

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG IT EMPLOYEES IN CENTRAL KERALA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Performance appraisal is an important human resource practice that shapes employees' perceptions of fairness, development, feedback, and organizational support. This study examines the relationship between performance appraisal practices and organizational commitment among employees working in information technology companies in Central Kerala. A descriptive, cross-sectional quantitative design was adopted, and data were collected from 384 employees using a structured questionnaire. Performance appraisal was assessed through clarity of performance criteria, fairness of the appraisal process, feedback quality, and opportunities for improvement, while organizational commitment was examined through affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, job involvement, and organizational citizenship behavior. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that overall performance appraisal was not significantly associated with overall employee commitment. However, clarity of performance criteria and fairness of the appraisal process showed weak but significant negative relationships with commitment. Affective commitment demonstrated a significant positive association with overall commitment, whereas normative commitment showed a significant negative association. The findings indicate that the relationship between performance appraisal and organizational commitment is dimension-specific rather than uniform. The study highlights the need for IT organizations to design appraisal systems that combine clarity and fairness with meaningful developmental support, constructive feedback, and employee-focused improvement opportunities.

Keyword: Brexpiprazole, UHPLC–MS/MS, Stability-indicating method, Method validation, Dilute-and-shoot, Bioanalytical analysis, Quantification.

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1. Introduction

Performance appraisal used to mean little more than rating what an employee had already done. That has changed. Most organizations now treat it as an ongoing conversation meant to line up individual effort with strategic direction 1. The stakes are higher in information technology firms specifically: project work moves fast, technology shifts underneath people's feet, and employees do not hesitate to leave if they are unhappy, so the credibility of whatever evaluation system is in place becomes central to how staff experience the workplace 2. Appraisal's very nature, as a process of reasoning or decision-making that is shared with another person, goes beyond the formal structures of the system to involve the perceptions of the employee of the purpose and manner of the reasoning or decision making 3. Performance appraisal is thus at the same time a feedback, a developmental, a recognition, and a signal of organizational fairness, and each of these functions can influence employees' commitment to the organisation, in principle 4.

In knowledge-intensive IT organizations, where a good portion of the value of a firm is in its employees' skill domain and their attitude to use the skill outside the minimum required, the psychological commitment of the employee to the organization is of particular importance 5. It is, then, just as much a question of practice as it is one of academic interest to grasp how appraisal practices relate to this bond in the first place; in a world of limited technical resources, this is a legitimate concern for firms 6.

IT organizations usually use both behavioral and technical scores for performance evaluation (focusing on teamwork, communication, and following process, as well as code quality, project delivery, and problem solving) 7. Clarity of performance criteria communication, perceived fairness of the appraisal process leading to the rating, quality of the feedback that is provided with the rating, and the quality of opportunities for improvement provided by the appraisal process are consistently identified in the literature as shaping employee responses to the appraisal process 8,9. Feedback quality can make the difference between a developmental versus just an evaluative appraisal, and opportunities for improvement can turn an appraisal into a developmental experience 10.

Organizational commitment has been traditionally understood as a multidimensional concept, including affective commitment (affection and identification towards the organization), continuance commitment (the perception of the costs of leaving), and normative commitment (the feeling of obligation to stay in the organization) 11. Some other constructs that are often studied in conjunction with commitment are: job involvement, the psychological absorption of the employee in the job, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, discretionary behavior that contributes to the organization but is not the employee's job task 12. What drives commitment in the IT industry in Central Kerala is a combination of many factors that intersect some directly, some indirectly, including organizational culture, leadership, opportunities for growth, etc 13, 14, 15.

The IT and IT-enabled services sector is fast emerging as a prominent sector in the region of Central Kerala and has attracted a large number of young and mobile technical workforce to a competitive job market 16. Such a market would suggest that the employee's experience of the appraisal process is likely to affect their prospects of staying with their employer or seeking alternative employment. However, many of the current studies focus on the analysis of the performance appraisal and organizational commitment as a general, single construct without analyzing the relationship between the dimensions of each of these constructs. This reduces the scope of the practical support that HR managers can offer in specific, discrete parts of the appraisal process (for example, on the communication of the criteria, or on giving feedback) rather than in "performance appraisal" as a whole.

