure and practice within the organisation. They know that this criterion can exclude others by favouring men who can network with appraisers to get better ratings.

On the other hand, women who are awarded high ratings are those who demonstrate and extend their caring traits within the organisation and its social events. By extending their caring responsibilities, women are reinforcing gender differences. Facilitative and caring responsibilities are considered to be inferior tasks (Crompton, 1997) which contrast with the image of the ideal worker. The distinction between male and female responsibilities during social activities therefore reflects the social gender order. Social activities form part of games which carry cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and act as loci of power (Cockburn, 1991) whereby men can perform themselves as the high performers,

while women support their inferior role in society. Hence it is in the male interest to keep and encourage sociability, especially since it involves enjoying themselves and that this is reciprocated by high ratings thereby reinforcing their dominant image. Lipman-Blumen (1980) claims that when women do the same job as men, the latter fear losing their masculinity. During social activities men also have the opportunity to exclude the majority of female colleagues from competing against them in this criterion (considering that 70 percent of the appraisees in the company are women). It is not surprisingly that Eikhof (2012) found women had a harder time gaining access to networks especially male-dominated ones.

The concept of network relates to the social capital. Putnam describes social capital as connections among networks that are healthy for the society. Contrary to Putnam's social capital view in terms of gender Bourdieu (1986:103) explains it more than just a network. Social capital serves to reproduce gender differentiations and intergenerational dis/advantage to maintain the gender social class. Considering the use of the distribution rating scale discussed in Chapter Six along with social capital, male appraisers may be supported by the use of comparative assessment to categorise men as high performers, relegating women to the lower and average positions along the curve. Arthur et al. (2011) found how informal networking decisions which strengthen networks are hard to break. This may explain why men will continue to feature as high performers in the company.

Considering that the majority of confirming appraisers are men also suggests that appraisers have good reason to identify men as high performers as this will maintain social capital and reproduce the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1986). In

the study, male appraisees also form part of small groups/cliques where symbolic masculine rituals, such as discussing hobbies, occur in formal social activities. And even if female appraisees who take care of organising the formal social events are awarded high ratings, they do not discuss family issues or hobbies with their appraisers. In fact, study found that women spend the majority of the time during social activities socialising with other female colleagues. This agrees with Lewis and Simpson (2010)'s study where they report that women find it hard to gain access to male established networks and bonds.

Confirming appraisers may be more comfortable giving men higher ratings since in attending social activities, men are adopt modes of behaviour dictated by their social role. Kanter (1977) adds that the higher a group is placed in the social hierarchy, the richer it is in collective power in the form of social networks which facilitate upward mobility within the organisation. Social capital and reciprocity may explain how masculine networks facilitate their own career progressions in the same way that more senior positions in the organisation under study are dominated by men.

Smith (2007) argues that networking is highly gendered. This study found evidence of a similar gendered networking system within this company, concluding that women are excluded or distinguished from this masculinity ritual. Men within social activities can perform their superiority in a culturally approved manner. In what follows, it becomes clear that social capital supports social order. Many feminists have suggested that one of the ways in which women can provide support for each other and counteract the effect of men's networks is to form their own networks. However, forming a woman's network alone cannot counteract the effect of men's social capital. As suggested by Reskin et al. (1999), groups

with a higher proportion of men command more resources and exercise more power and influence than those containing a larger number of women. The high positions within organisations which have the authority to make decisions and evaluate women, are occupied by men. As long as the evaluation system reproduces gender values of masculine performance, women will not be able to counter men's networks with their own. For this reason this study endorses Williams et al. (2012)'s recommendation that the wider implications of social events must not be ignored.

7.23 Painful and Expensive

The study has shown how appraisers assess appraisees according to their behaviour during social activities. The way the performance appraisal is processed has both restrictive and financial consequences for both appraisees and the organisation. The study found that the assessment's main criterion (sociability) and its processing are gendered in that they portray man as the high performer.

The performance appraisal system provides information about employees' performance on which the organisation can make administrative and development decisions. Managers do not consider women for career progression because their performance is portrayed as not good enough to meet current criteria as a result of the gendered assessment process. Although women may wish to progress in their career as their male colleagues do, their

performance is controlled and their choices restricted by gendered practices and distinctive processes, as suggested by Lewis and Simpson (2010).

Social activities can also have a negative impact on men. Men are dominated by their own domination (Bourdieu 2001:69). Appraisees who are not considered entertaining or do not have similar hobbies to their appraisers can also be awarded a low rating in their appraisal report. As explored in Chapter Five, besides a low rating, Andrew, the appraisee who had a hobby that conflicted with his appraiser's interests was also held back from other privileges that he previously enjoyed. The study concludes that male appraisees need to behave according to their social role in order to stay within the symbolic masculine game. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the role of men in social activities and the dynamics that constitute masculine games. The suggested research might explore other privileges men may miss out on when they do not behave as per their gender role.

Another interesting finding relates to how male appraisees use sociability for their own benefit. Appraisees know that appraisers value sociability highly within the organisation. As Kacmar et al. (2003) suggest, when appraisers and appraisees interact in a way that builds a relationship according to leader-member exchange theory, appraisees are rewarded highly. As explored in Chapter Six, appraisees socialise with their confirming appraisers, ignoring direct appraisers and discuss issues that are favoured by the confirming appraisers with the intention of getting high ratings in their assessment reports. This may explain why male appraisees prefer behavioural to technical targets.

Female appraisees declared that, despite the fact their technical targets increase regularly, some of them prefer technical over the behavioural section. The reason for this is that no one can contest the measurable achieved results. Women's reactions indicate that they would like an assessment system which holds everyone accountable in the same way. Golman and Bhatia (2012) suggest that a performance appraisal based on unambiguous criteria will be less biased. However this study found that when the meaning of assessment standards are gendered, clear criteria do little in terms of addressing gender inequality because exclusive and distinctive practices permeate the whole process.

In conclusion, it appears that the management of the organisation in question gives most value to sociability, which happens outside of the working hours and off-premises to the detriment of employees' actual output and efficiency within their working hours at the workplace. Employees who benefit from career progression opportunities are those who direct their efforts towards socialising rather than to banking services and products. Not surprisingly, then, financial organisations face challenges filling high positions (MFSA, 2015) when measuring tools may not always reflect a woman's actual performance, and men's performance is defined on social terms. This study may agree with Becker (1971) who states that discrimination is expensive for organisations, putting them at a cost disadvantage to non-discriminating firms.

Some of the most significant contributions of this research include the following:

1. The application of Bourdieu's theory of habitus to Acker's gendered organisations theory. Using this theoretical framework, the study finds that gendered habitus guides appraisers in distinguishing high performers from low

within a financial company. This was concluded after exploring how high and low performers are determined in the same way as traditional gender roles differentiate between men and women. Gendered habitus is regenerative as a result of appraisers' action in evaluating appraisees, making it difficult to change especially in a country where the breadwinner model still persists.

2. The findings provide insight into how appraisers 'see' each appraisee's ratings before the end of the year. Implicit in this is that the peers' achieved targets are not analysed. Appraisees explain how their appraisers sort their peers along the normal distribution curve, which supports the assessors' gendered habitus to distinguish between the performances of employees. The study explores how appraisers' gendered habitus is objectified visually and sorted along the average distribution curve.

3. The appraisee's performance is evaluated by confirming and direct appraisers. However, the review mechanism is not effective. Confirming appraisers, the majority of whom are men, can leverage peers' ratings because 'the ultimate word is mine'. Having conducted interviews with appraisees, direct and confirming appraisers, the study shows how male appraisees use the highly valued criterion for their own benefit to the detriment of their colleagues, in particular female employees.

4. By analysing the highly valued assessment criterion, the study finds that sociability is a male ritual rooted in local masculine cultural norms. The findings also suggest this gendered criterion is applied in a way that excludes and distinguishes women's performance from the high performer profile. The study explored how social norms are more powerful than the formalised practices that

serve to portray the superiority of males, in which men seem to perform better than women in ratings and form a corporate identity.

7.30 Mitigating Gendered Habitus

The role of appraisers and the dynamic function of habitus which guides appraisers' actions are fundamental key findings in understanding how the high performer status is structured. However, one way to mitigate appraisers' subjective influence and stereotyping is to develop sophisticated performance appraisal techniques including training and monitoring (CIPD, 2009; Drazin and Auster, 1987). Findings in this study show that the company does not provide training to appraisers. This creates scope for personal interpretation of the measuring tools, and thus an ambiguous environment. In such an environment, appraisers may apply their own social values and norms, and evaluators' assessments may be influenced by what is generally known about employees as a social entity (Rice and Aydin, 1991; Nieva and Gutek, 1980).

