

Performance management and wellbeing

Monica Franco-Santos, Dan Stull and Mike Bourne

Cranfield School of Management

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Abstract

Performance management systems can be a source of stress and anxiety, and yet they can also provide clarity and focus, which are both factors that have positive effects on wellbeing at work. Employee wellbeing is essential as it has been shown to enhance organizational performance and employees' quality of life. These paradoxical results represent a challenge for organizations when designing performance management systems. In this chapter, we examine current research on the relationship between performance management practices and employee wellbeing and formulate a conceptual framework elucidating the conditions under which different wellbeing results are likely to occur. The purpose of our work is to help organizations design performance management mechanisms that account for and foster employees' wellbeing as well as raise awareness regarding the situations that can deteriorate it. We conclude by highlighting the importance of managerial philosophies and organizational goals definitions, recommending the adoption of an enabling or a hybrid set of performance management mechanisms to better accommodate the complex nature of wellbeing and other organizational goals.

Introduction

How organizations manage their performance has profound effects on the wellbeing of their employees (Salas-Vallina et al. 2020). Some organizations adopt performance management practices that improve people's performance without posing a threat to their wellbeing. Others manage performance in a way that may enhance performance, but they do so by neglecting or weakening people's emotional and physical wellbeing (Franco-Santos and Doherty 2017). The management literature often refers to the former positive relationship between performance management and wellbeing as a *win-win* or *mutual gain* relationship, whilst describing the latter as a *win-lose* relationship (Peccei and Van der Voorde 2019). In general, the detrimental effect of managerial practices on wellbeing has received little attention in organizations (Tweedie et al. 2019). This is likely to be due to factors such as a pressing shareholder value agenda, prioritising the financial interests of shareholders over those of other stakeholders and organizations being more interested in knowing what people do than how they feel (Guest 2017). From a moral, ethical and financial perspective, this lack of attention is no longer tenable (Tweedie et al. 2019). Specially, when empirical evidence in economics shows that wellbeing influences long-term productivity (Oswald et al. 2015), and macro sociology research suggests that wellbeing interacts with the social structure of the communities in which organizations operate (Ouchi and Johnson 1978).

This chapter offers a review of the extant literature investigating the links between performance management systems and wellbeing. We aim to extract key insights and present a framework that can guide organizations in their design of performance management systems that promote mutual gains. The chapter is structured as follows: We first describe what we mean by performance management systems and employee wellbeing. We then explain what different types of performance management systems look like, paying special attention to their underlying rationale, assumptions and core components. Next, we review the academic research examining how (and why) different performance management systems influence employee wellbeing. We conclude by discussing how organizations can design performance management systems that foster healthy workplaces.

What do we mean by ‘performance management systems’ and ‘wellbeing’?

Performance management systems

We define performance management systems as the network of control mechanisms present in an organization to facilitate the delivery of its goals by influencing or guiding people’s behaviour (Ouchi and Johnson 1978; Flamholtz et al. 1985; Ferreira and Otley 2009). We view organizations as a coalition of individuals (often referred to as stakeholders) who pursue a set of intended goals or objectives (Cyert and March 1963). The degree of performance (or success) an organization achieves is understood in terms of how well its intended goals are agreed, shared and delivered. In the attainment of organizational goals, control mechanisms play a crucial role (Cardinal et al. 2017). The term ‘control mechanisms’ is here used in a broad sense to include the processes or practices that increase the probability of people (individuals and groups) behaving in ways that facilitate the delivery of organizational goals. In other words, that help an organization to perform as expected (satisfying the needs and wants of its stakeholders). For instance, control mechanisms help key stakeholders arrive at a consensus about the set of goals that need to be prioritised; they facilitate a shared understanding of those goals; and they translate goals into measures to assist in their delivery.

An organization-wide performance management system is a complex system, comprising various interrelated subsystems of controls (Merchant and Otley 2020). These systems may differ in terms of their specific form and usage across the various parts and hierarchical levels of an organization. These complex systems can have features that are rationally and centrally designed, but they are also subject to emergent processes that make them be in continuous evolution. To be effective, previous research has found that the overall design philosophy of a performance management system needs to fit the nature of the goals the organization pursues and the wider context in which the organization operates (Otley 2016). To foster employee wellbeing, it is also important that the system meets the behavioural and identity needs of the people whose skills, knowledge and motivations are more likely to help deliver organizational goals (Franco-Santos et al. 2017).

