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REVIEW ARTICLE

An Analysis of Performance Appraisal in China from The Perspectives of Scholars

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ABSTRACT

The importance of performance appraisal is widely acknowledged, and its implementation varies from country to country. China's performance evaluation is conducted once a year, and a new version of the civil service evaluation system will be developed in 2020. This study examines academic perspectives on performance appraisal in China, which often vary in approach, content, incentive structures, and outcomes. Due to the lack of accuracy and subjectivity, the concept of "unscientific indicator design" in China has been greatly criticized. Chinese civil servants must have a high ideological and political quality, strong working ability, maintain a good work style, outstanding work performance, and achieve excellent results in the annual assessment. These criteria have a wide range and have the potential to lead to unfair evaluations that can negatively impact employee motivation. Many experts put forward opinions and suggestions on improving the content of performance appraisal in China; The Dutch academics suggest a transparent and detailed workflow system for registering and measuring performance, while the Brazilian academics suggest that employee performance should be taken seriously during evaluation. This requires recognizing strengths and weaknesses, making suggestions for improvement, and identifying their career prospects based on the results of the performance review. This study mainly examines the scholars' views on the similarities and differences of performance evaluation. In addition, it assesses current concerns within the appraisal system. This data will provide the basis for the exploration and development of broader, more scientific and logical performance evaluation systems.

Contribution/Originality: The main contribution of this study is to analyze and judge China's performance appraisal from the perspective of scholars from various countries, summarize and classify different viewpoints, and explore the establishment of a system for China's performance appraisal to learn from the advanced experience of other countries.

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1. Introduction

Many experts have criticised the Chinese performance rating system, stating that it is unjust and challenging to attain excellence awards in the public sector. In order to determine the most efficient and effective performance appraisal system for Chinese public personnel, a thorough examination of scholarly viewpoints on performance appraisal is undertaken. It is crucial to recognise that there are discrepancies in the execution and progression of performance evaluation across various countries. For example, "*the 2020 assessment of Chinese civil servants stipulates that the proportion of outstanding civil servants in the annual assessment shall not exceed 20%, and the proportion of excellent civil servants can be increased to 25% with the consent of the competent authorities*" (Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, 2020). According to the implementation of the Comprehensive System for Public Administration Performance Assessment (SIADAP) in Portugal in 2004, 75 percent of public officials are unable to exceed the standard of "appropriate performance" (Madureira et al., 2021). This implies the existence of specific issues, some of which have been recognised as sharing comparable characteristics. The significance and value of analysing performance evaluation issues stem from their inherent importance and relevance. This paper explores the importance of analysing performance appraisals in China and other selected nations, emphasising the benefits of extracting insights from these evaluations, particularly in the context of problem-solving.

2. Literature Review

Performance appraisal holds significant importance in the domain of human resource management (HRM). Most developed countries have multiple subsystems. The United States enacted comprehensive legislation on federal personnel reform in 1978, which sought to establish a comprehensive performance appraisal system for federal civil servants (Perry, 2008). This system was intended to replace the assortment of informal and subjective systems that had been used in the past (Perry, 2008). Since the enactment of the Public Performance Appraisal Act 30 years ago, many analogous public performance evaluation approaches have been extensively implemented on a global scale. Within the countries belonging to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), 93.3% of them have utilised individual performance appraisals as a means of evaluating the performance of their employees (Lah & Perry, 2008). While performance management is widely recognised as a significant and often-discussed idea, its execution and efficacy have been a subject of contention. Liu and Dong (2012) noted a clear discontent with the performance appraisal system when it failed to meet expectations, resulting in employee unhappiness. In a study conducted by Liu and Dong (2012), it was discovered that numerous performance appraisal systems were ineffective in enhancing employee motivation and had no impact on stimulating intrinsically motivated people to perform at their highest level. The social context has an impact on performance rating, as demonstrated by Levy and Williams (2004), and Pichler (2012). The effectiveness of performance appraisal is influenced by various factors. These include distal variables such as technology, HR strategies, and economic conditions. Additionally, process proximal variables like rater issues directly impact how the appraisal process is conducted. Structural proximal variables, such as multi-source feedback systems, the purpose of the performance appraisal, and rater training, also play a role in determining effectiveness (Levy & Williams, 2004).