As a result of this study, it would be recommendable to provide specific training to assessors, especially considering the breadwinner context and the fact the majority of confirming appraisers are male. There are various types of training that can be provided specific to the performance appraisal system. This includes behavioural observation training (BOT). BOT-trained appraisers produce more accurate ratings irrespective of employees' characteristics compared with others who have received minimal or no training (Hedge and Kavanaugh, 1988). Hunt (2002) highlights the importance of equality training, especially for appraisers

who may undertake gender analysis of their appraisees' activities. When organisations provide training to appraisers they may overcome assessment problems and award more realistic ratings along with justified, constructive and consistent feedback which provides assessment criteria more consistently across employees (CIPD, 2009).

As has been stated, the study found that appraisees - mostly men - accept and reproduce the way their appraisers process the assessment practice through divisionary and exclusionary processes in a way that serves to maintain the gender division of labour. In fact, in Chapter Six, the researcher highlighted how appraisees give their extra ratings to their selected colleagues using the criteria used by their appraisers. To this effect, Syed and Murray (2008) recommend providing training to appraisees because they may become future appraisers themselves. Providing gender training to appraisees may make them, more aware of giving gender-neutral evaluation to their colleagues, and thus to potential future appraisees. There are various benefits to providing training. First, it shows that organisations recognise that gendering can influence organisational practices, and second, it transmits the company's commitment to eradicating gendering inequality to its own employees.

Another common issue appraisees pointed out was the lack of monitoring of the performance appraisal system. An organisation is considered a structural resource (Loury, 1977) which may facilitate or inhibit social norms beneath appraisers' actions within the PA process. The lack of monitoring by the company may explain how the review mechanism of using two appraisers in the company is not effective. Therefore, when organisations do not monitor their organisational practices, they are cooperating with the appraisers' social norms and enabling

them to enforce gender inequality. It cannot therefore be stressed enough how important it is for an organisation to support the development of appraisers' assessment skills through training (Pooyan and Eberhardt, 1989) and monitoring of the PA system (Swaneopol et al., 2014) in order to control gendering in organisations.

7.40 Limitations

The research aimed to produce a comprehensive piece of work; however, it has unavoidable limitations. One main limitation relates to the homogenous demography in terms of race, religion and ethnicity of the company's employees. Nevertheless, this limitation means we can conclude that the interaction between the social context and the performance appraisal process which has emerged may be more reliable and attributable to gender rather than to differences in culture, race or religion. Here this research may guide future researchers in understanding other social differences by applying Bourdieu's habitus concept.

This research uses one company as a case study. A single company study is limited when it comes to extracting generalisations. The study's strength is its focus on women's experience within the case study. By using one company, the researcher could be confident that differences in the data analysis were attributable to the way appraisers distinguish between men and women, excluding the possibility of attributing such gaps to other factors related to different organisations' processes.

The study was conducted in Malta only. This offers little opportunity to compare findings between countries. However, considering little research has been done in this regard in Malta compared with other European countries (especially in Mediterranean countries where the breadwinner concept may be similar to that of Malta), it is hoped that the findings form this preliminary study will generate enough interest for broader international investigations of the HRM concepts examined here. Despite these limitations, this study offers significant contributions that will allow further research to be conducted.

7.50 Recommended Future Research

Building on the limitations and findings of this study, the research suggests areas for future investigation. During the interviews, the study discovered that appraisers organise informal activities with their appraisees. From the data, there is no indication that women attend, are invited or organise such informal activities. The focus of this study was to explore how women experience the performance appraisal, therefore the investigating attendance at these informal gatherings fell outside the scope of this research. It would, however, be beneficial to shed more light on ways in which masculine games are played during these informal activities, and the effect of these informal activities on the excluded members.

The most pressing need when it comes to the breadwinner context is to conduct research in a context that includes a larger number of female confirming appraisers in a gendered organisation. This will contribute towards a better

understanding of how the context may shape female employees' habitus and how this, in turn, is regenerative. The naturalised habitus may have an effect in the way that even women generate the gender division of labour by failing to recognise the impartiality of their applications.

Another interesting finding is the case of a male appraisee who had low ratings because his hobby conflicted with that of his appraiser. In light of this, it would be interesting to investigate the effect a gendered performance appraisal has on men who do not follow implicit sociability rituals. Future study may include an investigation of how men should behave during social activities. This is highly significant when one considers that on 12 July 2017, the Maltese parliament passed a bill allowing same-sex marriage. Such a study may reveal how gendering may affect men who do not observe masculinity norms within the hegemonic masculinity theory.

Final Comments

This study opens with questions in relation to gender differences in the labour market which may be attributed to either women's choice or social structural influence. Applying Bourdieu's habitus concept, the study was able to examine gender in an organisation by reconciling structure-agentic dualism. The performance appraisal process investigated in this study led to an in-depth exploration of how representations of men and women, masculinity and femininity, are often fossilised by continuous emphasis on gender distinction, and are made less possible to challenge.

Investigating sociability and social activities revealed how appraisers differentiate between women and men's behaviour during social activities. This differentiation is based on local cultural norms that reinforce the breadwinner model and at the same time shape organisational characteristics. When employees enter the workplace, they carry these gendered values with them, influencing the workplace with those same values (Martin et al., 2002). These norms form part of one's habitus, and are naturalised within one's routine, becoming regenerative. Therefore, the impact of structures on gender roles should not be ignored (Acker 2008; Kanter, 1977) because structures can organise people's behaviour according to social gender roles. However, we also need to acknowledge how gendered habitus can make gendering hard to challenge.

The main contribution of this study concludes that social norms constrain women from proving their actual performance. The shortcomings found within the company's structure, such as the lack of monitoring and training strategies provided by the company show that gendered habitus will continue to be embedded in prospective appraisers' norms and actions. Consequently, gendering will continue to go unnoticed and unchallenged. Furthermore, unbiased PA processes may lead to wrong organisational decisions in relation to administration. This is because the study found that those who are considered and awarded as high performers are those employees who know how to socialise, while women who hold job-related skills are kept in lower roles and their skills are under-utilised.

Appendices

Appendix A

Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal

Pseudonym (can be chosen by respondent) _____

Date of interview   _____

Duration   _____

Questions to Appraisees

Sex   _____

Education Level _____

Occupational Role _____

Employment length within the company _____

How many years have you been appraised by the PA system _____

Parental Status _____

PA Satisfaction level

1. You have been employed by the company and appraised through the PA system for 'x' years. Can you tell me how satisfied you are with the PA system as a whole from 1(minimum) – 5 (maximum).

   If you were given the choice would you work under the PA system or not? Why/why not?

2. Does the PA system makes any difference to your working life/career?

3. Do you think that the PA system considers your own needs? [Prompt: such as the time you can give, parental measures entitlement …]

4. After discussing your situation within the PA system, how satisfied would you say you are, on a scale of 1 (minimum)-5 (maximum), with each of the following stages of the PA system (backed up with a reason for your rating):

- Allocation of technical targets

- Allocation of behavioural targets

- Awarding of ratings for technical targets

- Awarding of ratings for behavioural targets

- Giving recommendations

<u>Appraisees PA Experience</u>

5. Have you ever had a low score in your working experience under the PA system? In your opinion, which factors impacted on the evaluation in these situations?

6. Have you ever been awarded different ratings from what you were expecting? Where was this difference manifested? [Prompt: behavioural or technical?]

7. Have you noticed any change in the PA evaluation during your time with the company? [Prompt: example, one year very high ratings and the next a lower score. What factors contributed to this difference in your opinion?]

8. Would you say you have always been allocated targets, assigned ratings and given final recommendations as you expected? If not – why? Can you give an example?

<u>Appraiser actions in the PA process</u>

9. On what goals is the PA system is evaluated, what factors are considered?

   So you are saying that the PA system is evaluated on technical goals and behaviour-related skills. From your experience, are both goals allocated and rated in the best way for you as an Appraisee? Can you give an example?

10. Are you satisfied with all your appraisers and how they conduct the PA system? In what way (s)?

11. Do you think that all appraisers rate other appraisees with the same measuring rule as the one you are measured against? Have you got an experience or an example?

12. In your experience, does who the appraiser is make any difference? Can you give an example?

13. The PA system starts with the allocation of goals. Which criteria used in both goals (technical and behaviour) are, in your opinion, adequate, and which are less adequate. [Prompt: such as assessing on after-hours activities, long hours at work, un/realistic targets…]

<u>The most valued characteristics within the performance appraisal system</u>

14. When you are evaluated, is your evaluation given the same consideration and importance as your colleagues'? [Prompt: such as any other department, branch, men, women, younger, older colleagues.]

15. If I said you that all the appraisers value and award employees who perform excellently, what would you say? [Prompt: so what is it you need to get a high rating in your performance appraisal?]

16. Which factors are important to have in order to receive high ratings in both the behavioural and the technical sections of the appraisal? In your opinion are these factors justified? Do you think that they come from the appraisers or the organisation?

