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Optimizing Employee Performance and Performance Appraisal Through Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

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Performance Appraisal; 360 degree framework; performance evaluation, performance assessment; Engagement.

This study aims to analyze the effect of performance appraisal on employee performance, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was employed using a survey method involving 161 private sector employees from three major districts in South Kalimantan Province. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that performance appraisal does not have a significant direct effect on employee performance but does significantly affect job satisfaction. Job satisfaction also has a significant impact on employee performance and mediates the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance. These findings suggest that a well-designed performance appraisal system can enhance job satisfaction, which in turn positively influences employee performance. The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of organizations designing performance appraisal systems that not only assess but also develop employees. Theoretically, this study reinforces the understanding of the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance and contributes to the advancement of human resource management practices.

INTRODUCTION

Identifying the impact of performance appraisals on employee performance, including the perspective of appraisal satisfaction, is a key area of research in organizational psychology and human resource management. Performance appraisal systems are widely regarded as crucial mechanisms that influence not only organizational effectiveness but also individual employee outcomes. These systems

can fundamentally explain how employees perceive their roles, their level of satisfaction, and ultimately, their work productivity. The issue is that employees often perceive performance evaluations as one-sided, primarily from a managerial perspective, and influenced by organizational politics (Sahija, 2020; Thielen et al., 2018). Moreover, an emphasis on performance metrics has been found to lead to an over-reliance on measurable outcomes, neglecting personal development and the overall work environment—both of which are vital for fostering a supportive organizational culture (Arifin et al., 2019; Corso et al., 2019).

When conducted fairly, effectively, and transparently, performance appraisals can enhance employee recognition and satisfaction, which are significantly correlated with performance outcomes. Fairness and transparency in performance appraisals have been shown to positively affect employee well-being and clarify the relationship between fairness and performance (Corso, 2019). These findings underscore the need to understand the dimensions of appraisal satisfaction and its implications for overall employee performance.

Furthermore, several studies have demonstrated that job satisfaction is positively correlated with performance, and in some cases, it can better explain the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the performance appraisal process and performance itself (Culbertson et al., 2013; Krats & Brown, 2012). This supports the idea that job satisfaction often depends on the feedback received from appraisals, emphasizing that employees who feel valued and recognized through constructive feedback tend to perform better. Previous research has shown that employees who experience adequate levels of job satisfaction due to effective performance appraisals are more likely to be engaged in their work and achieve higher levels of performance (Jawahar, 2006). Therefore, appraisals that are perceived as supportive and development-oriented can trigger greater job satisfaction, creating a cyclical effect that drives sustained employee performance. Additionally, Culbertson et al. (2013) suggest that ensuring satisfaction in the appraisal process should be a strategic priority for organizations aiming to improve performance outcomes.

Research has also demonstrated the limited relationship between these concepts, suggesting that factors such as perceived appraisal fairness and procedural

justice can strengthen this indirect effect (Mehrez & Alamiri, 2019). The interaction between these dimensions highlights that strategic performance appraisal systems must incorporate elements that foster job satisfaction to positively influence overall employee performance.

Based on the above, this study aims to investigate the role of performance appraisal in employee performance through the mediation of job satisfaction. The results are expected to provide insight into the importance of fair and proportional behavior in performance appraisals for more integrated employee performance management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study emphasizes the importance of adequate performance appraisals that consider employee interests. Building on previous research, this study draws on feedback intervention theory, which posits that feedback, particularly from performance appraisals, influences employee behavior and overall job satisfaction. This theory suggests that feedback is a crucial component for personal growth and understanding performance metrics. Positive appraisal experiences lead to increased satisfaction, which in turn can lead to improved performance behaviors (Pichler et al., 2018; Corso et al., 2019). As demonstrated in the existing literature, effective feedback that recognizes achievements while identifying areas for improvement can be positively correlated with employee job satisfaction and subsequent performance improvement (Culbertson et al., 2013; Corso et al., 2019).

The relationship between performance appraisals and employee performance is a critical topic in human resource management, based on various theoretical frameworks that emphasize the importance of feedback mechanisms and perceptions of fairness. The frequency of performance feedback suggests that regular and constructive feedback during performance appraisals can enhance employees' ability to improve their work performance (Pichler et al., 2018). Furthermore, perceived fairness in the appraisal process, encapsulated in the concept of organizational justice, is essential for fostering positive employee attitudes and behaviors. This finding is reinforced by the fact that appraisal satisfaction mediates the relationship between

performance feedback and job performance (Thurston & McNall, 2010; Corso et al., 2019). Moreover, research has shown that when employees perceive a fair and supportive appraisal process, it contributes to increased job satisfaction, which is positively correlated with their performance levels (Thurston & McNall, 2010; Corso et al., 2019). Therefore, this study proposes the following first hypothesis:

H1: Effective performance appraisal practices can lead to improved employee performance.

