

The Role of Employee Engagement, Empowerment and Culture in Effective Performance Management

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Abstract: Performance management systems (PMS) are an essential tool in shaping employee behaviour in organizations. PMSs are also an important part of today's organizations and provide a framework for improving employee performance, productivity and leadership. Previous studies have not examined how PMSs influence employee behaviour, i.e. what are the mediating and moderating roles in this relationship. This article reviews and synthesizes current scientific knowledge on the influence of performance management systems on employee behaviour and examines the role of mediating and moderating mechanisms in this relationship. A systematic review of 83 research articles published in English up to 2022 was conducted. The review investigated various mechanisms through which PMS influences employee behaviour (specifically employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction). Promising trends and research trajectories were identified through content analysis with a mediating and moderating role. The PMS influences employee behaviour primarily through three constructs - clearly set goals, properly set rewards, and effective feedback delivery. A consistent (effective) PMS subsequently contributes to employee engagement and empowerment, which mediate the relationship. Organizational culture is a moderator because it can deepen the relationship between PMS and employee behaviour. The performance-oriented organizational culture in a company helps to create an effective PMS that positively influences employee behaviour. From a theoretical perspective, this paper synthesizes the results of each research, assesses the knowledge base in our selected research area, and clarifies potential avenues for future research and trends. This research contributes valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve their PMS for sustained employee success and satisfaction, as the literature search described the impact of PMS on employee behaviour through the identification and examination of individual mediating and moderating roles. Managers who pay attention to employee engagement and empowerment can then set up activities to have a good and necessary impact on employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction.

Keywords: Performance Management Systems, Employee Behaviour, Employee Commitment, Motivation, Satisfaction

1. Introduction

The impact of performance management systems (PMS) on employee behaviour has emerged as a significant area of interest for both researchers and practitioners (Awan et al., 2020). The extant literature indicates a strong correlation PMS and employee behaviour (Franco-Santos et al., 2012). While some studies have indicated that performance-related rewards can encourage enhanced work effort and measurable performance, other research has underscored the potential risks and adverse effects associated with such rewards (Pulakos et al., 2015). The practical concerns surrounding performance management systems, namely their cost, time-consuming nature and potential for stress, have been the subject of significant criticism (Murphy, 2020). Rigby and Ryan (2018) highlight additional adverse consequences associated with PMS, including a tendency for managers to prioritize quantity over quality, modifications to the incentive system, and employees focusing on performance goals explicitly included in the incentive plan.

The empirical evidence pertaining to the positive or negative impact of PMSs and the mechanisms by which they influence employee behaviour remains ambiguous and fragmented (Kakkar et al., 2020). Furthermore, the impact of organizational behaviour changes on PMS utilisation has not been adequately investigated (Yuliansyah et al., 2016). Additionally, the relationship between emotions, employee behaviour and PMS remains under-researched (Korff et al., 2017). The existing literature reveals a paucity of research concerning the outcomes of employee performance management, including work engagement and employee performance (Biron et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2016). This article addresses these research gaps by a comprehensive review and synthesis of the current scientific knowledge on the relationship between PMS and employee behaviour, and an examination of the role of mediating and moderating mechanisms.

This study examines the relationship between employee behaviour and three key variables: employee commitment, motivation, and satisfaction. These three constructs are examined within the framework of employee behaviour, as proposed by Gupta and Upadhyay (2012). Understanding these relationships is especially crucial for industries focused on employee productivity and organizational success (Botelho, 2020). In order to pursue specific research questions, a systematic literature review was conducted as part of the research process (Alqahtani et al., 2023). The mediating and moderating roles between PMS and employee

behaviour were identified. The findings were employed to construct a conceptual model, the purpose of which was to elucidate the interdependence of performance management systems and their impact on employee behaviour. Our findings extend the original knowledge by identifying the manner in which the three constructs of employee behaviour (commitment, motivation, and satisfaction) are influenced by each PMS construct, through the mediating role of managerial practices. The implementation of valuable insights facilitates the enhancement of PMS, thereby ensuring the sustained success and satisfaction of employees. By directing attention towards the aspects of employee engagement and empowerment, managers can subsequently establish activities that will have a beneficial and necessary impact on employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction.