The organisation's contribution to gender equality

17. Do you think that your organisation conducts PAs in the best possible way? Why and how?

18. If I say to you that 'Your Company tries to prevent the influence of the appraiser's subjectivity throughout the PA system. What would you say?

19. Do you think that the PA should consider different employees' needs or should there be a standard practice?

20. The government is in the process of introducing a number of family-friendly measures in the public sector such as maternity leave, paternity leave and free child care centres. Is the PA system flexible regarding such situations. If yes how?

Appendix B

Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal

Pseudonym (can be chosen by respondent)_____

Date of Interview_____

Duration _____

Questions to Appraisers

Sex _____

Education Level_____

Occupational Role_____

Employment with the company_____

Status and Dependants_____

Household responsibility Sharing (Partner full timer)_____

Confirming or Direct Appraiser _____

How many years have you been appraising _____

Experience as appraiser

1. You told me that you have been an appraiser for x years. What is your experience as an appraiser? How have you got on appraising your employees, do you think?

Did you receive any type of training? Do you feel you need any kind of PA training? And what about other Appraisers, from your experience, do they need PA training? In what and why?

2. The PA system appoints a direct appraiser and a confirming appraiser. What is your experience when coming to allocate criteria, award ratings and give recommendations to appraisees? Have you ever had an experience in which the confirming/direct appraiser had different views/opinions from yours? What were the factors?

<u>Appraisers' gender beliefs and values</u>

3. PA systems are introduced in companies to induce workers to work harder and to be more competitive. On the other hand, in the company there may be hard workers and less hard workers. What type of characteristic/s, factors and attributes should a hard worker have? Is there a way in which hard workers are identified and recognised under the PA system?

4. When coming to appraise your employees do you completely stick to the company guidelines (if any), or have you made your own system?

a. Are the criteria and weightings structured according to the company policy guide or do you as an Appraiser have some discretion regarding what to include in a PA report form?

b. For example, when you come to allocate behavioural and profit generation criteria to your employees, which factors do you consider? For e.g., competitiveness, ability, own initiatives, working time, number of years?

c. And when you come to rate behavioural and profit generation goals what factors do you consider? E.g., flexibility, working hours, loyalty, performance, any company instructions of how the ratings should be distributed.

5. Today there are different working patterns including reduced, flexi working hours and career breaks. Is this reflected in the performance of your unit and how? How does the PA system cater for these situations, or is it from your side as an Appraiser to tailor accordingly?

What about longer working hours – are these recognised in the PA system and how do you distinguish between those working longer hours and those who work less? Is overtime taken into consideration in the PA?

6. The criteria of the objective goals are more tangible and better reflect the organisation's core objectives. Imagine that the company needs a new project or a deposit account campaign of EUR600,000 to be accomplished within 2 weeks. How would you allocate these to your current appraisees. And which factors would you consider when you distribute the goals? [Prompt: competitiveness, ambition, working hours, capabilities]

How is this extra project/profit generation product considered in the PA system (behavioural/profit generation part)?

7. The PA allocates ratings from 1 to 5, and now with the new system the PA awards 1 to 3 stars to each appraisee. In a way, PA is exercising a rating division of who is a 1-star, a 2-star and a 3-star, (it's like students in a class– A student, B student and C student). Do you think that everyone could be a 3-star employee? What makes the difference between a 3-star employee from a 1-star employee (perhaps some common thing/factor that you have noticed during your experience that works)?

The organisation's contribution to the performance appraisal

8. Do you see any differences in the way the PA system is processed within the company? [Prompt: differences between criteria, ratings and recommendations between one unit and another, from year to year or from one head to another.]

9. The PA system is employed on you, too, and it captures your end results depending on the people in your team and their output. Could I ask you to list some important characteristics and factors that your team of employees should have for you to be successful in your work?

As an appraisee, what factors do you feel the PA process does not consider and needs improvement in? What is the company doing to improve the PA system?

Appendix C

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Role of Key Informant	Status	Employment in the Company	Employment under the PA	Role
1	Jessica	Female	Appraisee	Married 2 children	18 years	11years	Manager
2	July	Female	Appraisee	Married 2 children	34 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
3	Katrina	Female	Appraisee	Married 1 child	18 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
4	Emma	Female	Appraisee	Married 1 child	25 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
5	Andre	Male	Appraisee	Married 1 child	26 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
6	Amber	Female	Appraisee	Single	18 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
7	Otaner	Male	Appraisee	Married 2 children	31 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
8	Joe	Male	Appraisee	Married 2 children	20 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
9	John	Male	Appraisee	Single	7 years	7 years	Senior Relationship Officer

10	Andrew	Male	Appraisee	Married 2 children	21 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
11	Jane Doe	Female	Appraisee	Married 1 child	29 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
12	Pamela	Female	Appraisee	Single	10 years	10 years	Senior Relationship Officer
13	James	Male	Appraisee	Married 1 child	19 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
14	Guido	Male	Appraisee	Married 2 children	20 years	11 years	Manager
15	Karl	Male	Appraiser Direct	Single	16 years	11 years Appraisee 4 years Direct Appraiser	Manager
16	Laura	Female	Appraisee	Married 2 children	22 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
17	Stephen	Male	Appraiser Direct and Confirming	Single	16 years	6 Years Direct Appraiser 4 Years Confirming Appraiser	Head of Department
18	Simon	Male	Appraiser Direct	Single 2 children	39 years	11 years Direct Appraiser	Manager
19	Joseph	Male	Appraiser	Married	22 years	11 years Direct Appraiser	Manager

			Direct	2 children			
20	Maria	Female	Appraisee	Single	18 years	11 years	Manager
21	Josette	Female	Appraiser Direct	Married 1 child	21 years	6 years Direct Appraiser	Manager
22	Mario	Male	Appraisee	Married 1 child	16 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Officer
23	Nicole	Female	Appraisee	Married 1 child	15 years	11 years	Senior Relationship Manager
24	Matteo	Male	Appraisee	Single	10 years	10 years	Senior Relationship Manager
25	Martina	Female	Appraisee	Single	14 years	11 years	Manager
26	Monica	Female	Appraiser Direct and Confirming	Married 2 children	26 years	3 years Direct Appraiser 4 years Confirming Appraiser	Manager
27	Michela	Female	Appraiser Direct	Single	20 years	9 years Direct Appraiser	Manager
28	Luke	Male	Appraiser	Married 2 children	26 years	3 years Direct 8 years Confirming Appraiser	Senior Manager
29	Michael	Male	Appraisee	Married 2 children	20 years	11 years	Manager

Appendix D

University of Leicester
School of Management
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RH

16 January 2015

To whom it may concern,

Angele Ellul Fenech is a candidate for the degree of doctoral in social science at the University of Leicester School of Management. She has already completed significant coursework and is now preparing her thesis on performance appraisal in the banking sector. As her supervisor on this course, I confirm that she has sought ethical approval through the necessary channels at the University of Leicester and is conducting this research work for the purpose of her D.SocSci thesis.

Please do let me know if you require further information from me.

Yours sincerely,

Shireen Kanji

Senior Lecturer

Appendix E

Angele Ellul Fenech

Email: angor@maltanet.net

Dr. Shireen Kanji

Email: Sk543@leicester.ac.uk

Dear employees,

It is over 10 years that the performance appraisal system has been adopted in this organisation. As an employee surely you have knowledge about this measuring system, which has shaped your belief about practices used by the organisation. I, Angele Ellul Fenech, a University of Leicester student am interested in understanding your experiences of the performance appraisal tool.

This will be part of a project for a Doctoral course titled 'Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal', which relates to a study among men and women in work to explore the different aspects related to work and any potential gaps existing in the employment of organisational practices particularly in the performance appraisal system.

The research forms part of a dissertation project for Social Science. The project is the sole responsibility of the undersigned and under the supervision of Dr. Shireen Kanji at the School of Management at the University of Leicester, England. The study seeks to collate unique information on the different features in the conditions of work afforded to all employees, enabling local entities to implement positive approaches to promote neutrality at work. The European Commission for Equality is targeting various strategies to address existing

employee disparity in the labour market. An interesting recent local study conducted by the NCPE (2012) found that gender inequality among Maltese employees is of high concern. The conveyance of this study is therefore important to understand employees' beliefs that lead to everyday organisational activities which you or one of your relatives may experience.

I am interested in interviewing both male and female employees, with over ten years of employment within this company who participate in the performance appraisal system either as an appraiser or an appraisee. I would be most grateful if you were willing to spend 45 to 60 minutes answering and discussing a set of questions with the undersigned. Any information you provide will be treated with the strictest of confidence and all data collected will be used only for my Doctorate thesis. Your own data will not be used in any way that could lead to the identification of any individual participating in the study. Indeed, your responses, like many others, will be used in analysis of the aggregate results for all respondents and some important findings may be quoted individually without reference to any detail through which the individual could be identified. Those interested in collaborating in this project may contact the undersigned on the details provided within one month of this email.