Prior studies have separately examined appraisal fairness, feedback quality, and commitment dimensions such as affective and normative commitment, but few have jointly examined clarity of performance criteria, fairness, feedback quality, and improvement opportunities alongside the full set of commitment-related dimensions (affective, continuance, and normative commitment, job involvement, and organizational citizenship behavior) within a single regional IT workforce. This integrated approach is necessary because appraisal dimensions do not necessarily move together, and neither do the dimensions of commitment; aggregated analyses can therefore mask important relationships. This study addresses that gap using data collected from IT employees in Central Kerala.

Aim and Objectives

The purpose of the study is to analyse the relationship between the practices of performance appraisal and organizational commitment of employees of IT companies in the central region of Kerala.

Objectives:

- To evaluate employees' perception of the working of IT companies with regard to the performance appraisal system.
- To investigate the connection between the clarity of performance criteria and commitment of the organization
- This study explores the relationship between the perceived fairness of the appraisal process and organizational commitment
- To investigate the role of feedback quality with organizational commitment
- To examine how commitment relates to opportunities for improvement

- To examine the relationships between affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, job involvement, OCB, and overall commitment of the employees

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Concept of Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is no longer just a rating exercise, and has become part of a wider performance management process that has a focus on employee development and organizational alignment 17. Appraisal is not simply about reporting on what has already been achieved; it should have a strong influence on behaviour, help skills to be developed, and share information about priorities with the organisation 18. This developmental programming is especially significant in the IT industry, where technical skills become outdated rapidly, and learning is considered a must to compete in the industry 19.

2.2 Dimensions of Performance Appraisal

Clarity of performance criteria means that employees have a clear understanding of what they'll be judged on and how they will be rated 8. Fairness of the appraisal process refers to both procedural fairness (consistency, accuracy, and voice during the appraisal process) and interactional fairness (respectful, well-explained communication of appraisal outcomes) 20. The quality of feedback is about its specificity, promptness, and/or constructive nature, versus its vague and/or evaluative nature 21. Opportunities for improvement capture the extent to which the appraisal process leads to action for development (e.g., training, mentoring, individual development plans) 9. These four dimensions are conceptually separate, and an organization could excel in some dimensions and not in others.

2.3 Concept of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment reflects the strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization and is consistently linked in the literature to lower turnover intentions and higher discretionary effort 22. Because committed employees are less likely to leave and more likely to invest discretionary effort, commitment is treated as a key organizational outcome that HR practices, including appraisal, are expected to influence 23.

2.4 Dimensions Related to Employee Commitment

Following the widely used three-component model 11, affective commitment reflects genuine emotional attachment; continuance commitment reflects a calculative attachment rooted in the costs of leaving; and normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to stay. Job involvement, a related but distinct construct, describes the degree to which employees psychologically identify with their work itself 24.

Organizational citizenship behavior refers to discretionary, non-rewarded behaviors helping colleagues, tolerating minor inconveniences, and going beyond formal duties that collectively support organizational functioning 25.

2.5 Performance Appraisal and Organizational Commitment

In theory, appraisal practices should influence commitment in terms of perceived fairness; perceived procedural and interactional fairness of the appraisal process leads to higher levels of trust and attachment on the part of employees, and social exchange reasoning 26. The quality and clarity of feedback are also expected to enhance commitment, as it will create less uncertainty and show the commitment of the organisation to the employee 27. There is evidence, however, that the relationship between fairness and feedback quality and commitment is inconsistent: Some studies have indicated that fairness and feedback quality are strong and consistent predictors of commitment 14,28, Others have reported that their impacts are less than theory suggests, depend on the organizational culture and/or leadership context, or depend on the culture/leadership context and on which dimension of the commitment is studied 29,30. One reason for the dimensional approach of the present study is the fact that there is a certain lack of consistency in the literature.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The study frames practices of performance appraisal as being accompanied by clarity of performance criteria, fairness of the appraisal process, quality of feedback, and opportunities for improvement in relation to organizational/employee commitment (represented by affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, job involvement, and citizenship behavior of an organization employee). The framework does not require a one-to-one relationship, but rather permits each dimension of the appraisal to be related in isolation to overall commitment and each dimension of commitment to be related to the composite commitment measure in isolation.

