

What Drives Employee Performance? Revisiting the Human Performance System Model

(Apakah yang Mendorong Prestasi Pekerja? Pengkajian Semula Model Sistem Prestasi Manusia)

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ABSTRACT

The performance of firms is a result of the work performance of its individual employees making up its valuable workforce. While there exist several research models offering their perspectives of work performance factors, the human performance system model offers a relatively more detailed and comprehensive range of determinants of individual work performance. However, empirical evidence for the model seems absent from literature and qualitative evidence seems scant and only limited to a few case studies. The minimal evidence suggests that this area is still in need of exploration. Hence, this paper explores the constructs in the human performance system model from qualitative data through focus group discussion sessions on factors determining individual work performance. The model's six work performance factors are performance specification, task support, consequences, feedback, skills/knowledge, and individual capacity. Data comes from 280 research participants engaged through 33 focus group discussion sessions. The results are consistent with the work performance factors proposed by the human performance system model. Besides lending support to the human performance system model, another important contribution of the study is the identification of research variables, which can be used for the development of a survey questionnaire for future empirical testing of the model.

Keywords: Work performance; human performance system model; organizational support; career awareness; competency; self-efficacy; rewards and incentives; performance targets; performance feedback.

ABSTRAK

Prestasi firma adalah hasil dari prestasi kerja setiap pekerjanya yang membentuk tenaga kerjanya yang berharga. Walaupun terdapat beberapa model penyelidikan yang menawarkan perspektif mereka mengenai faktor prestasi kerja, model sistem prestasi manusia menawarkan julat penentu prestasi kerja individu yang lebih terperinci dan komprehensif. Walau bagaimanapun, bukti empirikal untuk model nampaknya tidak ada dalam literatur dan bukti kualitatif nampaknya sedikit dan hanya terhad pada beberapa kajian kes. Bukti minimum menunjukkan bahawa isu ini masih memerlukan penerokaan. Oleh itu, kajian ini meneroka konstruk dalam model sistem prestasi manusia dari data kualitatif melalui sesi perbincangan kumpulan fokus mengenai faktor-faktor yang menentukan prestasi kerja individu. Enam faktor prestasi kerja adalah spesifikasi prestasi, sokongan tugas, akibat, maklum balas, kemahiran / pengetahuan, dan kemampuan individu. Data berasal dari 280 peserta kajian yang terlibat melalui 33 sesi perbincangan kumpulan fokus. Hasilnya selaras dengan faktor prestasi kerja yang dicadangkan oleh model sistem prestasi manusia. Selain memberi sokongan kepada model sistem prestasi manusia, satu lagi sumbangan penting dalam kajian ini adalah pengenalpastian pemboleh ubah penyelidikan, yang dapat digunakan untuk membentuk soal selidik bagi pengujian empirikal model pada masa akan datang.

Kata kunci: Prestasi kerja; model sistem prestasi manusia; sokongan organisasi; kesedaran kerjaya; kecekapan; keberkesanan diri, ganjaran dan insentif, sasaran prestasi, maklum balas prestasi.

INTRODUCTION

Assessing and improving employee performance is important to organizational success. Performance is defined as activities and measurable outcomes. The performance of firms is a result of the work performance of its individual employees making up its valuable workforce. According to Rummler and Morrill (2004), there is a connection between individual jobs within the organization, the processes which they are a part of, and the results at organizational level. Hence, it is important to understand the factors that drive individual employee performance. Researchers have argued that to improve performance, all organizational elements, i.e. the soft (human resources) and the hard (systems and technologies) are essential (Appelbaum, St-Pierre & Glavas 1998).

While there exist several research models offering their perspectives of work performance factors, the human performance system model offers a relatively more detailed and comprehensive range of determinants of individual work performance.