I shall respect a strict code of data protection and social research ethics in accordance with ethical codes set out in the British Sociological Guidelines and according to the Maltese Data Protection Act and promise that information will be destroyed within two years of the interview. This project is not undertaken on behalf of or in collaboration with the organisation you are employed by. As such, none of the data collected will be accessible to the company.

Participants in this study who are interested in acquiring a copy of the study findings and recommendations may contact the undersigned on the provided contact details once the study is completed and approved by the University supervising and authorising this project.

Consequently, I am inviting you to voice your experiences of the performance appraisal tool on a voluntary basis, which may contribute to better effective deployment of the resources available.

Thank you

Angele Ellul Fenech

Appendix F

Angele Ellul Fenech

Email: angor@maltanet.net

DATA PROTECTION/INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research on 'Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal'. I greatly appreciate you giving up your time in order to help me. I am undertaking this project as part of a Doctorate degree which I am studying with the University of Leicester. The study relates to the employee equality phenomenon which refers to the equal opportunity given to each and every employee within the organisation irrespective of gender and status. This project aims to understand how the Performance Appraisal is employed in real life.

You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you are happy to take part in the research, I am asking you to sign a consent form in order to give your consent. You can still withdraw from the research after signing the form. The interview will last for about one hour and a series of questions will be asked and will give you the opportunity to ask me any questions you may have. I would like to reassure you that the information which you provide in the course of the interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Your answers will be unattributed to either yourself or to the organisation you work for. Your own data will be completely anonymous and you will not be identifiable as fictitious names are to be used. Your response like many others will be used for analysis of aggregate results for all respondents. Any important quotations are to be shown individually, without referring to any particular detail through which the individual could be identified. In addition, all data collected will be treated in accordance with ethical codes set out in the British Sociological Guidelines and according to the Maltese Data Protection Act. The project is the sole responsible responsibility of solely by the

undersigned and under the supervision of Dr. Shireen Kanji at the School of Management at the University of Leicester, England. The study is not being undertaken on behalf of or in collaboration with the organisation you are employed in. The data gathered during the interview will only be used for my Doctorate thesis and will not be accessible to the company through any means.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation. If you have any questions at any stage of the project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Angele Ellul Fenech

Angele Ellul Fenech

Email: angor@maltanet.net

Dr. Shireen Kanji

Email: Sk543@leicester.ac.uk

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

'Employee Equality in Performance Appraisal' study by Angele Ellul Fenech supervised by Dr. Shireen Kanji from the School of Management at University of Leicester, England.

I agree to take part in an interview as part of the above named project. The research has been clearly explained to me and I have read and understood the participant informed consent letter. I understand that by signing the consent form I am agreeing to participate in this research and that I can withdraw from the research at any time. I understand that any information I provide during the interview is confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than the research project outlined above. The data will not be shared with any other organisations.

I agree that the interview can be audio taped by voice recorder: YES/NO

Reference Name …………………………………………..

Participant Signature………………………………… Date: ………………

Angele Ellul Fenech Signature..

Bibliography

Abela, A. M. (1991), *Transmitting Values in European Malta: A Study in the Contemporary Values of Modern Society,* Valletta and Rome: Jesuit Publications and Editrice Pontifica Universita Gregoriana.

Acker, J. (2006), Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations, *Gender & Society*, Vol.20, No.4, (August), pp.441-464.

Acker, J. (1992), From Sex roles to Gendered Institutions, *Contemporary Sociology*, American Sociological Association, Vol. 21, No.5 (Sep. 1992), pp.565-569.

Acker, J. (2000), Revisiting Class: Thinking from Gender, Race and Organizations, *Social Politics,* (Summer 2000) pp.192-214.

Acker, J. (2008), Helpful Men and Feminist Support: More than Double Strangeness, *Gender, Work & Organization,* Vol.15, No. 3 (May, 2008), pp.288-293.

Acker, J. (1990), Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations, *Gender & Society,* Vol. 4, No.2 (Jun, 1990), pp.139-158.

Aguinis, H. (2013), *Performance Management*, 3rd Edition, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Arthur, M., Del Campo, R. and Van Buren, H. (2011), The impact of gender-differentiated golf course features on women's networking, *Gender in Management*, Vol.26, No.1, pp.37-56.

Arthur, S. and Nazroo, J. (2003), Designing Fieldwork Strategies and Materials, in Ritchie, J and Lewis, J, (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers,* London: Sage.

Babcock, L. and Laschever, S. (2003), *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide,* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Baker, G. P.*,* Jensen, M. J., and Murphy, K. J*. (*1988), Compensation and Incentives: Practice vs. Theory*, Journal of Finance,* Vol.18*,* pp.593–616*.*

Banyard, K. (2010), *The Equality Illusion: The Truth about Women and Men Today*, London: Faber and Faber.

Baron, J. N., Hannan, M. T., Hsu, G., and Kocak, O. (2007), In the company of women: Gender inequality and the logic of bureaucracy in start-up firms, *Work and Occupations,* Vol.34, No.1, pp.35-56.

Bauer, C. C. and Baltes, B.B. (2002), Reducing the Effects of Gender Stereotypes on Performance Evaluations, *Sex Roles,* Vol.47, No.9-10, pp.465-476.

Beardwell and Thompson (2014), *Human Resource Management: A Contemporary approach*, 7th Edition, Harlow: Pearson.

Becker, G. S. (1971), *The Economics of Discrimination*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, G.S. (1985), Human capital, effort and the sexual division of labor, *Journal of labor economics*, Vol.3, No.1, S33-S58.

Becker, G.S. (1993), Nobel lecture: The economic way of looking at behaviour, Journal of Political Economy, pp.385-409.

Bell, J. (1997), *Doing Your Research Project: A guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*, 2nd Edition, Buckingham: Open University Press in CLMS (1.2) Doctorate in Social Sciences *Introduction to Social Research*, Module 1 Unit 1.

Bender, K. A*.,* Green, C. P., and Heywood, J. S. (2012), Piece Rates and Workplace Injury: Does Survey Evidence Support Adam Smith?*, Journal of Population Economics* Vol.*25,* pp.569–*590.*

Bennett, R. (1987), How performance appraisals hurt women managers, *Women in Management Review*, Vol.2, No.3, pp.145-153.

Benschop, Y. and Doorewaard, H. (1998), Covered by equality. The gender subtext of organizations, *Organization Studies*, Vol.19, No.5, pp.787-805.

Benschop, Y. and Meihuzen, H. E. (2002), Keeping up gendered appearances: representations of gender in financial annual reports, *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol.27, Iss.7, (Oct. 2002), pp.611–636.

Best, R.G., Stapleton, L.M., and Downey, R.G. (2005), Core Self-Evaluations and Job burnout: the test of alternative models, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* Vol. 10, No.4 (Oct), pp.441-451.

Bevan, S. and Thompson, M. (1992), *An overview of policy and practice*, *Personnel Management in the UK: an analysis of the issue*, London: IPM.

Bezzina, F., Azzopardi, R.M. and Vella. G. (2013), Understanding and Assessing the Work Motivations of Employed Women: Insights into Increasing Female Participation Rates in the Maltese Labor Market, *Sage Open* , Vol.3, No.3, (July-September), pp.1-14.

Biernat, M., and Kobrynowicz, D. (1997), Gender- and race-based standards of competence: Lower minimum standards but higher ability standards for devalued groups, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.72, pp.544-557.

Blair-Loy, M. (2001), Cultural constructions of family schemas: the case of women finance executives, *Gender & Society*, Vol.15, No.5, pp.687-709.

Blair-Loy, M. (2003), Globalisation, work hours and the care deficit among stockbrokers, *Gender & Society*, Vol.17, pp.230-249.

Blair-Loy, M., and Warton, A.S. (2004), Organizational commitment and constraints on work-family policy use: Corporate flexibility policies in a global firm, *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.47, pp.243-267.

Blau, F.D, and Kahn, L.M, (2000), Gender Differences in Pay*, Journal of Economic Perspectives,* Vol.14, pp.75-99.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2001), *How to research*, 2nd Edition, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Blume, B.D., Baldwin, T.T. and Rubin, R.S. (2009), Reactions to different types of forced distribution performance evaluation systems, *Journal of Business Psychology,* Vol.24, No.1, pp.77-91.

Borman, W. C. and Motowidlo, S.J. (1993), Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In Schmitt, N. and Borman, N. (Eds., *Personnel Selection in Organizations* (pp.71-98), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Boswell, W.R and Boudreau, J.W. (2000), Employee satisfaction with performance appraisals and appraisers: The role of perceived appraisal use, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol.11, Iss.3, (Autumn, 2000), pp.283-299.