2. Research Methodology

In line with Seuring and Gold's (2013) framework, the aim of the literature review is to describe important research trends, synthesize the results of individual research, assess the knowledge base in the research area, and clarify potential avenues for future research/trends. In pursuit of the objective, research focuses on performance management systems (PMS) and their impact on employee behaviour. The aim of this paper is to review and synthesize the current research evidence on the relationship between performance management systems and employee behaviour and to explore the role of mediating and moderating mechanisms. In line with this aim, we adopted a systematic approach (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003) aimed at providing a comprehensive and thorough review of the literature in this area of research (Seuring and Gold, 2013).

Our systematic literature review is limited to the literature published up to 2022. We have used a wide time span, which we consider appropriate given the large development and diversification of different aspects of performance management systems (Nudurupati *et al.*, 2021). The starting point is the question of what gap currently exists in our chosen issue. Subsequently, a search of peer-reviewed English articles in the following databases was conducted: the Web of Science and Scopus, which are the most widely used sources of academic publications in the field of business and management. A narrow search criterion was chosen using keywords (performance management systems, employee behaviour, employee commitment, motivation, satisfaction) - 956 related results were found in the databases. We selected 58 articles related to this issue. Articles were selected for the subject areas of business, management, and business finance as search sources for academic publications (for the categories title, abstract, author keywords). Subsequently, the selection of studies, data extraction, synthesis of results and interpretation of results were performed (Machado *et al.*, 2019). In the next stage, we selected an initial sample of articles based on the title, abstract, and keywords of each article. We selected articles whose title, abstract, and keywords were relevant to the issue.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance Management System

Sahu (2009) describe PMS as a process of goal setting, monitoring, coaching, measuring and evaluating, giving feedback, rewarding and planning of development. Demartini (2014) states that the characteristics of the PMS definitions can be summarized in the following three elements: formal and informal mechanism a process, strategy formulation and implementation, and enabling organizational goals to be achieved through learning and change. Within this context Muhammad *et al.* (2021) states that the goal of the PMS is to achieve the best possible results in the planned goals, to stimulate each employee to high performance and improve competencies, and to eliminate their poor behaviour. In a nutshell, the primary objective is to achieve the organizational goals by influencing the behaviour and performance of individuals (Broadbent and Laughlin 2009; Ferreira and Otley 2009).

As we can see, PMS includes continuous process, at the heart of which lies performance appraisal (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). In recent years, there has been a shift from traditional methods of performance management to modern ones that focus primarily on employee development and growth, as noted by Chillakuri (2018). Current research attention is shifting from control theory in PMS to behavioral theory. This paper seeks to extend the knowledge in the area of the impact of PMS on employee behaviour. Wendt (2014) considers that a PMS which motivates employees to take responsibility for their own development and provides them with the necessary support to do so is optimal. The role of PMS is in guiding employees to meet performance expectations mainly through goal setting, rewards, and feedback, (Kubiak, 2022; Schleicher *et al.*, 2018). For this reason, the three

constructs of PMS will be described in more detail in the context of employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction (Gupta and Upadhyay, 2012).

3.2 Mediating and Moderating Role

3.2.1 Goal Setting, Feedback and Rewards

Regarding employees, PMS is primarily concerned with setting corporate goals, performance targets, as well as challenging employees to meet those goals in a proper and appropriate manner. Goals should be clearly defined, measurable, along with accountability for rewards, which compels employees to act in the interest of the company of their own volition (Lee and Jimenez, 2011; Campbell, 2015). According to Franco-Santos and Otley (2018) setting clear, achievable goals through PMS can drive employee behaviour by providing direction and purpose. As part of goal setting, Murphy's (2020) latest study recommends a coaching-oriented performance management system rather than simply evaluating deviations from goals. In particular, it means building commitment and engagement to the organization and its broad goals, and helping employees who are struggling to meet their individual goals.