This study investigates factors influencing individual work behaviour as part of the human performance system model in reference to the work of Rummler (1972), which had been referenced by subsequent researchers such as Wile (1996), Tosti and Jackson (1997), Whiteside (1998), Atkinson and Chalmers (1999), and Langdon (2000) Langdon (2000), and Wilmoth, Prigmore and Bray (2002). There are also more recent works on work performance factors such as that of Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) and Selamat and Heryanto (2019), but the researchers' investigation focuses on different variables in the human performance system model. Further review of literature also reveal that the application of the complete model seems limited to a few case studies such as that of Rummler and Morrill (2004), and Kelly and Huff (2007). Hence, the minimal evidence suggests that the model is still in need of exploration. This paper utilizes qualitative research techniques, more specifically, using focus group discussions, to build on the existing minimal data and to gain deeper understanding on the work performance factors identified in the model. The question to be answered in this study is: What are the factors influencing individual work performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

HUMAN PERFORMANCE MODELLING

The International Society for Performance Improvement (2000) defines the human performance modelling as a systematic approach to improve the competency of an employee involving the process of analysis, evaluation, intervention selection and design, and development, which are elements influencing individual behaviour and accomplishment. Human performance modelling is a method of quantifying human behaviour, cognition, and processes recognised by human resource practitioners as a tool to analyse human functions and employee development for the purposes of optimal customer experience and interaction (Sebok, Wickens & Sargent 2013). Researchers like Langdon (2000) also advocate that the model be applied to predict human performance as many benefits may be gained from using modeling techniques in the human performance field in terms of work process design, selection of job tools, and so on. Other benefits involve tying employee performance analysis to the business needs of a modern organisation to assist projects managers and trainers in improving organisation performance that produce quantifiable outcomes (Lummus 2008).

Researchers and practitioners in the field of human performance recognise Thomas Gilbert as the "Father of Performance Technology" (Dean 1998). Through his work, Gilbert argue that improving employee performance must begin with understanding and eliminating environmental barriers, thus enabling the employee i.e. performers to achieve his or her maximum performance (Dean 1997). Another pioneer in the field of performance technology was Joe Harless, who advocated that understanding causes of a problem is at the root of findings performance solutions (Ripley 1997). Works by subsequent researchers like Mager (1984) moved the human performance technology field towards human performance objectives. His work shifted the focus of the field from instructional design to the analysis of changes in learner performance. Another renowned pioneer researcher is Geary Rummler, a methodologist who had identified that there are ways for managers to improve employee performance (BP Trends 2008). Works by Gilbert, Harless, Mager, and Rummler form the principle foundations for human performance analysis (Rosenberg, Coscarelli & Hutchinson 1992).

The work that seem to have a relatively stronger influence on later researchers is that of Rummler. His human performance system model identifies six factors that affect human performance: performance specification, task support, consequences, feedback, skills/knowledge, and individual capacity (Wilmoth et al. 2002). Rummler argues that an organisation is a system consisting of resources, human capital, plans and products or services for customers, and that the different elements in the organisation function to produce particular characteristics of employee performance. Organisational elements are not in the employee's control and the success of tasks are due to the information given by the manager.

Through the years, other researchers offer their perspectives of work performance factors. Hoffmann (1999) links his work to that of Rummler's by highlighting any work performed by an employee leads to consequences and hence feedback provided by managers to the employee. The employee then perceives the consequences either negatively or positively. Other researchers such as Wile (1996), Tosti and Jackson (1997), Whiteside (1998), Atkinson and Chalmers (1999), and Langdon (2000) further explored Rummler's work in great detail, adding other ways of interpreting the variables. The focus of the authors varies widely from model to model. Nevertheless, what they all seem to have in common is the influence of some external factors in the organisation that are beyond the employee's control. As aptly put by Wilmoth et al. (2002), there is no one single universally acceptable human performance model that can be applied to all environments and business problems.

FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK PERFORMANCE

As this study sets out to further explore the factors influencing individual work behaviour, it refers to the original work of Rummel (1972) and his six factors, namely performance specification, task support, consequences, feedback, skills/knowledge, and individual capacity. This section describes the work performance factors outlined by Rummel and research evidence supporting them based on works of others.