Bourdieu, P. (1972), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London, Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). '*The Forms of Capital'. Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Capital*, by J. G. Richardson, New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001), *Masculine Domination*, translated by Richard Nice, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant Loic. J. D. (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bradley, H., Erickson, M., Stephenson, C. and Williams, S. (2000), *Myths at Work*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brandes, S. (1980), *Metaphors of Masculinity, Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Brown, C. (1990), Firms' Choice of Method of Pay, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol.43, No.3, pp.165-182.

Brown, M*, and* Heywood*, J.* S, (2005), Performance Appraisal Systems: Determinants and Change*. British Journal of Industrial Relations,* Vol.42*,* (Dec.), pp.659–79.

Brown, M., Hyatt, D. and Benson, J. (2009), Consequences of the performance appraisal experience, *Personnel Review*, Vol.39, No.3 pp.375-396.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods,* 3rd Edition, US*:* Oxford University Press Inc. New York.

Ministry For Finance (2013), Budget Speech 2014, Accessed: 10/08/2017, URL: http://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2014/Budget2014_Speech_EN.pd.

Burgess, R.G. (1990), *In the Field Research*, *An Introduction to Field Research*, Contemporary Social Research, Vol.8, London: Routledge

Buzzanell, P., Meisenbach, R., Remke, R., Lui, M., Bowers, V. and Conn, C. (2005), The good working mother: Managerial women's sensemaking and feelings about work-family issues, *Communication Studies*, Vol.56, Iss.3, pp.463-495.

Cahusac, E. and Kanji, S. (2014), Giving up: How gendered organizational cultures push mothers out, *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol.21, No.1, pp.57-70.

Cameron, D. (1981), Performance Appraisal and Review, *Management Decision*, Vol.19, No.6 pp.3-54.

Camilleri-Cassar, F. (2005), *Gender equality in Maltese social policy? Graduate women and the male breadwinner model*, Malta: Agenda.

Central Bank of Malta (2007), Malta's Economy on the Path to the Euro, Accessed: 14/08/2017, URL: https://www.centralbankmalta.org/file.aspx?f=31430

Chetcuti Cauchi (2017), Malta's Financial Services Industry- Performance in 2013, by Mifsud Parker, P., Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://www.ccmalta.com/news/malta_s-financial-services-industry

CIPD (2009), Performance Management in Action, Current trends and practice, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/AC5B3F1D-CA83-4CB2-AD97-9B2333411133/0/Performance_management_in_action.pdf

CIPD (2017), Performance management: understand and implement the fundamentals of performance management, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-topics/performance-management.aspx

CLMS (1.2) Doctorate in Social Sciences *Introduction to Social Research*, Module 1, Unit 1.

Cockburn, C. (1991), *In the Way of Women: Mem's Resistance to Sex equality in Organizations*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Coffey, A. and Atkinson, P. (1996), *Making sense of qualitative data: complementary research strategies*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Coltrane, S. (2010), Gender Theory and Household Labor, *Sex Roles A Journal of Research,* Vol.63, Iss.11-12, pp.791-800.

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities,* 2nd Edition, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cook, C. and Walters, M. (1998), 'The impact of organizational form on gendered labour markets in engineering and law', *The Sociological Review*, Vol.46, No.2, pp.314-339 in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2.

Cortis, R. and Cassar, V. (2005), Perceptions of and about women as managers: Investigating job involvement, self-esteem and attitudes. *Women in Management Review*, Vol.20, No.3 pp.149-164.

Countrymeters (2017): Malta Population, Accessed: 12/08/2017, URL: http://countrymeters.info/en/Malta

Crompton, R. (1997), *Women and Work in Modern Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DeNisi, A. S., Cafferty, T., and Meglino, B. (1984), A cognitive view of the performance appraisal process: A model and research propositions, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, Vol.33, pp.360-396.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2008), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, London: Sage Publications.

Desai S. D., Chugh, D., and Brief, A. (2014), The Implications of Marriage Structure for Men's Workplace Attitude and Behaviors towards Women, *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Vol.59, Iss.2, pp.330-365.

Diener, E. and Crandall, R. (1978), *Ethics in Social and Behavioural Research*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press in Bryman, A., (2008) *Social Research Methods,* 3rd Edition, New York: Oxford University Press.

Distefano, M. K. and Pryer, M. W. (1986), Factorial assessment of rated work performance with entry level psychiatric aides. *Psychological Reports*, Vol.59*,* pp.479–482.

Drazin, R. and Auster, E.R. (1987), Wage Differences between Men and Women: Performance Appraisal Ratings vs. Salary allocation as the Locus of Bias, *Human Resource Management*, Vol.26, No.2, (Summer 1987), pp.157-168.

Driessen, H. (1983), Male Sociability and Rituals of Masculinity in Rural Andalusia, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol.56, No.3 (Jul, 1983), pp.125-133.

Eagly, A.H., and Steffen, V.J. (1984), Gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social roles, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.46, pp.735-754.

Eagly, A.H. (1987), *Sex differences in social behaviour: A social-role interpretation*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Eagly, A. H. (1997), Sex differences in social behavior: Comparing social role theory and evolutionary psychology, *American Psychologist*, Vol.52, pp.1380–1382.

Eagly, A., Wood, W. and Diekman, A. (2000), *Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: a current appraisal.* In Eckes, T. and Traunter, H.M (2000), *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*, pp.123-174, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eagly, A.H., and Carli, L.L. (2007), *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Eckes, T. and Trautner, H. M. (2000), *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Edwards, R. and Holland, J. (2013), *What Is Qualitative Interviewing*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Edwards, J. R., and Rothbard, N. P. (2000), Mechanisms linking work and family: Clarifying the relationship between work and family constructs, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.25, No.1, pp.178-199.

Eikhof, D.R. (2012), A double-edged sword: twenty-first century workplace trends and gender equality, *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol.277, Iss.1, pp.7-22.

European Commission Eurostat statistical books, (Eurostat), (2008), *The Life of women and men in Europe 2008,* A statistical portrait, Population and social conditions, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission Justice, (2010), *Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010*, *The gender balance in business leadership,* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission Social Europe (2010), *Demography report 2010, Older more numerous and diverse Europeans,* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2011), *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission, Eurostat, (2012a), *Labour market participation by sex and age,* Accessed: 27/05/2017, URL:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Labour_market_participation_by_sex_and_age

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2012b), *Employment rate, by sex percent Females*, Accessed: 27/05/2017, URL: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsdec420&language=en

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2013), Accessed: 27/05/2017, URL: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Table 2_The_unadjusted_gender_pay_gap_by_NACE,_2011.png&filetimestamp=20130301142021

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2013a), Accessed: 27/05/2017, URL: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc340&plugin=0

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2013b), Accessed: 27/05/2017, URL: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Table 2_The_unadjusted_gender_pay_gap_by_NACE,_2011.png&filetimestamp=20130301142021

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2014a), *Gender Equality in the Workforce: Reconciling work, private and family life in Europe,* Contract ref no: JUST/2011/GEND/PR/1081/A4 April 2014 Brussels, Belgium: RAND Europe.

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2014b), Gender balance on corporate boards, Europe is cracking the glass ceiling, March 2014, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140303_factsheet_wob_en.pdf

European Commission, (Eurostat), 2014c, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140502_gender_equality_workforce_ssr6_en.pdf

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2015), Quality of life, Facts and views, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/6856423/KS-05-14-073-EN-N/742aee45-4085-4dac-9e2e-9ed7e9501f23

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2016), National Employee Skills Survey in Malta, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/content/national-employee-skills-survey-malta

European Commission, (2016), Commissioner for Justice, *Gender balance on corporate boards; Europe is cracking the glass ceiling*, Fact sheet (July, 2016).

European Commission, (Eurostat), (2017), Gender statistics, Accessed: 14/08/2017, URL: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_statistics

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, (EFILWC), (2008), *Working in Europe: Gender differences* No: EF/08/34/EN.

Fagan, C. (2001), Time, Money and the Gender Order: Work Orientations and Working-time Preferences in Britain, *Gender, Work and Organization,* Vol.8, No.3, pp.239-266.

Falzon, M.A. (2006), *Breaking the Mould, Women and Men in non-traditional occupations in the Maltese Labour Market*, Employment and training Corporation, Malta: Agenda Academic.

Fanga, M., and Gerhart, B. (2012), Does pay for performance diminish intrinsic interest? *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol.23, No.6, pp.1176–1196.

Farndale, E., Hope Hailey, V., and Kelliher, C*.* (2011*),* High commitment performance management: The roles of justice and trust*, Personnel Review,* Vol.40, pp.5–23.

Fielden, S. L., and Davidson, M. J. (2003), *Individual Diversity and Psychology in Organizations: A Wiley Handbook in the Psychology of Management in Organizations*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

FinanceMalta, (2017), Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://www.financemalta.org/#

Fletcher, C. and Williams, R. (1985), *Performance Appraisal and Career Development*, Vermont: Brookfield Publishing Company.