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2.1. Evaluating job performance: Analysing the fairness and efficiency of a compensation system that relies on performance-based pay

The performance appraisal is a structured procedure in which individuals of an organisation are assessed (Erdogan, 2002). One criterion for evaluating the success of performance assessments in an organisation is the assessment of performance appraisal fairness (Jacobs, Kafry, & Zedeck, 2006). According to Kellough and Lu (1993), performance goals and evaluation criteria often display complexity, disagreement, and diversity. As a result, employees are concerned about how performance reviews are conducted in their businesses. HR directors widely agree that pay-for-performance provides clear criteria and objectives that are essential for creating a fair performance review process.

The evaluation method within the performance rating system for civil personnel in China mainly relies on subjective perception. Evaluators appraise the performance of civil servants relying on their subjective views, rather than objective criteria. This subjective approach affects the impartiality of the appraisal process.

2.2. The Performance: Factors for Evaluation

Several scholars have conducted extensive research on the subject of context and its significance in the field of management (e.g. Child & Marinova, 2014; Tsui, 2007). Tsui (2007) argues that contextualization is essential for the formation of new ideas and the appropriate application of old theories to new situations. This process is crucial for both theory development and application. Contextualization, in this context, involves connecting observations with pertinent facts, actions, events, or ideas. This process enhances theorising by considering how contextual features influence the behaviour of individuals and the functioning of an organisation (Wang et al., 2017). It is assumed here that organisations are open systems, and the context in which they operate greatly affects them. This context must be considered while explaining the practises and outcomes of organisations (Tsui, 2007). There is an increasing amount of research suggesting that scholars should focus more on the elements that impact management practises in the public sector, as noted by Andrews (2016).

Within the framework of China's civil service performance appraisal system, the influence of traditional cultural values has led to a situation where the majority of civil servants receive a qualified or above rating in their appraisals. However, there is an issue with the rotation of outstanding indicators, which hinders the effective use of incentives.

2.3. Varied research on performance rating in diverse circumstances

Performance appraisal systems receive significant global attention due to its application to both civil servants and employees. These systems are crucial for enhancing job efficiency and fostering social growth. The performance rating systems of several countries were studied to varying degrees by researchers from different countries. The scholars encompass Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and Africa, encompassing both established and developing nations. Researchers conduct their work or academic studies in various nations such as China, the United States, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and they possess divergent perspectives on performance assessment. For instance, many scholars emphasise the significance of the performance evaluation

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system, while others argue that the competence and expertise of public servants play a crucial role in performance evaluation. Additionally, other researchers suggest that culture and system both limit and facilitate the advancement of performance evaluation. Table 1 presents the varying perspectives of these researchers on performance evaluation.

The data is categorized into five categories. First, external variables such as culture, policies and values affect performance appraisal standards. Performance appraisal systems such as 360-degree reviews are the second aspect. Performance evaluation systems like 360-degree appraisals are the second factor. Performance appraisal variables including civil servant competence and fairness are examined in the third aspect. Fourth, assess performance appraisal feedback sources and methods, such as subordinates, coworkers, or superiors. The fifth factor is how performance appraisals affect civil servants' motivation. Leadership, promotion, experience, etc. According to data analysis, performance evaluation issues in many countries are focused on values, fairness indicators, and incentives, like in China's civil service performance evaluation system.

3. Discussion

Performance evaluation procedures vary by country, although China, Portugal, and Indonesia have comparable operational issues. China's civil officials are evaluated using the 2020 performance appraisal system. China's performance evaluation criteria may be too broad to accurately judge performance. Morality, competence, diligence, achievement, and integrity are hard to measure. Effective performance evaluation methods require evaluator training, which government agencies lack. Despite inadequate work performance, civil officials were not penalised in the assessment because the correlation was low.

The Portuguese government has a thorough administrative performance evaluation system. Quotas prevent 75% of public employees from achieving "adequate performance" despite their good work. Due to this, public employee career progression will be delayed. In such conditions, motivating government officials is challenging. unfavourable impressions of psychological contracts and unfair evaluations might drive individuals and organisations to have unfavourable commitments to one other (Madureira et al., 2021).