Performance Specification Performance specification refers to the expected outputs or performance targets set by managers for employees (Wilmoth et al. 2002). Mauya (2015) postulates that performance appraisal and target could improve and facilitate the performance of employees. Additionally, established and clear objectives assists them to be more focused on their specific tasks. It is found that existing research discusses the importance of clear performance targets, such as the work of Ashton and Sung (2005), which argue that the use of performance targets linked to strategic aims could be a powerful tool but it requires careful consideration of what is targeted, how targets are applied and how targets are applied to. Other research findings also indicate that a performance-approach goal orientation approach is essential for organisation performance and success. For example, the need for performance target essentially will result in better performance and achievement of task, which enhances an individual competency (Jung, Schneider & Valacich 2010). Benefits for defining performance targets includes assisting individuals to understand their role and contribution and creating standards to measure the efficacy of employees' work. A survey done involving 164 employees in a Kenya Ministry of Tourism concluded that performance targets influence service delivery performance in the ministry (Mauya 2015). It is observed that the existing body of literature support the performance target-work performance link.

Task Support The support provided by organizations for workers to perform their work tasks are commonly termed 'perceived organisational support' in organisational behaviour research such as in the work of Abas et al. (2016). Past studies have indicated that support from organisation has positive implication to employees (Saadiya 2016; Kim, Eisenberger & Baik 2016). The potentiality of this relationship between employees and employer has been seen prominent (Masterson et al. 2000). Empirical evidence such as from Neves and Eisenberger (2014) and Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) have also looked into the perspectives of support which have been related to positive consequences such as low turnover and better employee performance (Neves & Eisenberger 2014). Past researchers have also observed support are drivers of work performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002; Riggle, Edmondson & Hansen 2009) and employee engagement (Basit & Arshad 2016). Resources are defined as anything perceived by employees in the achievement of goals (Halbesleben et al. 2014). Given the appropriate resources, employees are able to complete their work and fulfil their performance requirements in the organisation (Balducci, Schaufeli & Fraccaroli 2011). Other forms of organizational support such as job security and work environment have also been found to influence job performance (Van Vuuren, de Jong & Smulders 2020; Badrianto & Ekhsan 2020). Firstly, past research seems to study different types of organisational support, and secondly, they all seem to indicate its significant impact on work performance.

Consequences In terms of work consequences, researchers have identified the influence of incentives and rewards on employee's behaviour specifically on performance (e.g. Mamdani & Minhaj 2016; Milne 2007). Reward especially if it is in monetary form is known to be a motivator and creates special relationship between employers and employees. Mamdani and Minhaj (2016) research in Pakistan involving 154 bank employees, identified that monetary rewards and incentives play a crucial part in the employee's performance. Similarly, Nawab and Bhatti (2011) survey research in a higher education identified rewards packages are important predictors to maximise the contribution and productivity of the employees. Hence, organisation incentive programs positively influence employees' interest within the organisation. More recent research data also highlight the impacts of rewards as well as recognition on employee work performance (NDungu 2017). Patterns in past research seem to indicate researcher focus on different types of employee rewards, and the findings point to rewards' significant impact on employee work performance.

Feedback Performance feedback has been a great topic of interest specifically to organisational behaviour researchers. Researchers highlight that the likelihood of organisations giving informative feedback will improve human capital performance (Kuhnen & Tymula 2012). Feedback positively influenced productivity and competency of the employees in the organisation. Taylor, Fisher and Ilgen (1984) advocated that feedback is important to improve organizational effectiveness. Lack of feedback contributes to negative implications such as anxiety, and a diversion of effort to perform. According to Anseel et al. (2015), feedback is instrumental in remedying bad performance. Performance feedback allows human capital to evaluate their performance and compare towards their standards of excellence. Zhang (2008) postulated that employees tends to make good progression in their work and efforts increase if they get feedback. Empirical evidence contributed by Menguc et al. (2013) involving 428 service employees and customers in 66 retail stores indicated that feedback positively

predicts engagement and with more engagement comes more positive employee performance. Constructive feedback is shown to improve employee work performance (Rony et al. 2020). Hence, past research data generally seems to be in support of the performance feedback-work performance link.