Additionally, the relationship between performance appraisals and job satisfaction is expected to show a positive impact. This demonstrates how effective performance appraisal practices can enhance employees' perceptions of their contribution and recognition within the organization. According to Nukpezah et al. (2022), the effectiveness of performance appraisals is closely related to employees' feelings of worth and satisfaction, indicating that a transparent and fair evaluation process leads to increased job satisfaction. Furthermore, Memon et al. (2020) support the idea that satisfaction with performance appraisals is a key driver of employee engagement, which in turn negatively affects turnover intentions, demonstrating a positive relationship between satisfaction with performance appraisals and overall job satisfaction. These findings suggest that a supportive appraisal system can lead to increased job satisfaction by providing constructive feedback to employees, encouraging growth, and reinforcing their value within the organization (Alrige et al., 2022). However, Stimpfel et al. (2022) found contrary results regarding the relationship between performance appraisals and job satisfaction. Therefore, this study proposes the following second hypothesis:

H2: Good performance appraisal practices can increase job satisfaction.

Finally, the positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance has been extensively researched. When employees derive satisfaction from their work, they tend to engage in their roles with enthusiasm, increased motivation, and commitment to achieving their goals (Memon et al., 2020; Ritter et al., 2022). High job satisfaction encourages employees to take ownership of their responsibilities, fostering creativity and innovation. Additionally, job autonomy, as a manifestation of transparency, significantly contributes to employee creativity and

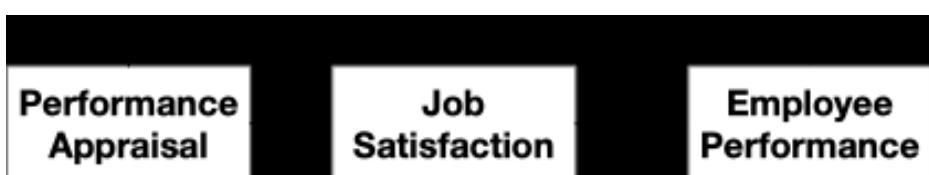
overall performance (Supriyanto et al., 2023). Therefore, this study proposes the following third hypothesis:

H3: Adequate job satisfaction can improve employee performance.

Furthermore, the lack of consideration for job satisfaction as a mediator in the context of performance appraisal is noteworthy and warrants further examination. Most studies emphasize a direct relationship, overlooking the potential role of job satisfaction as a significant mediator between performance appraisals and employee performance outcomes. For example, Memon et al. (2020) explored human resource management practices and their direct influence on various employee outcomes but failed to address how job satisfaction might mediate the impact of performance appraisal effectiveness on employee performance improvement. This omission calls for additional research to clarify the mediating impact of job satisfaction, allowing organizations to optimize performance management strategies that incorporate the significant influence of job satisfaction on performance outcomes. This aligns with the notion that employees may perceive appraisals as punitive or superficial, potentially leading to decreased motivation and engagement (Aly & El-Shanawany, 2016).

H4: Effective performance appraisal practices can improve employee performance through job satisfaction.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Hypotheses



METHODS

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between performance appraisals and employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction. To achieve this, the study employed a quantitative design using a survey approach, as recommended by previous research (Dimitrijevska-Markoski & Nukpezah, 2021; Corso, 2019). The study involved 161 private sector employees from three major regencies/cities in South Kalimantan Province, randomly selected from around Banjarmasin City, Banjarbaru City, and Banjar Regency. Table 1 represent the demographic profiles

which indicates that majority of respondent is gen z, female, and has works for about 1-3 years.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Demographic profile	Middle low	Percentage
<i>Age group</i>		
Millenials	82	50.93%
Gen Z	79	49.07%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	78	48.45%
Female	83	51.55%
<i>Years of experience</i>		
1 - 3 Years	62	38.51%
4 - 6 Years	56	34.78%
> 6 years	43	26.71%
Total	161	100%

To measure the proposed concepts, a questionnaire was developed covering job appraisals, job satisfaction, and performance, using a 7-point Likert scale. Detailed information and references for instrument development are provided in the table 2. Of the 161 responses collected, SEM-PLS data analysis was used, as recommended by previous studies, to identify the relationships between the concepts and produce robust results that explain the findings (Memon et al., 2020; Irawanto et al., 2025; Zamrudi et al., 2025). According to Hair et al. (2020), the SEM-PLS approach consists of two analytical steps: measurement model analysis (including construct validity and reliability) and structural model evaluation (hypothesis testing). The results of the measurement model evaluation, shown in the table, indicate that the data collected meet the necessary criteria, with validity values (loading value > 0.7), AVE (> 0.5), and construct reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha (> 0.68) and composite reliability (> 0.7). Therefore, the data are suitable for further analysis and discussion.