Fogarty, T.J., Parker, L. M. And Robinson, T. (1998), Where the rubber meets the road: Performance evaluation and gender in large public accounting organizations, *Women in Management Review*, Vol.13, No.8, pp.229-310.

Folger, R., Konovsky, M. and Cropanzano, R. (1992), A due process metaphor for performance appraisal, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol.14, Iss.1, pp.129–177.

Foucault, M. (1972), *The archaeology of knowledge,* London: Routledge.

French, S. and Meredith, V. (1994), Women in public accounting: Growth and Advancement, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, Vol.5, Iss.3, pp.227-241.

Gbadamosi, G and Ross, C. (2012) Perceived Stress and Performance Appraisal Discomfort: the Moderating Effects of Core Self-Evaluations and Gender, *Public Personnel Management*, Vol.41, No.4 (Winter 2012), pp.637-659.

Gibbons, R. *(*1998), Incentives in Organizations*, Journal of Economic Perspectives,* Vol.12*,* Iss.4, pp.115–132.

Goldberg, P. (1968), *Are women prejudiced against women? Trans-action,* Vol.5, Iss.5, pp. 28-30.

Golman, R. and Bhatia, S. (2012), Performance evaluation inflation and compression, *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol.37, Iss.8, pp.534-543.

Gomez-Mejia, (1989), Improving the effectiveness of performance appraisal, *Personnel Journal*, Vol.360, Iss.1, pp.74-82.

Grace, M. (1998), The Work of Caring for Young Children: Priceless of Worthless?, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.21, No.4, pp.401-413 in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2 Option 2B.

Grix, J. (2002), Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research, *Politics* Vol.22, Iss.3, pp.175-186.

Grote, D, (2010), Employee Performance Appraisal- An Ideal System. IN Kondrasuk, J.N, (2011), So What Would An Ideal Performance Appraisal Look Like? *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, Vol.12, Iss.1, pp.57-71.

Guralnik, O., Rozmarin, E. and So, A. (2004), Forced distribution: is it right for you? *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.3, pp.339-345.

Gutek B. A., Cohen A. G., Tsui, A. (1996), Reactions to perceived discrimination, *Human Relations*, Vol.49, pp.791–813.

Guy, M. E., and Fenley, V. M. (2014), Inch by inch: Gender equity since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, Vol.34, Iss.1, pp.40-58.

Hagen, R. L., and Kahn, A. (1975), Discrimination against competent women, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* Vol.5, pp.362-376.

Hakim, C. (1992), Explaining Trends in Occupational Segregation: The Measurement, Causes, and Consequences of the Sexual Division of Labour, *European Sociological Review,* Vol.8, No.2, pp.127-152.

Hakim, C. (1993), The Myth of Rising Female Employment, *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol.7, No.1, pp 97-120.

Hakim, C. (1996), *Key Issues in Women's Work. Female heterogeneity and the polarisation of women's employment*, London: Athlone Press.

Hakim, C. (2000), *Work-lifestyle choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hakim, C. (2003), A New approach to Explaining Fertility Patterns: Preference Theory, *Population and Development Review*, Vol.29, Iss.3, (Sep. 2003), pp.349-374.

Harkness, S. and Waldfogel, J. (2003), The Family Gap in Pay: Evidence from Seven Industralized Countries, *Research in Labor Economics*, Vol.22, pp.369-414.

Haywood, C. and Mac an Ghaill, M. (2003), 'Working Men's Way? Exploring Masculinity at Work', *Men and Masculinities*, Chapter 1 London: Sage in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2 Option 2B.

Hedge, J. W., and Kavanaugh, M. J. (1988). Improving the accuracy of performance evaluations: Comparison of three methods of performance appraiser training, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.73, pp.68–73.

Hermanowicz, J. (2002), The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed, *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol.26, No.4, pp.479-499.

Hind, P. and Baruch, Y. (1997), Gender variations in perceptions of performance appraisal, *Women in Management Review*, Vol.12, No.6, pp.276-289.

Holt, L. (2008), Embodied social capital and geographic perspectives: Performing the habitus, *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol.32, No.2, pp.227-246.

Howarth, C. (2002), Using the theory of social representation to explore difference in the research relationship, *Qualitative Research,* Vol.2, No.1 pp. 21-34.

Hunt, J, (2000), Understanding gender equality in organisations: A tool for assessment and action, *Development Bulletin*, No.51, (March 2000), pp.73-76.

International Labour Office (ILO), (2010) *Women in labour markets: Measuring progress and identifying challenges*, March 2010, Geneva: ILO Publication.

International Labour Office (ILO), (2015), *World Employment Social Outlook, The changing nature of jobs*, Geneva: ILO Research Department.

Jawahar, I.M. (2006), An investigation of potential consequences of satisfaction with appraisal feedback, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, pp.14-28.

Jawahar, I.M. (2007), The influence of perceptions of fairness on performance appraisal reactions, *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol.28, No.4, pp.735-754.

Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., and Thoresen, C. J. (2003), The Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES): Development of a measure. *Personnel Psychology*, Vol.56, pp.303–331.

Kacmar, K. M., Witt, L. A., Zivnuska, S., and Gully, S. M. (2003), The interactive effect of leader–member exchange and communication frequency on performance ratings, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.88, No.4, pp.764–772.

Kanji, S. and Cahusac, E. (2015), Who am I? Mothers' shifting identities, loss and sensemaking after workplace exit, *Human Relations*, Vol.68, Iss.9, pp.1415-1436.

Kanter, R. M. (1977/2008), *Men and Women of the Corporation*, (Rev.ed.), New York, NY: Basic Books.

Kessler, I. and Purcell, J. (1992), Performance Related Pay: Objectives and Applications, *Human Resources Management Journal*, Vol.2, Iss.3, (March, 1992), pp.16-33.

Kondrasuk, J. N., Crowell, E., Dillon, D., Kilzer, S., and Teelye, J. (2008), Appraising Performance Appraisal: The Problems, Proceedings of the 16th International Conferences 2008 of the Association on Employment Practices and Principles, Chicago, IL. In Kondrasuk, J. N, (2011), So What Would An Ideal Performance Appraisal Look Like? *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, Vol.12, Iss.1, pp.57-71.

Kondrasuk, J. N, (2011), So What Would An Ideal Performance Appraisal Look Like? *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, Vol.12, Iss.1, pp.57-71.

KPMG, 2015, Survey on Gender Balance in Senior Management Positions, Accessed: 16/08/2017, URL: https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/278056/KPMGSurveyReportFINALRevised.pdf

Kuvaas, B. (2011), The interactive role of performance appraisal reactions and regular feedback, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol.26, No.2, pp.123-137.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009), *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd Edition, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Latham, G. P., Budworth, M., Yanar, B., and Whyte, G. (2008), The influence of a manager's own performance appraisal on the evaluation of others, *International Journal of Selection and Assessment,* Vol.16, No.3, pp.220-228.

Levy, P. E., and Williams, J. R. (2004), The Social Context of Performance Appraisal: A Review and framework for the Future, *Journal of Management*, Vol, 30, Iss.6, pp.881-905.

Lewis, J. (2001), The Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model: Implications for Work and Care, *Social Politics*, Vol.8, No.2, pp.152-169.

Lewis, J. (2003), Economic Citizenship: a Comment, *Social Politics*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.176-185.

Lewis, P. and Simpson, R. (2010), Meritocracy, difference and merit: women's experiences of advantage and disadvantage at work, *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol.25, No.3, pp.165-169.

Lewis, S., and Smithson, J. (2001), Sense of entitlement to support for the reconciliation of employment and family life, *Human Relations*, Vol.54, Iss.11, pp.1455-1481.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*, London: Sage.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1980), Female leadership in formal organizations: Must the female leader go formal? In *Readings in Managerial Psychology*, edited by Leavitt, H. J., Pondy, L. R, and Boje, D, M., 4th Edition, Chicago: University Press.

Loury, G. (1977), A dynamic theory of racial income difference. In P. A. Wallace and A. M. Le Mund (eds.), *Women, minorities and employment discrimination*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Maas, V and Torres-Gonzalez, R (2011), Subjective Performance Evaluation and Gender Discrimination, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol.101, pp.667-681.

Madden, J. F. (2012). Performance-Support bias and the Gender Pay Gap among stockbrokers, *Gender & Society,* Vol.26, No.3, (June 2012), pp.488-518.

Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA), (2015), Malta Financial Services Authority Education Consultative Council Annual Report 2015, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://careersinfinance.mfsa.com.mt/Files/Annual percent20Report percent202015.pdf

Manning, A. and Saidi, F. (2010), Understanding the Gender Pay Gap: What's Competition Got to Do With It? *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol.63, No.4 pp. 681-699.