Skills/Knowledge Many researchers seem to refer to employee skills and/or knowledge as being part of their work competency. Mirabile (1997) define competency as employee knowledge, techniques, and attitudes related to outstanding work performance and measured by a set of standards (Parry 1998). Srividya and Basu (2015) define competencies as management activities which include the combination of knowledge, skills, and behavioural patterns in improving human performance. Farah (2009) mentions that the performance of companies depends on the efficacy of human capital and with the right competency or skills, they are likely to superior in their performance. Having the right competencies has been shown to positively affect the performance of leaders (Mansor & Hamzah 2015). Another research work involving 13 insurance agents in Thailand concluded that the lack of skills hinders employee career development and work performance (Lasim, Fernando & Pupat 2016). It is established that organisations that engage less in the development of employee competency are likely to have negative performance implications (Shah et al. 2001; Wai & Robinson 1998). Muhamadiyah Ariffin (2015) found that lack of competency affected 117 teachers' performance in Indonesian schools. Madaria (2013) further highlights that human resource development by means of competence improvement affects employee performance positively and significantly. More recent research data also highlights the influence of individual competency on work performance (Sabuhari et al. 2020). It is observed that firstly, existing research data refer to job competency or its elements i.e. knowledge, skills, abilities, and secondly, data shows competency as a significant factor in work performance.

Individual Capacity With regard to an individual's capacity to perform job tasks, many researchers refer to the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as a function of belief which an individual hold to accomplish his or her work. Judge and Bono (2001) mentioned that high self-efficacy has positive implications. Related to this notion, individual with high self-efficacy with respect to motivation predicted performance (DeDonno & Demaree 2008). Employees with high self-efficacy are more likely to take challenging tasks and goals, provide better customer service and performance (Stajkovic 2006). Conversely, employees having low belief in self-efficacy will have difficulties in performing or solving a difficult task. They will foster feelings of stress and depression to solve a certain problem (Iroegbu 2015). Employees with high self-efficacy are known to be capable in performing a given behaviour and are found to be socially engaged in rendering supportive services to others (Schwarzer & Luszczuska 2007). High self-efficacy implicates better task effort and well-being specifically when approaching difficult work issues and problem solving (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Employees with relatively high self-efficacy would have lower work related anxiety and higher work performance (De Clerq, Ul Haq & Azeem 2018).

From a review of existing research, another concept that is not among Rummel's six work performance factors but seems to be closely tied to one's capacity to perform job tasks seems to be the general interest in and awareness of one's career. Some researchers offer their explanation. Careers are becoming more dynamic and employees are required to keep up with the changes of the organisation situational context. Essentially, employees are responsible to manage their own career (Segers & Inceoglu 2012). Previous studies have looked into the significant relationship between career awareness and performance such as from Crook, Healy & O'Shea 1984). Cohen (1991) meta-analysis involving 30 studies and 41 samples hypothesized that a significant relationship exists between performance and career decision status. Similarly, a study by Lasim et al. (2016) involving 33 Thai insurance agents concluded that career awareness assists them in achieve goals on the job.

Based on literature support for Rummel's work performance factors discussed so far, the study was designed to gain more definitive support for the constructs. The following section describes the research methodology.

RESEARCH METHOD

The sequential exploratory technique is frequently discussed and used when additional data is required for the purpose of building a research instrument (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2007). This paper explores existing qualitative data on the human performance model through focus group discussion sessions on factors influencing employee work performance. Results are intended for use in developing a survey questionnaire for future empirical research.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Research participants were selected from employees of all levels in the organization, from non-executive to top management, from a Malaysian telecommunication company. They came from four employee levels, which are non-executive, non-executive (supervisory), executive, and executive (managerial). However, for convenience purposes, only employees from two of the biggest divisions in the company, namely the Information Technology and Network Division and the Customer Experience Management Division were targeted in the study. Both divisions are crucial to the quality of service provided to customers, with one division responsible for the technical aspect of the service and the other attending to customer experience. A combination of the manpower strength of these two divisions represents about 50% of the company's total manpower. The work performance of employees in the two divisions are key to the company's product and service excellence.