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Variabel/Item	Mean	SD	Loading	AVE	CR	Alpha
Performance Appraisal				0.760	0.848	0.841
X1.1	4.708	1.426	0.851			
X1.2	4.602	1.476	0.821			
X1.3	5.280	1.227	0.939			
Employee Performance				0.653	0.844	0.826
Y1.1	5.006	1.239	0.826			
Y1.2	5.280	1.053	0.777			
Y1.3	5.025	0.952	0.773			
Y1.4	4.696	1.164	0.853			
Y1.5			0.730			
Job Satisfaction				0.676	0.880	0.879
Z1.1	4.708	1.343	0.849			
Z1.2	4.602	1.084	0.828			
Z1.3	5.280	1.295	0.875			
Z1.4	4.932	1.207	0.820			

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, these results indicate that to improve employee performance, organizations should focus not only on effective performance appraisals but also on fostering high job satisfaction, as job satisfaction serves as a key factor linking performance appraisals to improved employee performance highlighted in Figure 2. The results of the structural model analysis, presented in Table 2, details several important findings related to the influence of performance appraisals on employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction.

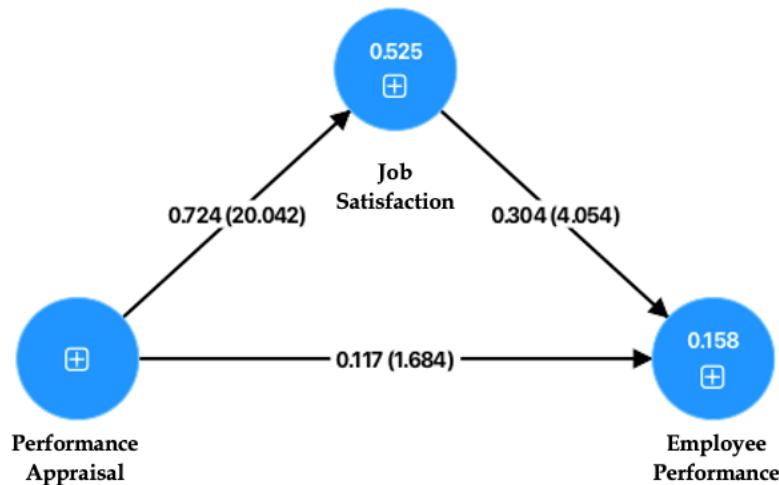
Figure 2. Structural Model Results

Table 3. Hypotheses Testing Results (Direct & Indirect)

Direct Effect	Original sample	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.304	0.075	4.054	0.000
Performance Appraisal → Job Satisfaction	0.724	0.036	20.042	0.000
Performance Appraisal → Employee Performance	0.117	0.070	1.684	0.092
Indirect Effect	Original sample	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Penilaian Kerja → Kepuasan Kerja → Kinerja Karyawan	0.220	0.059	3.720	0.000

The conceptual role of a performance appraisal system is generally expected to directly support employee performance. However, it is highly likely that this factor does not have a direct impact due to several variables that can reduce its effectiveness. The results of this study indicate that performance appraisals cannot directly influence employee performance. Several factors contribute to this finding.

First, the use of performance appraisal instruments can function solely as evaluation tools, rather than as sources of constructive feedback. Employees' perceptions of the instrument as an evaluation tool – viewed merely as punishment or justification for judgment – can lead to a tendency to simply meet minimum performance standards rather than seek improvement (Alrige et al., 2022). Furthermore, the psychological impact of appraisal results can vary based on individual differences, such as personal motivation, resilience, and prior experience with feedback, which can mediate employees' responses to the appraisal (Parent-Lamarche et al., 2022). Additionally, contextual factors such as organizational culture and leadership dynamics significantly influence how employees receive and act upon appraisal feedback (Pereira et al., 2021). In some cases, a lack of clarity in performance expectations or inadequate training on how to effectively utilize feedback can create a gap between appraisal results and actual performance improvement. This suggests that performance appraisals alone are insufficient to directly drive behavioral change. Without a supportive environment that fosters dialogue, growth, and development,

the direct impact of performance appraisals on performance outcomes remains limited.