Wellbeing

The meaning of wellbeing is highly contested. Some argue that it is an ‘elastic concept’ because it means different things to different people (Danna and Griffin 1999). The concept involves ‘being’ and ‘well’, which means, colloquially speaking, ‘feeling good’. In general, most scholars agree that wellbeing refers to people’s feelings about their everyday life (Warr 1978). In research

terms, a common view is emerging suggesting that wellbeing comprises three separate but related components: cognitive evaluations about one's life (e.g., satisfaction with life), positive affective states (e.g., happiness), and negative affective states (e.g., stress) (Diener et al. 2018). In particular, management research focuses on work-related wellbeing, understood as "the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work" (Grant et al. 2007, p. 52). Due to the multidimensional nature of wellbeing, its operationalization is not always consistent across studies; although, most researchers concur with the notion that employee wellbeing can only be subjectively assessed and involves the presence of positive emotions about life at work (e.g., happiness, meaning, satisfaction, good relationships) as well as the absence of negative ones (e.g., depression, stress, burnout or anxiety). Management practices influence how people feel at work (Guest 2017). Notably, performance management systems play a crucial role in people's working life. Although, the wellbeing effects of these systems are highly dependent on the type of performance management system adopted; that is, their specific design features and how these features are used or enacted (Franco-Santos and Doherty 2017).

Different types of performance management systems

Performance management systems have a cybernetic or 'steermanship' nature (Flamholtz et al. 1985), which implies that they are purpose-driven and developed by people and for people to use. They are 'tools' designed with a purpose in mind, which may or may not be used as designers expect. For example, in a hospital, a 'waiting time measure' may have been designed to better understand the healthcare delivery process and learn how to improve it. Yet, over time, the measure starts to be used by some managers as a performance indicator with which to 'hammer' staff for not meeting their, all of a sudden, 'accountable' results. As explained earlier, the overall purpose of a performance management system is to facilitate the delivery of organizational goals. The delivery of organizational goals can be considered a problem. Leaders at all levels need to deal with this problem. The way the problem is framed is determined by the assumptions and rationale the people dealing with the problem have. These assumptions and ideas are not only crucial in the process of framing the problem. They are also essential in the process of creating a potential solution to the problem. How leaders frame their performance problem has consequences for the mechanisms they select to address such problem.

A performance management system comprises the control mechanisms designed and used in organizations to address the performance problem leaders believe their organization has. If we understand organizations as a coalition of individuals, and individuals are characterised by the diverse assumptions and ideologies they hold; then, we are likely to find different framings of the performance problem leaders face as well as different types of performance management systems. For ease of understanding, we focus our attention on describing ideal types of these systems. This approach helps us illustrate the two poles designers may adopt. As Ouchi and Johnson (1978) suggest, an ideal-type approach is a useful tool for explaining complex phenomena, in which the whole is more than its parts. We describe these systems adapting a well-known framework specified by Flamholtz et al (1985), building on a broad and diverse social science literature. Flamholtz et al.'s (1985) original work simplifies the complexity associated with performance management systems by concentrating on 'core controls' (i.e., those that are formally designed to increase the probability of people behaving in ways that facilitate the delivery of goals).

Their framework acknowledges that these core controls are embedded in a wider ‘control context’ shaped by the organizational structure, culture and its external environment, which indirectly influence individual and group behaviour. To this framework, we add that the control context is also a product of the history of the organization. This control context not only influences individuals and groups. It also affects the design, evolution and usage of control mechanisms and their relationships (Otley and Franco-Santos 2020). Flamholtz et al. (1985) highlight that the core control mechanisms are those developed to ‘plan’ for performance, ‘measure’ performance, ‘review’ performance and ‘reward’ performance. Subsequent research identified a set of additional control mechanisms, which are ‘selection’ and ‘leadership’ (Abernethy et al. 2010, 2015). These controls can take various forms. We categorise them under the labels of *directive* and *enabling performance management systems* (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). In the overall design, core controls follow a sequence which is often time-bound. Both types of controls can operate at the organization, group and individual level.