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the focus group discussion. Participants were supposed to have ample experience working in the company to know the company practices and their jobs well. They must also represent employees of different performance levels. The criteria were that they be permanent staff with three or more years of service with the company, and the group of participants must be from different performance levels (categories), which was determined based on the previous year's performance appraisal scores. Participants included a mix of those in level 1 (not meeting work targets) up to level 4 (significantly exceeding work targets). They were also chosen based on their geographical locations. It was ensured that all the company branches in the respective fourteen states in Malaysia were represented.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Participants were contacted and invited to attend the sessions through email and telephone calls for confirmation of their attendance. The invitation and confirmation process were made easier due to close cooperation with company representatives. The venue and refreshments for the focus group discussion sessions were sponsored by the company as part of a collaborative research project on factors influencing their employees' work performance. Invited participants were also motivated to voluntarily attend the sessions as benefits outlined to them by the company was the greater intention to improve work processes and working environment in the organization, and that their individual responses are confidential and not made available to the company. Rather, only cumulative findings were to be used in reporting the results to company top management. A small gift was provided as token of appreciation for participation. Each participant was made to read and sign a 'Consent Form' prior to participating and promised complete anonymity.

In terms of participant demographics, more than half of them (54.4%) are located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, while the rest come from other states in Malaysia, with each state comprising between 3% to 7% of the participants. Males make up about two-thirds of the participants (66.5%) while females are only 33.5%. The heavy distribution in male employees is due to the participants derived mostly from the company's Information Technology and Network Division, which is inherently made up of more male than female employees. Hence, the participant gender distribution reflects the actual organisational workforce gender distribution. In terms of job category, a majority of nearly 70% (68%) is in the non-executive category, while the rest (32%) are executive. In terms of education background, most have a diploma level education (34.2%), followed by certificate (32.8%), bachelor's degree (29.3%), masters degree (3.6%), and PhD (0.1%). The educational background also reflect the background of the technical employees from the Information Technology and Network Division. In terms of age, most are in the 31-40 age group (31%), followed by the above 51 years age group (26%), 25-30 years (22%), 41-50 years (20%), and less than 25 years (1%).

In total, the study had covered 280 participants via 33 focus group discussion sessions held in the different state offices around the country during a period of two months. Each focus group discussion hosted between 5 – 9 participants and lasted at the most two hours. The sessions were stopped when points raised were redundant or at the point of saturation, which refers to a situation where participants were discussing similar factors (Klenke 2008; Strauss & Corbin 1998). All sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis is done on the taped discussion sessions and field notes entered into computer files, and it is done manually rather than via any qualitative data analysis software due to the relatively limited scope of study.

FINDINGS

This study had set out to explore the factors influencing individual work behaviour based on the work of Rummler and his six factors, namely performance specification, task support, consequences, feedback, skills/knowledge, and individual capacity. The results of the study are consistent with the work performance factors proposed by Rummler's human performance system model. The factors i.e. research variables are discussed below along with their proposed definitions which had been developed based on the study's findings.

PERFORMANCE SPECIFICATION & WORK PERFORMANCE

Study participants view 'performance specification' as having an important influence on their work performance. The construct is often interpreted as key performance indicators (KPIs) or performance targets by participants, and it is described in terms of clarity of work targets, the extent of their linkage with organizational objectives, and employee involvement in target-setting. From the study findings, the construct 'performance specification' can also be referred to as 'performance targets' and is defined as information on the desired level of work performance as set by the organization. Elements relating to performance targets are reflected in the following interview quotes:

"Performance targets are given without any regard for work resources available such as manpower, contractor competence, work material availability..."

"...no communication with subordinates on the setting up of key performance indicators (KPIs)..."

"...unrealistic KPIs. Management keeps increasing KPIs without looking into other factors."

"KPI targets are just way too high...management does not understand the constraints we face at the respective regional offices."

"There are shared KPIs...we depend on others, so our marks are so low because they are affected by the performance of other divisions..."