2.7 Research Hypothesis

H0: The study has revealed that there is no significant correlation between the performance appraisal practices and employee commitment of employees in IT companies in Central Kerala.

H1: There is a significant relationship between performance appraisal practices and employee commitment among employees of IT companies in Central Kerala.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive, cross sectional and quantitative research design that is appropriate for the examination of the association between perceptual variables at a one-time point. The employees of selected IT companies working in the Central Kerala region, which has become a major hub for IT & IT-enabled services, were surveyed. The subjects were employees of different jobs and in different positions and levels of IT companies in Central Kerala. The study received 384 responses from employees of the selected IT companies, all of which were deemed to be valid responses. With the regional IT workforce being hard to establish a precise sampling frame for, a sample size of 384 was used, based on the standard sampling size guidelines for large or poorly bounded populations at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The responding organizations were used to get the respondents through convenience sampling. A structured, self-administered questionnaire with items related to employees' commitment and performance appraisal practices was used for data collection, along with basic demographics.

Performance appraisal was measured through four dimensions - Clarity of Performance Criteria (CPC), Fairness of the Appraisal Process (FAP), Feedback Quality (FQ), and Opportunities for Improvement (OI) together with an overall Performance Appraisal (PA) score. Employee commitment was measured through five dimensions - Affective Commitment (AC), Continuance Commitment (CC), Normative Commitment (NC), Job Involvement (JI), and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) together with an overall Employee Commitment (EC) score. All items were measured on multi-point rating scales adapted from established instruments in the performance appraisal and organizational commitment literature. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above conventionally regarded as indicating acceptable reliability for behavioral research instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of association among the performance appraisal dimensions, the commitment-related dimensions, and the respective overall composite scores.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Correlation among Performance Appraisal Dimensions

Table 1 presents the correlation matrix for all study variables. Among the appraisal dimensions, clarity of performance criteria and fairness of the appraisal process were weakly, positively, and significantly correlated ($r = .294$), suggesting that employees who perceive clearer criteria also tend to perceive the process as somewhat fairer. Feedback quality and opportunities for improvement were strongly, negatively, and significantly correlated ($r = -.780$), an unexpected result given that both are conceptually developmental; this pattern may reflect how the two items were interpreted by respondents, or a genuine trade-off in practice between the volume of feedback given and the extent to which employees feel they

are, in turn, given room to act on it. Clarity of performance criteria was moderately, negatively, and significantly correlated with the overall performance appraisal score ($r = -.534$), and fairness of the appraisal process was weakly, negatively, and significantly correlated with the overall score ($r = -.258$).

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

	CPC	FAP	FQ	OI	PA	AC	CC	NC	JI	OCB	EC
CPC	1										
FAP	.294*	1									
FQ	.037	.038	1								
OI	-.006	.041	-.780*	1							
PA	-.534*	-.258*	-.044	.021	1						
AC	-.024	-.076	-.027	.051	-.064	1					
CC	.018	.124*	.078	-.102*	-.117*	-.084	1				
NC	.123*	.115*	.021	-.050	-.168*	-.065	.016	1			
JI	.051	.057	-.078	.051	.009	.017	.028	-.050	1		
OCB	-.024	-.051	.048	-.031	-.023	-.003	-.031	.060	-.942*	1	
EC	-.132*	-.172*	-.075	.076	.036	.111*	.044	-.132*	-.036	.023	1

Note:

NC = Normative Commitment;

CPC = Clarity of Performance Criteria;

JI = Job Involvement;

FAP = Fairness of Appraisal Process;

OCB= Organizational Citizenship Behavior;

FQ = Feedback Quality;

EC = Overall Employee Commitment.