Modern Indonesian Civil Servants (ASN) face various classic issues that were present in past generations, notably in the areas. Lack of professionalism, bad work culture, lack of work ethic, and continuous employee discipline are issues for employees. This circumstance makes the public more sceptical about ASN's performance. This scepticism led to the creation of the Ombudsman Institution, which supervises both the federal and regional governments' public service delivery (Pratama et al., 2015).

Public officials in several countries employ a data-based performance appraisal method. They focus more on fairness (including the assessor's expertise) and application of appraisal outcomes (including discontent and demotion, performance promotion, and career development).

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Table 1: Performance Appraisal in China: Different perspectives by scholars

Classification	Research ideas				
Performance evaluation system	Portuguese scholars-The best way to actively evaluate is to take a low-key attitude and avoid mistakes (Rego et al., 2010)	Dutch Scholar-A highly transparent, meticulous system of registration and measurement workflow is the best solution to control the civil service (Romme et al., 2022)	Singapore Scholar-The more goals of public organizations, the lower the performance level, and the appropriate evaluation tool must be selected (Gao, 2015)	Indonesian scholar- Implement the 360-degree feedback performance evaluation system (Tambunan et al., 2022)	
Performance evaluation indicators	Chinese scholars-Central government assessment indicators are general (Liu & Dong, 2012)	American scholars-The extent to which performance indicators affect the decisions of the top management of government agencies and the extent to which departments use performance data as a guidance tool vary widely (Waxin & Bateman, 2009)	Chinese scholars-Human resource development should combine the development of employees, positions and the company, and pay attention to the matching relationship between employees, positions and abilities and their applicability (Ying Guo, 2022)	Indian Scholar-Stricter performance documentation practices and the participation of multiple raters can enhance the assessment (Sharma et al., 2022)	Indonesian scholar-Participated in the formulation of evaluation documents. Formulate the performance appraisal standards at each stage (Tambunan et al., 2022)
Performance evaluation: Country's background	Chinese scholars-Cultural constraints in public administration, nepotism to squeeze out elite management (Zhang, 2015)	Cultural and institutional factors limit many characteristics of SMEs adopting HRM, but Chinese cultural values and national systems have a positive impact on their personnel management (Warner, 2010)	Pakistani scholar-Political leadership has failed to fulfill its role in policy making, and the bureaucracy has been thoroughly politicized (Shaikh et al., 2018)	Chinese scholars-Political, institutional and cultural factors are intertwined, affecting the employees' interpretation and behavior of performance evaluation (Wang et al., 2017)	

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Factors contributing to the impact of performance evaluation	Indonesian scholar-Experience variables had the most significant impact on employee performance(Rudi et al., 2022)	The formation process of HRM in China is influenced by factors such as culture and tradition, labor regulatory environment, foreign import technology, management ideology and global competition (Chen et al., 2016)	Indonesian scholar-Work motivation and work environment should have a significant impact on work performance, including corporate culture (Jumady & Lilla, 2021)	Chinese scholars-believe that assessors lack training (Yu, 2011)	American scholars-A healthy working environment encourages performance appraisal (Kim, 2016)
Evaluation outcomes and feedback for Chinese performance	Chinese scholars-linking unsatisfactory results to demotion decisions is far from institutionalized (Chou, 2005)	Brazilian scholar- During the evaluation, pointed out the advantages and disadvantages, put forward suggestions for improvement and means of their professional development (Sánchez & Bruno, 2021)	Indonesian scholar-Performance appraisal determines the success or failure of civil servants and the weaknesses of civil servants in their duties and reward work (Hamid, 2022)	Romanian scholars-The performance evaluation of public institutions is not uniform and lacks fairness and transparency (Ciobanu & Ristea, 2015)	

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Scholars in Portugal (Madureira et al., 2021) have suggested replacing Portugal's performance appraisal system with one that matches the administrative departments' organisational and professional culture to make it fairer and widely accepted by evaluated public officials. SIADAP may also reconsider the quota system to make it more accessible and provide more individuals relevant or great ratings. Many Portuguese public officials will no longer find the assessment system unfair, improving their performance.