Directive performance management systems

As suggested earlier, performance management systems exist to address the performance problem an organization faces. In some organizations, the performance problem is framed as an ‘alignment’ problem (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). The dominant logic or rationale in these organizations suggests that performance is more likely when individual and organizational goals are aligned. Alignment, however, is problematic because people tend to behave opportunistically, prioritising their interests at the expense of organizational goals. This way of framing the performance problem is known to be underpinned by an instrumental rationality largely informed by economics knowledge and, in particular, the assumptions and predictions of principal-agency research (Davis et al. 1997). First, this framing assumes that shareholders (or owners) are the organization’s dominant coalition. They delegate the running of the organization to managers or ‘agents’ who act on their behalf. Thus, shareholders’ financial goals must be prioritised, ensuring there is little uncertainty about the expected results and the means to achieve them. Another assumption is that information is asymmetric (i.e., performance knowledge is imperfect, but managers have more and better information than shareholders). Further, it presupposes that managers are risk-averse, effort-averse and motivated by self-interest.

These assumed conditions create the basis for the goal-misalignment problem. This problem is thought to be resolved with the use of directive controls; in particular, monitoring and incentives (Eisenhardt 1989). Without controls, the thinking goes, shareholders’ goals will suffer because employees will make decisions and work on tasks that advance their agendas, disregarding shareholder’s needs. With monitoring practices, shareholders can obtain additional information to be able to assess the extent to which managers are making decisions and taking actions that benefit the organization from the perspective of its shareholders/owners. With monetary incentives, shareholders can attract and retain the individuals that are more likely to help them achieve their goals as well as motivate them to focus their attention on the behaviours that are more likely to lead to the expected financial results. Both mechanisms tend to bring with them additional secondary or indirect effects. Among other things, they may constraint autonomy, promote internal competition, condition learning and discourage innovative behaviours (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). Yet, these potential side-effects are considered by many as necessary evils. Deeds that may be harmful but less important than the positive effects these mechanisms create for the organization as a whole.

In practice, the organizations focused on goal-alignment tend to describe their monitoring and incentive practices as the core elements of their performance management system. Monitoring is formally implemented through the use of three key managerial practices: performance planning, measurement and reviews. Performance planning comprises the decisions and actions for selecting and agreeing on the definition of the goal or goals that need delivery (e.g., profit-maximisation). Performance measurement involves the operationalisation of goals, the selection of metrics or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that help shareholders and leaders understand the extent to which goals are being achieved, and the setting of performance targets signalling the level of achievement expected. Performance reviews includes the analysis and evaluation of goal-related information at the individual, team and organizational level. Indirectly, monitoring can also be exercised through leaders who follow an ‘initiating structure’ or ‘command-and-control’ approach characterised by a central focus on structuring the work environment by implementing uniform procedures and clear roles and responsibilities with limited employee participation (Abernethy et al. 2010).

Organizations often implement incentives by using bonuses and other performance-related rewards (e.g., commissions, shares-schemes) linked to the complete or partial attainment of goals as a way to extrinsically motivate alignment. Apart from their motivation effect, these incentives also have a sorting effect. They activate and attract people who have a preference for them. Previous research has highlighted that to be effective in the delivery of organizational goals, control mechanisms need to be tightly coupled. In other words, they are linked and dependent upon each other. For instance, bonus schemes to work well require to be connected to relevant goals, valid metrics, reasonable targets and objective performance appraisals (Otley 2016). In Table 1, we explain in greater detail what these directive performance management system looks like. In current times, this is the type of performance management system most organizations adopt and endorse; however, not all organizations do so. Some adopt enabling control mechanisms informed by a different way of defining their performance problem.