OI = Opportunities for Improvement;

PA = Overall Performance Appraisal;

AC = Affective Commitment;

CC = Continuance Commitment;

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Performance Appraisal Factors and Employee Commitment

Turning to the relationship between appraisal dimensions and overall employee commitment (EC), the pattern is mixed. Clarity of performance criteria ($r = -.132$, $p < .05$) and fairness of the appraisal process ($r = -.172$, $p < .05$) were both weakly but significantly and negatively correlated with overall commitment. Feedback quality ($r = -.075$), opportunities for improvement ($r = .076$), and the overall performance appraisal score ($r = .036$) showed no statistically significant association with overall commitment. This indicates that, contrary to the initial expectation that a well-designed appraisal process straightforwardly builds commitment, only two of the four appraisal dimensions were significantly related to commitment in this sample, and both of these relationships were negative rather than positive.

4.3 Commitment Dimensions and Overall Employee Commitment

Among the commitment-related dimensions, affective commitment was weakly, positively, and significantly correlated with overall employee commitment ($r = .111$, $p < .05$), consistent with its theoretical status as the emotional core of organizational attachment. Normative commitment was weakly, negatively, and significantly correlated with overall commitment ($r = -.132$, $p < .05$), a counterintuitive finding given that normative commitment is typically expected to reinforce, rather than detract from, overall attachment. Continuance commitment ($r = .044$), job involvement ($r = -.036$), and organizational citizenship behavior ($r = .023$) showed no statistically significant association with overall employee commitment.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Because the overall performance appraisal score was not significantly correlated with overall employee commitment ($r = .036$, $p > .05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) cannot be rejected at the level of the composite constructs: this study does not find evidence of a significant overall relationship between performance appraisal, taken as a whole, and employee commitment, taken as a whole. However, at the level of individual dimensions, clarity of performance criteria and fairness of the appraisal process are significantly related to commitment, indicating that the relationship between appraisal and commitment in this context is real but dimension-specific rather than uniform.

5. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Interpretation of Major Findings

The central finding of this study is that performance appraisal, as an overall composite, does not show a significant association with overall employee commitment among the IT employees surveyed, even though two of its component dimensions - clarity and fairness - do. This suggests that aggregating

appraisal practices into a single index may obscure meaningful, dimension-specific effects, a concern also raised in prior reviews of appraisal-commitment research 29. It further suggests that IT employees in this context do not experience appraisal as a single undifferentiated event, but rather respond distinctly to how clearly criteria are set and how fair the process feels.

5.2 Clarity and Fairness in Performance Appraisal

Both clarity of performance criteria and fairness of the appraisal process were negatively associated with commitment, which runs counter to the common theoretical expectation grounded in organizational justice and social exchange perspectives that clearer, fairer processes should strengthen attachment 26. One plausible explanation is that, in a sample where appraisal is used partly as an evaluative and comparative exercise, for example, to inform promotion or compensation decisions, greater clarity and fairness may make outcomes more salient and consequential rather than uniformly reassuring, particularly for employees who receive average or below-average ratings 27. At least in the short term, it may be that if the criteria are clearer, this will increase the awareness of the difference between what is expected and what the employee is achieving, which might then be perceived as pressure, rather than encouragement 30. Clarity and fairness are essential elements of a credible appraisal system, but should not be interpreted as a criticism of them; rather, they do indicate that a commitment to clarity and fairness alone may not be enough to establish a commitment, and they need to be supported by a real commitment to follow-through that is developmental in nature.