The Indonesian government has taken steps to strengthen its human resources. Government Regulation 30/2019 requires an accurate, accountable, and competent employee performance management system. The Performance Assessment of Civil Servants (ASN) ensures the objectivity of the ASN development process in terms of achievements and career routes, according Government Regulation Number 30/2019. When measuring public servant performance, targets, achievements, outcomes, benefits, and behaviour are considered in individual, unit, and organisational performance planning (Pratama et al., 2015).

Jumady and Laila (2021) used a purposefully random sample of 40 respondents to show that motivation and work environment affect performance. Both theoretical and empirical investigations have shown that boosting motivation and the work environment can improve public servant performance over time. Employees who balance their skill and willingness to complete a task provide the greatest results. This equilibrium can boost production and reduce inefficiencies. Motivated workers boost productivity and help companies produce more.

HR executives in six U.S. state governments that experienced major civil service reforms studied performance reviews to establish their efficacy. The study found that performance pay is more successful when the job description contains performance evaluation criteria. This study agrees with earlier research on job content clarity. Increasing the direct relationship between job responsibility and performance requirements was one way to increase performance standards (Kim, 2016).

Researchers and intellectuals have shown that boosting public servants' working conditions and incentives improves performance. Additionally, clarified its performance evaluation guidelines for current employees. Thus, by using international scholars' research, Chinese public servants' performance rating system can be improved and some issues resolved. Using job descriptions to specify detailed criteria for evaluating civil servants' performance in the performance appraisal system can help solve the problem of examiners using their subjective will to evaluate their work. Portuguese researchers' practise can be utilised to examine the quota system to rotate excellence metrics.

4. Recommendation

Since the start of the decade, more studies on government performance assessment systems have shown that public sector performance improvement efforts work. The

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focus has shifted from performance measurement to performance management, in addition to the ongoing examination of measurement (both objective and subjective). Performance management professionals often emphasise the balanced scorecard (BSC)'s advantages over other methods. The BSC has been utilised in healthcare, higher education, and local government management organisations for decades. Its many benefits include allowing the selection of multiple performance measures related to strategic goals and integrating traditional financial metrics with non-financial metrics from customer, internal process, and learning and growth perspectives. Dreveton (2013) research of a French organization's BSC formation suggests that the process can help build a shared vision of a company's strategy, key performance metrics, and operationalization. The BSC is both a diagnostic control and a system that helps stakeholders interact to solve information asymmetries in decision-making.

Based on two surveys of senior civil officials in 18 European nations, researchers developed a new fourfold typology of performance rating systems. Type IV "want-it-alls" assume that motivating and developmental mechanisms can be combined. The Type IV system research shows that these objectives have become institutionalised and macro-level. Administrative policymakers like the concept of achieving developmental and incentive goals concurrently. To determine whether this objective is achievable, more empirical research is needed (Hajnal & Staronova, 2021).

Scholars have studied and debated performance grading. Chinese civil servant performance evaluation can combine reality with the operation of the civil servant performance evaluation system, draw on the balanced scorecard (BSC), decompose and transform various specific and mutually balanced performance indicators in the civil servant group, clarify specific tasks in the performance evaluation, and fully mobilise civil servants' work enthusiasm at all levels.

5. Conclusion

Performance evaluation is essential to an organization's performance management system and helps measure and achieve performance plans. A performance evaluation system will motivate people to work hard for career achievement. The goal of a performance evaluation system is to boost employee performance, which boosts organisational success. Performance evaluation can improve professional, personal, employee, and organisational performance. Performance appraisal systems can help employees make big organisational commitments and reach their full potential. Many methods exist for assessing employee performance.

Scholars from different countries have found that analysis can improve the content and indicators of Chinese civil servants' performance evaluations and select the best evaluation model for China's national conditions. This will help China develop a strong civil service. This is simply a theoretical concept; its practical efficacy will require further research and experimentation. Meanwhile, evaluation tools using information and communication technology are growing more common. Future research should examine how to integrate information technology into Chinese government servant performance appraisals.

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Conflict of Interests

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