Marshall, J. (1995), *Women Managers Moving On*, London and New York: Routledge, pp23-38 in CLMS (1.2) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Advanced research Methods Training*, Module 1 Unit 2.

Martin, C. L., Ruble, D. N. and Szkrybalo, J. (2002), Cognitive theories of early gender development, *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.128, pp.903-933.

Martin, P. Y. and Collinson, D. (2002), Over the Pond and Across the Water: Developing the field of Gendered Organization, *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol.9, No.3, pp.244-265.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*, London: Sage.

Mastracci, S. and Arreola, V. L. (2016), Gendered Organizations: How Human Resource Management Practices Produce and Reproduce Administrative Man, *Administrative Theory & Praxis,* Vol.380, Iss.2, pp.137-149.

Mastracci, S. H, (2013), Time use on care giving activities: Comparing federal government and private sector workers, *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, Vol.33, No.1, pp.3-27.

Maxwell, G. A. and Watson, S. (2006), Perspectives on line managers in human resource management: Hilton International's UK hotels, *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, Vol.17, pp.1152-1170.

Mercer, J. (2007), The Challenges of Insider-Research in Educational Institution; wielding double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas, *Oxford Review of Education,* Vol.33, No.1, pp.1-17.

Mercieca, L. (1999), *Glass Ceilings & Sticky Floors' The Situation of Women Employees at the Banking Sector* unpublished Diploma Dissertation, University of Malta.

Metcalfe, B. D. (2008), A feminist post-structuralist analysis of HRD: Why bodies, power and reflexivity matter, *Human Resource Development International*, Vol.11, Iss.5, pp.447-463.

Mies, M. (1998), *Patriarchy and Accumulation On A World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

Milkovic, G. *and* Newman, J*. (*2002), *Compensation,* 7th Edition, Boston*:* McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Millmore, M., Biggs, D., and Morse, L. (2007), Gender differences within 360-degree managerial performance appraisals, *Women in Management Review*, Vol.22, Iss.7, pp.536-551.

Mitchell, J. P. (2002), *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta, London:* Routledge.

Mobley, W. H. (1982), Supervisor and employee race and sex effects on performance appraisals: A field study of adverse impact and generalizability, *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol.25, No.3, pp.598-606.

Morgen, S. (1994), Personalizing personnel decision in feminist organizational theory and practice, *Human Relations*, Vol.47, pp.665-684.

Murphy, E. and Graff, E. J. (2005), *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men- and What to Do About It*, New York: Touchstone.

Murphy, K. R. and Cleveland, J. N. (1995), *Understanding performance appraisal: Social, organizational, and goal-based perspectives*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

National Statistical Office, (NSO), (2012) Census of Population and Housing 2011, NSO: Valletta, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3998

National Statistics Office Malta (NSO), (2016), Labour Force Survey Q4/2016, Accessed: 16/08/2017, URL: http://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_St atistics/Documents/2016/News2016_006.pdf

National Statistical Office, (NSO), (2017), Labour Force Survey Q1/2017, Accessed: 14/08/2017, URL: https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_S tatistics/Documents/2017/News2017_103.pdf

Ng, E.S.W. and Burke R.J. (2004), Cultural Values as Predictors of Attitudes towards Equality and Diversity: a Canadian Experience, *Women in Management Review*. Vol.19, No.6, pp.317-324.

Ngo, H. Y., Tang, C., and Au, W. (2002). Behavioural responses to employment discrimination: A study of Hong Kong Workers. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol.13, No.8, pp.1206–1223.

Niederle, M., and Vesterlund, L. (2007), Do women shy away from competition? Do men compete too much? *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.122, Iss.3, pp.1067-1101.

Nieva, V. F., and Gutek, B. A. (1980), Sex effects on evaluation. *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 5, pp.267-276.

Nilsen, A., Brannen, J., and Lewis, S. (2012), *Transitions to parenthood in Europe: A life course perspective*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Nishii, L. H. and Wright, P. (2008), Variability Within Organizations: Implications for --*Strate*gic Human Resource Management (CAHRS Working Paper 07-02), Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, *Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies.*

Nye, R. A. (1993), *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France,* New York: Oxford University Press.

O'Reilly, C. A. and Anderson, J. C. (1980), Trust and the communication of performance appraisal information: the effect of feedback on performance and job satisfaction, *Human Communication Research*, Vol.6, No.4, pp.290-298.

Oakley, A. (1974), *Housewife*, London: Allen Lane.

Oakley, A. (1981), *Interviewing Women: A contradiction in terms*, pp.31-61. In Roberts, H. (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Oakley, A. (1998), Gender, Methodology and People's Ways of Knowing: Some Problems with Feminism and the Paradigm Debate in Social Science, *Sociology*, Vol.32, Iss.4, pp.707-731.

OECD, (2016), OECD Family Database, Accessed: 14/08/2017, URL: http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm

Pahl, R. E. (1988), (ed.), *On Work*, Oxford: Blackwell. In Crompton, R. (1997), *Women and Work in Modern Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pateman, C. (1988), *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

Patton, F. (1999), Oops, the future is past and we almost missed it!—Integrating Quality and Behavioural Management Methodologies, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol.11, No.7, (1999), pp. 266–277.

Perfect, D. (2011), Gender pay gaps, *Equality and Human Rights Commission,* Briefing paper 2, Manchester, Accessed: 16/08/2017, URL: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/

Perrons, D, (2009), Women and Gender Equity in Employment: Patterns, progress and challenges, Working Paper 23, *Institute for Employment Studies*, (January 2009).

Phillips, E. M. and Pugh, D. S. (2010), *How to get a PhD: A handbook for students and their supervisor,* 5th Edition, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Phipps, Polly. A. (1996), Due-process performance appraisals, *Monthly Labor Review*, (Mar. 1996), Vol.119, Iss.3, pp. 34.

Pitt-Rivers, J.A. (1977), *The people of the Sierra*, 2nd Edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Plantenga, J. and Remery, C. (2006), *The gender pay gap. Origins and policy responses, A comparative review of thirty European countries,* Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

Pocock, B. and Alexander, M. (1999), The price of feminised jobs new evidence on the gender pay gap in Australia, *Labour and Industry*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.75-100.

Pooyan, A. and Eberhardt, B. J. (1989), Correlates of performance appraisal satisfaction among supervisory and nonsupervisory employees, *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.19, Iss.3, pp.215-226.

Prendergast, C. (1999), The Provision of Incentives in Firms*, Journal of Economic Literature,* Vol.37*,* No.1, pp.*7–63.*

Pulakos, E. D, (1984), A comparison of training programs: Error training and accuracy training, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.69 (1984), pp. 581–588.

Putnam, R. D. (2000), *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, R. D. (1995), Turning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol.27, Iss.4, pp.664-683.

Reskin B .F., McBrier, B. C., and Kmec, J.A. (1999), The Determinants and Consequences of Workplace Sex and Race Composition, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.25, pp.335-361.

Reskin, B. F. (2000), The proximate causes of employment discrimination, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol.29, Iss.2, pp.319-328.

Rhoades, L., and Eisenberger, R. (2002), Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature, *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol.87, Iss.4, pp.698-714.

Riccucci, N. M. (2009), The pursuit of social equity in the federal government: A road less travelled? *Public Administration Review*, Vol.69, Iss.3, pp.373-382.

Rice, R. E. and Aydin, C. (1991), Attitudes toward New Organizational Technology: Network Proximity As a Mechanism for Social Information Processing, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol.36, pp.219-244.

Ridgeway, C. L. and Smith-Lovin, L. (1996), Gender and Social interaction, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol.59, No.3, pp.173-175.

Rizzo, S. (2006), *The Dual Worker Family in Malta* Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta and Fridrich Ebert Stifung (FES).

Robbins, T. L. and DeNisi, A.S. (1998), Mood vs. interpersonal affect: Identifying process and rating distortions in performance appraisal, *Journal of Business & Psychology,* Vol. 12, No.3, pp.313-325.

Robson, C. (2002), *Real World Research*, 2nd Edition, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Rogers, A., Jones, D., and Robinson, G. (1977), Appraisal, Assessment and Equal Opportunity, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol.1, Iss.5, pp.17-21.

Rowald, C. A. and Hall, R. D (2013), Perceived unfairness in appraisal: engagement and sustainable organizational performance, *EuroMed Journal of Business*, Vol.87, No.3, pp.195-208.

Rubery, J. (1992),The economics of equal value, EOC Discussion paper, Manchester, IN Rubery, J. (1995), Performance-Related Pay and the Prospects for Gender Pay Equity, *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol.32, No.5, September 1995, pp.637-654.

Rubery, J. (1995), Performance-Related Pay and the Prospects for Gender Pay Equity, *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol.32, No.5, September 1995, pp.637-654.