5.3 Role of Feedback and Development Opportunities

There was no significant direct correlation between feedback quality and opportunities for improvement, and overall commitment of the sample. This is not to say that commitment isn't important to feedback and development or that its effect on commitment isn't indirect, as influencing variables outside of the scope of this study could affect commitment to feedback and development 21. It is also possible that feedback quality and development opportunities matter more for motivation and engagement outcomes than for the specific construct of organizational commitment as measured here 31.

5.4 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Affective commitment's positive, significant association with overall commitment is consistent with its established role as the most emotionally grounded and behaviorally consequential component of the three-component model 11. The negative, significant association found for normative commitment is more difficult to reconcile with prior theory, which typically treats normative commitment as complementary to, rather than in tension with, affective commitment 11. One interpretation is that, in this sample, normative commitment, a sense of obligation to remain, may reflect employees who feel bound to stay for reasons unrelated to genuine attachment, and whose broader disposition toward the

organization is, on balance, less positive. This pattern merits further investigation using models capable of distinguishing net and suppressor effects among the three commitment components.

5.5 Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Job Involvement

There were poor, non-significant relationships between organizational citizenship behavior and job involvement and overall commitment in this sample. With this cautionary interpretation, it should be noted that this does not imply that these behaviours are not important or are not correlated with particular aspects of commitment, but rather, in this dataset, they do not correlate with the measure of commitment utilized 25.

5.6 Managerial Implications for IT Companies

The results have a number of implications for HRM professionals in IT companies. Firstly, there should be clear criteria, and these should be communicated clearly, but organisations should be aware that there is a danger of clarity not being enough to spark greater commitment and that this should be backed by clear and visible developmental support 9. Second, the perceptions of procedural and interactional fairness need to be actively monitored, not only because they can change independently of the formal design of the appraisal system but also because of the periodic pulse surveys, which can be used for this purpose 20. Third, managers need to be trained to provide developmental, not evaluative, feedback information 21. Four, the outcomes of an appraisal must have a clear connection to individual development plans, mentoring, and training opportunities, and must be seen as an investment in the employee, not just an evaluation of past performance 9. Finally, because normative commitment showed a negative association with overall commitment, organizations should be cautious about building retention strategies primarily around obligation-based bonds and should instead prioritize practices that build genuine affective attachment 11.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. It is confined to IT companies within Central Kerala, which may limit generalizability to other regions or industries. The cross-sectional, questionnaire-based design captures perceptions at a single point in time and relies on employees' self-reports, which may be subject to common-method bias. Most importantly, correlational analysis identifies association, not causation, so the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that appraisal practices directly cause changes in commitment.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between performance appraisal practices and organizational commitment of the IT industry workers in the central region of Kerala. The results reveal that overall performance appraisal is not significantly related to overall employee

commitment; however, two dimensions of the performance appraisal, namely clarity of performance criteria and fairness of appraisal process, are significantly, but weakly and negatively, associated with employee commitment. The affective commitment has a positive association with overall commitment, while the normative commitment has a negative association with overall commitment; there is no significant association with dimensions such as job involvement, continuance commitment, or organizational citizenship behavior. These findings together indicate that the appraisal commitment link in this context is selective and dimension-specific, and not broad and uniform, highlighting the importance of breaking down the constructs, rather than just using composite measures. This study can be extended in future studies by studying the IT employees from other parts of Kerala or India, conducting cross sectional comparison of companies with different sizes, and using longitudinal designs, which can be used to establish temporal precedence. Mediation and moderation variables like perceived organizational support, supervisor relationship quality, organizational justice in general, leadership style, and organizational culture can help to explain why the relationships documented above occurred. More sophisticated statistical analyses, such as multivariate regression or structural equation modelling (with scales that have been validated), would also enable the field to go on from correlational description to a more precise causal explanation. Finally, the results confirm the general argument of HR practice in the IT industry: appraisal systems that employees perceive as clear and fair, developmental, and actually relevant to their personal and organizational objectives are more likely to enhance, rather than hinder, the type of 'fit' that is essential for organizations to attract, retain, and motivate a mobile, highly skilled workforce.

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