Unfortunately, it seems that comments made by study participants on the impact of performance specification/targets on their work performance were generally negative ones. Nevertheless, study results show the significant influence of performance targets on individual work performance.

TASK SUPPORT & WORK PERFORMANCE

In terms 'task support', it also has been found to have important influences on participants' work performance. The construct is described by participants in terms of work resources, tools, and facilities, immediate superior support, and peer support. From the study findings, the construct 'task support' can also be labelled 'resources and support', which refers to all types of resources and support required to effectively perform job tasks. Elements relating to task support are reflected in the following interview quotes:

"...not enough individual computers or they are outdated. We are told to go fast, but at the same time not everyone has access to their own computers...(we) have to share"

"With inadequate manpower, sometimes the technical team has to bear with one-man shows... (this) can lead to serious accidents."

"Even basic tools such as test gears are not enough to go around."

"The computer system is forever slow...starts nicely at system launch but when we have multiple users it starts to break down..."

"The new (safety) suits and body harnesses are not suitable to those who have to go into the manhole for repair work...they are heavy...with hooks that get easily snagged on to things. In emergency situations it can be fatal for us."

Similar to the comments made by study participants on the impact of performance specification/targets on their work performance, comments relating to task support also seem imbued with negative tones.

CONSEQUENCES & WORK PERFORMANCE

'Consequences' is another factor that participants view as having an important influence on their work performance. The construct is described in terms of pay-performance link, non-monetary rewards and recognition, individual- and team-based rewards. From the findings, the construct 'consequence' refers to 'rewards and incentives', which include monetary and non-monetary rewards and incentives that recognize and motivate good performance. Elements relating to consequences are reflected in the following interview quotes:

“Rewards are the same between those with expertise and formal certification and those who do not have such things...”

“(Performance) incentives are not adequate especially for the non-executive category.”

“Team performance is not included (in determining rewards)”

“Rewards should have suitable value...but when the ‘Superb Manager’ award winner gets only RM150... (laughs)?”

“Department X gets the thrashing from customers and Department Y provides infrastructure support. But why is the Sales Department the only one getting overseas trips as rewards?”

It is evident that comments capturing the significant impact of rewards on work performance also reveal negative rewards practices.

FEEDBACK & WORK PERFORMANCE

With regards to ‘feedback’, the study’s findings reveal that it is another factor that significantly impacts work performance. The construct is often spoken of in terms feedback quality and frequency, and its link to performance improvement. From the study findings, the construct ‘feedback’ or to be more specific, ‘performance feedback’ can be defined as information on work performance strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement. Elements relating to feedback are reflected in the following interview quotes:

“The (face-to-face) performance appraisal meeting is just for formality. Most managers don’t do it...sometimes (it is done) through WhatsApp only.”

“What happens at the ‘bottom’ do not reach the top...and even if it gets through (to the top), the picture is very much altered...(sneers)”

“There are many problems on the ground that are not known to top management...even problems dating seven years back (laughs)...no changes until now...so how do you improve performance?”

SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE & WORK PERFORMANCE

As for ‘skills/knowledge’, participants also regard it as an important influence on their work performance. The construct is described by participants in terms of technical and behavioral competencies, as well as the ability and willingness to acquire new competencies. From the study findings, the construct ‘skills/knowledge’ refers to one’s ‘competency’ which is defined as the capability to apply a relevant set of knowledge and skills required for the job. Elements relating to skills/knowledge are reflected in the following interview quotes:

“System training is inadequate. Employees have to explore the system themselves”

“The non-executives are grappling with inadequate knowledge of the job...no reference person among the executives who can guide the non-executives”

“(There are) ...no training provided in handling difficult customers”

“There has to be many more equipment training... (such as) proper use of the testing gear...right now there are not used because people do not know how to use (the testing gear).”

INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY & WORK PERFORMANCE

Finally, study participants are also of the view that ‘individual capacity’ wields an important influence on their work performance. However, their interpretation of it seems relatively wider. There seems to be two parts of what they regard as ‘individual capacity’.