However, this study suggests that performance appraisals play a significant role in job satisfaction rather than directly influencing employee performance. Job satisfaction is considered a reflection of employees' attitudes and emotional responses to the work environment, primarily influenced by their perceptions of performance appraisals. When employees receive performance appraisal results that are perceived as fair, constructive, and supportive, they are more likely to feel recognized and valued (Memon et al., 2019; Kampkötter, 2016). This sense of recognition can then enhance job satisfaction, as employees perceive that their contributions are acknowledged, fostering a positive emotional state and commitment to their roles (Memon et al., 2019). Furthermore, performance appraisals can include discussions that provide developmental feedback and opportunities for growth, thereby increasing employees' satisfaction with their jobs (Kampkötter, 2016).

Moreover, job satisfaction significantly impacts job performance through various mechanisms that increase employee engagement, productivity, and commitment to organizational goals. Satisfied employees tend to exhibit increased motivation and demonstrate greater commitment to their roles (Jin et al., 2023). Higher levels of job satisfaction correlate with improved task performance, as satisfied employees engage in behaviors that promote individual success and, by extension, team success (Memon et al., 2020). Supriyanto et al. (2023) illustrate that employee autonomy is a key factor in job satisfaction, providing individuals with the space to explore creative solutions and improve performance. Furthermore, satisfied employees typically experience lower stress and burnout at work, which helps them stay focused on their tasks and meet performance expectations more effectively (Alrige et al., 2022). Conversely, when job satisfaction is low, employees may exhibit disengagement, reduced morale, and increased turnover intentions (Jin et al., 2023).

The mediating role of job satisfaction in enhancing the effectiveness of performance appraisals is crucial, yet it remains underexplored in the literature. Many studies emphasize the direct relationship between performance appraisals and performance outcomes without adequately addressing how job satisfaction mediates

this process (Shahzad et al., 2023; Nguyen & Prentice, 2020). By recognizing the mediating role of job satisfaction, organizations can more effectively link performance appraisal systems to employee performance improvement, leveraging job satisfaction to maximize productivity.

Ultimately, although the results of testing the direct effect of performance appraisals on employee performance are insufficient, this study indicates a positive indirect effect through job satisfaction. This mechanism suggests that performance appraisals can serve as constructive feedback and recognition for efforts, leading to increased job satisfaction. Furthermore, Rana et al. (2022) emphasized that well-structured performance appraisals contribute to employee satisfaction by providing opportunities for professional development and recognizing achievements as a manifestation of performance. This finding aligns with the work of Batta et al. (2023), who showed that when employees become more aware of the results and benefits of performance appraisals, their overall job satisfaction increases, which correlates with improved performance levels. Additionally, a study by Hassan et al. (2022) highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction, demonstrating that employee satisfaction with performance appraisals significantly influences their commitment and productivity. Therefore, higher job satisfaction can lead to stronger performance outcomes, thereby creating a sustainable relationship.

While several studies have shown a positive correlation between job satisfaction and employee performance, the explicit mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between appraisal and performance still requires further investigation. This conclusion is based on the relatively small value of the model's ability to explain performance. Detailed explanations of each alternative solution to these limitations can be found in the conclusion section.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the importance of a performance appraisal system in enhancing employee performance through the mediation of job satisfaction. Although theoretically, performance appraisal should have a direct effect on performance improvement, empirical results indicate that this direct effect is insignificant. In

contrast, effective performance appraisal significantly impacts increasing employee job satisfaction, which ultimately has a positive effect on performance. In other words, job satisfaction is an important mediating variable in the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance.

Fair, transparent, and constructive performance appraisals foster feelings of appreciation and recognition, which, in turn, enhance job satisfaction. This satisfaction is not merely emotional; it reflects employee engagement, motivation, and commitment to the organization. Employees who are satisfied with their work environment and the appraisals they receive tend to be more productive, responsible, and exhibit higher task performance.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the positive correlation between job satisfaction and employee performance is modest. This effect could be further amplified by mediation from other factors such as engagement and motivation. This relationship suggests that while satisfactory performance appraisals can create an environment conducive to higher job satisfaction, they have a limited impact on employee performance. Alternatively, various intervening variables, such as individual motivation, workplace culture, and support systems, may explain the extent to which job satisfaction translates into actual performance outcomes (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017; Dewi & Amar, 2019). Moreover, job satisfaction is often seen as a prerequisite for performance improvement, and even the most effective appraisal systems can lead to only modest performance improvements (Prabowo et al., 2018). Thus, the accuracy of performance appraisals is primarily reflected in their ability to enhance job satisfaction, which then contributes to improved employee performance.

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