Rubery, J., Bettio, F., Fagan, C., Maier, F., Quack, S., and Villa, P. (1997), Payment structures and gender pay differentials; some societal effects, *The International Journal of Human Resources Management,* Vol.8, No.2, pp.131-149.

Rubery, J., Grimshaw, D. and Figueiredo, H. (2005), How to close the gender pay gap in Europe: towards the gender mainstreaming of pay policy, *Industrial Relations Journal,* Vol.36, No.3, pp.184-213.

Saari, M. (2013), Promoting Gender Equality without a Gender Perspective: Problem Representations of Equal Pay in Finland, *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol.20, No.1 (January 2013), pp.36-55.

Sandberg, S. and Scovell, N. (2013), *Lean in*, New York, NY: Random House.

Schmitt, N. and Lappin, M. (1980), Race and sex as determinants of the mean and variance of performance ratings, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.65, No.4, pp. 428-435.

Selden, S. and Sowa, J. E. (2011), Performance Management and Appraisal in Human Service Organizations: Management and Staff Perspectives, *Public Personnel Management*, Vol.40, Iss.3, pp.251-264.

Shore, L. and Thornton, G. (1982), Effects of gender on self and supervisory ratings, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol.29, No.1, pp.115-129.

Simpson, R. (1998), Presenteeism, power and organizational change: long hours as a career barrier and the impact on the working lives of women managers, *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 9 No.3, S1, pp.37-50.

Simpson, R. (2004), Masculinity at work: the experiences of men in female dominated occupations, *Work Employment and Society,* Vol.18, No.2, pp.349-368 in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2 Option 2B.

Smith, S. (2007), *Lone pursuit: Distrust and defensive individualism among the Black poor*, New York: Russell Sage.

Smith, A. and Rogers, V. (2000), Ethics-related responses to specific situation vignettes: evidence of gender-based differences and occupational socialization, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol.28, No.1, pp.73-86.

Smithson, J., Lewis, S., Cooper, C. and Dyer, J. (2004), Flexible working and the gender pay gap in the accountancy profession, *Work, Employment and Society*,

Vol.18, No.1, pp.115-135 in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2 Option 2B.

Spence, J. R., and Keeping, L. (2011), Conscious rating distortion in performance appraisal: A review, commentary, and proposed framework for research, *Human Resources Management Review,* Vol.21, Iss.2, (June 2011), pp.85-95.

Spiteri, L. (2007), *Going out to Work; Factors that Shape Female Working Patterns in Malta,* unpublished MPhil Dissertation, University of Manchester, Manchester Business School, UK.

Stacey, M. (1981), *The Division of Labour Revisited* in Crompton, R (1997), *Women and Work in Modern Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Steiner, D. D. and Rain, J. S. (1989), Immediate and Delayed Primacy and Recency Effects in Performance Evaluation, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol.74, No.1, pp136-142.

Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. M. (1998), *Basic of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Swailes, S. *(*2002*),* Organizational commitment: A critique of the construct and measures, *International Journal of Management Reviews,* Vol.4*,* pp.155–178*.*

Swanepoel, S., Botha, P.A., and Mangonyane, N.B. (2014), Politicisation of performance appraisals, *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol.12, Iss.1, pp.1-9.

Syed, J. and Murray, P. (2008), A cultural feminist approach towards managing diversity in top management teams, *Equal Opportunities International*, Vol.27, No.5-6, pp.413-432.

Taormina, R. J. and Gao, J. H. (2009), Identifying acceptable performance appraisal criteria: An International perspective, *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, Vol.47, Iss.1, pp.102-125.

Teichgraber, M. (2012), European Union Labour Force Survey – Annual results 2011 in Eurostat Statistics in focus, *Population and social conditions*, European Commission No. 40/2012.

Thair, T. and Risdon, A. (1999), Women in the labour market results from the spring 1998 LFS *Labour Market Trends,* (March) pp 103-128 in CLMS (1) Doctorate in Social Sciences, *Gender, Work and Society*, Module 2 Option 2B.

The British Psychological Society (2000-2017), Ethics and Standards, Accessed: 16/08/2017, URL: http://beta.bps.org.uk/standards-and-guidelines/ethical-enquiries-faq

The British Sociological Association (2017), Statement of Ethical Practice, Accessed: 15/08/2017, URL: https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, (NCPE), (2006), *Gender Pay Gap Review,* Malta: Research Report.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, (NCPE), (2007), *Lehen ghal kulhadd- Voice For All* VS/2007/0477 Malta: Research Report.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, (NCPE), (2010), *Underreporting of discriminatory incidents in Malta,* Malta: Research Report.

The National Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality, NCPE, (2011), *The National Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality Annual Report,* Malta: Research Project.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, (NCPE), (2012), *Unlocking the Female Potential,* Malta: Research Report.

The National Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality, NCPE, (2015), *The National Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality Annual Report,* Malta: Research Report.

The National Commission for Promoting Equality, (NCPE), (2016), *The National Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality Annual Report,* Malta: Research Report.

Tinker, T. and Neimark, M. (1988), The Struggle Over Meaning in Accounting and Corporate Research: A Comparative Evaluation of Conservative and Critical Historiography, *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol.1, Iss.1, pp.55 – 74.

Todd, P. and Binns, J. (2013), Work-life Balance: Is it Now a Problem for Management? *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol.20, No.3 (May 2013), pp.219-231.

Trompenaars, F., and Prud' Homme, P. (2004), *Managing change across corporate cultures*, UK: Capstone.

Tziner, A. and Latham, G. P. (1989), The effects of appraisal instrument, feedback and goal-setting on worker satisfaction commitment source, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* , Vol.10, No.2, pp.145-153.

University of Malta, (UOM), (2009) *Biennial Report,* Malta: Centre for Labour Studies.

University of Malta, (UOM), (2013), *Biennial Report 2011-2012,* Centre for Labour Studies, Malta.

University of Malta (UOM), (2016), Facts & Figures, URL: http://www.um.edu.mt/about/um/facts [16/08/2017]

University of Malta, (UOM), (2017), Facts & Figures, URL: http://www.um.edu.mt/about/um/facts [16/08/2017]

Vroom, V. (1964), *Work and Motivation*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wacquant, L. (2011), Habitus as Topic and tool: Reflections on Becoming a Prizefighter, Qualitative Research in Psychology, Vol.8, Iss.1, pp.81-92

Wagner, S. H., and Goffin, R. D. (1997), Differences in accuracy of absolute and comparative performance appraisal methods, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol.70*,* pp.95–103.

Walby, S. (1990), *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Warren, C. A. B., Barnes-Brus, T., Burgess, H., Wiebold-Lippisch, T. with Hackney, J., Harkness, G., Kennedy, V., Dingwall, R., Rosenblatt, P.C., Ryen, A.

and Shuy, R. (2003), After the Interview, *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol.26, No.1 pp.93-110.

Warren, T. (2007), Conceptualizing breadwinner work, Work, *Employment, & Society*, Vol.21, Iss.2, pp.317-336.

Wiles, R. (2012), *What are qualitative research ethics*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Williams, C. L, Muller, C. and Kilaski, K. (2012), Gendered Organizations in the New Economy, *Gender & Society*, Vol. 26, No.4, pp.549-573.

Williams, J. (2001), *Unbending gender: Why family and work conflict and what to do about it,* New York: Oxford University Press.

Williams, J.C. (2004), Hitting the Maternal Wall, *American Association of University Professors*, Vol.90, Iss.6, (Nov-Dec., 2004), pp.16-20.

Williams, J. R. and Levy, P. E. (2004), The Social Context of Performance Appraisal: A Review and Framework for the Future, *Journal of Management,* Vol.30, Iss.6, pp.881-905.

Wilson, F. (1996), Research note: organizational theory: blind and deaf to gender?, *Organization Studies* (1996), Vol.17, Iss.5, pp.825-842.

Winslow-Bowe, S. (2009), *Spousal wage gaps: income disparities in couples*, available at: http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=16369&area=All

Wisecarver, M. M and Carpenter, T. D. and Kilcullen, R. N. (2007), Capturing interpersonal performance in a latent performance model, *Military Psychology*, Vol.19, No.2, pp.83-101.

Wood, R. E. and Marshall, V. (2008), Accuracy and effectiveness in appraisal outcomes: the influence of self-efficacy, personal factors and organisational variables, *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol.18, No.3, pp.295-313.

World Economic Forum (2013), *The Global Gender Gap Report 2013,* Cologny/Geneva Switzerland.

World Economic Forum, (2015), *The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-16*, World Economic Forum Geneva: Columbia University,.

Yin (2003), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd Edition, CA: Sage Publishing.

Youngcourt, S. S., Leiva, P. I. and Jones, R. G. (2007), Perceived purposes of performance appraisal: correlates of individual- and position-focused purposes on attitudinal outcomes, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.3, pp.315-343.