Self-Efficacy The first refers to the believe in one’s ability to do one’s job well, which has to do with one’s ability in accomplishing difficult tasks, performing different tasks, and overcoming work challenges. From the study findings, the construct that they are referring to may be labelled ‘self-efficacy’ which is defined as one’s

self belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or to accomplish a task. Elements relating to self-efficacy are reflected in the following interview quotes:

"Customers now are very aggressive. So when employees do not have enough (product or service) knowledge, they become very defensive"

"Confidence? (frowns in disbelief) New staff is not even given formal training or if there are any, they are usually few in between. How can they have confidence on the job?"

"(Employee)...self-confidence on the job is in the red zone area...(it) is low"

"Only when employees have confidence on the job will they be able to perform well."

Career Awareness/Interest The second part of what participants regard as portraying 'individual capacity' has to do with one's career management and development. Participants mentioned of the importance of knowledge of and interest in one's occupational field, and the perceived importance of career development to an employee as a significant factor influencing work performance. Based on this observation, the construct that they are referring to may be labelled 'career awareness/interest' which refers to awareness of and interest in one's existing field of work and one's career development. Elements relating to career awareness and interest are reflected in the following interview quotes:

"(There has been) ...no career movement even for lateral movement...difficulty in transferring staff"

"Promotion is very difficult and very limited..."

"Staff are not given much opportunity to go for lateral movement. Bosses do not want to release them...this demotivates the staff"

"In the state offices, career pathing is not attractive"

In sum, the study's findings seem to be in line with all the six factors outlined in the human performance system model. However, for the factor 'individual capacity' there seem to be two separate constructs at work i.e. self-efficacy and career awareness/interest. Thus, adding to the body of knowledge on work performance factors, qualitative data from this study suggests that seven, instead of six factors serve as important determinants of work performance. Rummeler's six factors are relabelled to better reflect the study's findings, and combined with the additional factor, they are presented in the form of the following variables: performance targets, resources and support, rewards and incentives, performance feedback, competency, self-efficacy, and career awareness/interest.

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

The study has achieved its objective, which is to identify the factors influencing individual work performance. The results are consistent with the work performance factors proposed by the human performance system model. As for theoretical implications, more in-depth analysis via focus group engagement data had allowed the six factors to be effectively revisited with the final analyses revealing seven instead of only the original six factors determining work performance. Hence, this paper not only provides additional support for the human performance system model, it also contributes an additional variable in the model to be further explored by future researchers.

With regard to managerial implications, companies would benefit from knowledge of the seven factors affecting individual work performance. They should invest significant efforts in ensuring that all the seven factors are experienced and perceived positively by employees. For example, ensuring that performance targets are communicated clearly to employees, adequate resources and support are provided together with employee preferred rewards and incentives, specific and continuous performance feedback is channelled to employees, and that employees possess the right competency, self-efficacy, and interests relevant to their jobs. Additionally, efforts should also be made to investigate if the factors may be perceived differently by different employee demographic groups, job categories, and job levels. Any spotted differences would mean that a customised approach is needed to cater to different employee group needs. For example, younger employees might desire more frequent feedback and closer guidance by managers compared to older and more senior employees, and the types of rewards and incentives preferred by employees may also be different according to their ages and marital status.

As for implications for future research, looking at the current gap in empirical data, it is recommended for future researchers to operationalise the seven variables to gain empirical data on the human performance model.

A review of existing organizational behaviour and work performance literature reveals an ample array of survey questionnaires measuring the seven variables appear relevant to be adapted for use as a future data collection instrument.

In conclusion, besides lending support to the human performance system model, another important contribution of this study is the identification of research variables, which can be used for the development of a survey questionnaire for future empirical testing of the model. The availability of empirical data in addition to the qualitative data from this paper would lend further significant support for the human performance model. Data on employee work performance factors are indeed crucial for organisations in managing their workforce. With research evidence on the factors driving employee work performance, people management strategies could be customised to focus on organisational elements that are deemed important to employees. The end result would be enhanced employee work performance that drive business sustainability.

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