A continuous and ongoing feedback process that minimizes the gap between set standards and observed results of actual performance is part of control theory (Buchner, 2007). Effective provision of feedback and performance appraisals can motivate employees to improve their performance and align their behaviour with the organization's goals (Mone *et al.*, 2018). However, according to these studies, it is appropriate to focus feedback narrowly on those employees who need it, and to focus it on learning and development rather than evaluation. Then it can have a positive effect on employee engagement in the workplace (Gruman and Saks, 2011; Mone *et al.*, 2018).

The link between performance measurement and rewards is considered a critical decision that may result in unintended negative consequences (Kerpershoek *et al.*, 2016). Different organizations exhibit different approaches, with some relying heavily on performance monitoring and extrinsic rewards, while others adopt alternative, more facilitative methods to achieve their mission and enhance performance (Franco-Santos *et al.*, 2012; Frey *et al.*, 2013). Performance-related rewards have a greater potential to increase work effort and thus measurable performance (Kuvaas *et al.*, 2017; Gerhart and Fang, 2014). However, Pink (2011) challenges the traditional view that rewards and recognition are the only motivating factors for employees. Various factors such as lack of awareness, different risk attitudes, personal characteristics of employees, differences in organizational culture and management attitudes significantly affect the effectiveness of reward systems and how they contribute to employee motivation and performance (Larkin *et al.*, 2012; Nyberg *et al.*, 2016). In addition, employees' job satisfaction is the result of a positive view of their job duties, as well as the rewards they receive for performing those duties (Khavayet *et al.*, 2018).

3.2.2 Management Practices

Clear and consistent PMSs that signal expectations through goal setting, feedback and evaluation contribute to employee engagement and understanding when well defined and agreed (Biron *et al.*, 2011; Bednall *et al.*, 2022). Work engagement is considered a critical aspect of PMS (Abraham, 2012; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Effective PMS increases work engagement, which leads to superior performance (Smith and Bititci, 2017). Organizations with higher employee engagement build better culture of motivation, commitment and work (Harter *et al.*, 2002; Cheese and Cantrell, 2005). Effectively designed PMS have the potential to increase employee engagement and involvement in work (Medlin and Green, 2009; Mone *et al.*, 2011; Saks, 2019; Scott and McMullen, 2010), leading to increased efforts to achieve organizational goals and improved performance (Anitha, 2014; Awan *et al.*, 2020). Parzefall and Hakanen (2010) found a positive relationship between perceived psychological contract fulfilment and work commitment, with work engagement fully mediating the relationship between perceived contract fulfilment and affective work commitment. In a related study, May *et al.*, (2004) found a significant association between work role fit and work engagement. In order to enhance employee engagement, it is essential that managers receive training in order to recognise, develop and measure it. Furthermore, they must learn how to incorporate it into performance reviews and feedback. It is also crucial to create a supportive environment and provide the necessary resources in order to fully engage employees (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

Empowerment is seen as an act that involves the granting of work power to individuals (Kanter, 2008) a process leading to the experience of power (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990), and a psychological state manifested as

measurable knowledge (Spreitzer, 1995). Empowerment depicts employee cognition at a point in time (Menon, 2001). Viewing empowerment as a psychological state creates a mediating link between acts of empowerment and employee outcomes such as satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment (Seifert *et al.*, 2016). For example, acts of empowerment such as delegation are expected to induce a state of empowerment that can lead to favorable employee behaviours and overall work outcomes such as increased employee satisfaction (Cook and Crossman, 2004). There is a positive relationship between the level of employee empowerment and all dimensions of performance appraisal system quality. Trust has been identified as a mediating factor between employee empowerment and business unit performance (Baird *et al.*, 2020). The relationship between empowerment and business unit performance operates through the perceived quality of performance appraisals, particularly in terms of trust in supervisors (Fletcher, 2001). The way PMS are implemented and managed by the management influences employee perceptions and reactions. Fair and transparent practices are more likely to encourage positive reactions from employees (Awan *et al.*, 2020). As posited by Bakker *et al.* (2011), managers should prioritise the empowerment of employees, not only through the conferral of greater autonomy in the organization of their work, but also through the granting of autonomy in the decision-making processes surrounding the performance of tasks, the presentation of challenges, and the promotion of teamwork.

3.2.3 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture represents the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that guide day-to-day activities in an organization, but it also represents the implicit assumptions that organizational members share (Maher, 2000; Miska *et al.*, 2018). In an organization that has a strong performance-oriented organizational culture, the performance of workers is positively affected (Kotková Striteska and Sein, 2021). For organizational culture to function effectively, it is imperative that managers establish a clear correlation between performance management systems and organizational culture, and foster a culture of knowledge sharing and innovation among employees (Kotková Striteská and Zapletal, 2020). The creation of an environment that facilitates collaboration and the integration of innovation processes with core business activities represents a pivotal step in the attainment of enhanced performance and the safeguarding of a competitive advantage (Azeem *et al.*, 2021).

Organizational culture is an important element of a company because it influences employee behaviour, motivation and values. At the same time, performance-oriented culture is critical factor that enhances the effectiveness of the PMS (Kotkova Striteska and Zapletal, 2020). Performance management systems create career paths for employees and groups of people who stay in the company long enough to create a company culture (Ehtesham *et al.*, 2011). A culture that values performance and learning is more likely to foster positive behaviour changes (Wua *et al.*, 2022). The impact of organizational rewards on knowledge sharing among members is moderated by the type of organizational culture, which in turn influences employee performance (Rohim and Budhiasa, 2019). In general, there is a positive effect of organizational culture on various aspects of employee satisfaction, productivity, commitment and job satisfaction (Wua *et al.*, 2022). Specifically, organizational commitment was identified as a key factor positively affecting employee productivity, which is consistent with previous studies by Tolentino (2013). Job satisfaction can partially mitigate the effect of organizational culture on productivity. Therefore, it is essential for business leaders to prioritize and promote job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees in order to enhance employee productivity (Wua *et al.*, 2022). Organizational culture deepens and strengthens the relationship between PMS and employee behaviour. A well-adjusted performance-oriented organizational culture in a company helps to create an effective PMS that positively influences employee behaviour. The entire relationship defined by our literature review is illustrated in the following figure.



Figure 1: Mediating and moderating roles in the relationship between PMS and employee behaviour

Figure 1 shows the components of PMS and the managerial practices that have a mediating role in relation to employee behaviour. The moderating role is played by organizational culture, which, if well set, has an impact on the different components of the PMS as well as employee behaviour.

4. Conclusion

The findings of our systematic review demonstrate the complex and multifaceted nature of performance management systems, and underscore their pivotal role in fostering employee engagement, empowering employees, and directing our attention toward employee behaviour. The findings highlight the necessity for organizations to implement fair and transparent practices, empower employees through a well-defined performance management system (PMS), and cultivate a supportive organizational culture that is aligned with overall corporate goals. The central conclusion is that there is a need to alter the conceptual framework underpinning current performance management systems, moving away from a control-oriented approach and towards a coaching-oriented one that emphasises learning and development across the entire process.

This study also has limitations as it includes studies selected by us up to 2022 and there may be studies not included in the paper that would differ from our results. Articles were filtered based on the appropriateness of the selection criteria, while there may be limitations in the aspects we selected. The choice of other aspects provides an opportunity for future research. Future research studies should consider the role of performance appraisal system quality with a focus on trust. Building trust through forming relationships and improving employees' perceptions of supervisors' abilities, benevolence and integrity (Baird *et al.*, 2020). Future trends could address the area of aspects that mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational unit performance.

From a theoretical perspective, this paper synthesizes the results of each research, assesses the knowledge base in our selected research area, and clarifies potential avenues for future research/trends. This research contributes valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve their PMS for sustained employee success and satisfaction, as the literature search described the impact of PMS on employee behaviour by identifying and exploring individual mediating and moderating roles. From a practical point of view, the article describes the findings for managers who, if they give attention to employee engagement and empowerment, can subsequently set up activities to have a good and necessary effect on employee commitment, motivation and satisfaction.

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