Enabling performance management systems

Given their history, logic or circumstances, some organizations (their leaders and key stakeholders) may frame their performance problem differently. Rather than perceiving the problem in terms of goal-misalignment, they may frame it as a problem that emerges due to the perceived uncertainty and changing environment, limiting the extent to which people’s actions will be effective (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). Underpinned by an involvement rationality, this problem framing operates with a different set of assumptions (Davis et al. 1997). For instance, the dominant coalition is thought to be comprised by multiple stakeholders (e.g., owners, customers, employees, regulators, society, environment) with a multiplicity of interests some of which are complex (e.g., wellbeing or environmental sustainability) and conflicting. People’s decisions and behaviours are presupposed to be genuinely aligned to the interest of the organization; that is, people tend to behave as ‘stewards’ who are internally motivated to satisfy the various needs of stakeholders. Managers are also thought to operate in a complex environment characterised by continuous change and imperfect information. Under these conditions, organizations face an uncertainty problem that will affect their performance. The complex nature of their goals and the environment they operate in create a situation in which the consequences of managerial action may be unknown, and the connections between actions and results may be inexact. Consequently, the delivery of organizational goals may be constrained. From this perspective, stewardship researchers (Davis et al. 1997) identify and suggest the

adoption of empowering or enabling control mechanisms to help organizations navigate complexity and manage their performance.

Enabling controls are focused on encouraging managers to learn how to deal and cope with uncertainty and on conserving their motivation to act in a pro-organizational manner. Given the uncertain situation managers are thought to be in, the use of monitoring or financial incentives are considered to be pointless as the multiplicity and complex nature of organizational goals is technically not suited to this type of controls. Organizations following this performance framing are likely to define their intended goals in broad terms and identified them through consultations with key stakeholders (Davis et al. 1997). They gather data about the extent to which they are advancing their stakeholders' goals through quantitative (e.g., metrics without performance targets), but also qualitative means (e.g., informal conversations). They review their performance-related information to encourage learning and development rather than monitoring; and use intrinsic reward mechanisms that encourage self-efficacy and self-determination (sense of autonomy, sense of meaningfulness, sense of development and sense of community). They select individuals based on values, attitudes and potential, using longer probation periods and fostering a shared leadership approach. Table 1 summarises what this enabling system looks like in practice.

Table 1. Classification of performance management systems

	Directive performance management system	Enabling performance management system
Control problem	▪ Alignment	▪ Uncertainty
Management philosophy	▪ Transactional (Control/monitoring oriented)	▪ Relational (Learning/involvement oriented)
Assumptions	Agency-theory assumptions: ▪ Organizational goals defined by shareholders (owners): wealth-maximisation ▪ Employees' behaviours (self-interest, extrinsically motivated) ▪ Information asymmetry ▪ Uncertainty is not perceived as a problem	Stewardship theory assumptions about: ▪ Organizational goals defined by multiple stakeholders: wealth and non-wealth-related satisfaction ▪ Employees' behaviour (pro-organizational, intrinsically motivated) ▪ Information is imperfect ▪ Employees' self-interest is not perceived as a problem
Control mechanisms		
<i>Plan for performance</i>	▪ Success (performance) is defined using specific organizational, team and individual goals. ▪ These goals tend to be financial and have a short-term orientation. ▪ Senior leaders set organizational goals, and these are then cascaded them down to the individual level. ▪ Specific strategies and projects are devised to reach the set goals.	▪ Success is signalled by the delivery of a mission. The organization has a purpose (or a cause) ▪ The mission may comprise vague end goals with a long-term orientation. ▪ The mission aims to capture the main needs and wants of key stakeholders. Through continuous communication, it is embedded/internalized throughout the organization. ▪ Priorities are discussed and agreed among the different stakeholders (including employees) through active discussions and dialogues. ▪ Strategies and projects may be ill-defined and long-term in nature.
<i>Measuring performance (Knowledge)</i>	▪ Metrics are created and quantitative data is gathered and analysed to help monitor the delivery of organizational, team and individual goals.	▪ Where applicable metrics are developed, agreed with relevant stakeholders and used to guide action. Together with quantitative data qualitative data is also gathered and analysed.

	<i>Directive performance management system</i>	<i>Enabling performance management system</i>
	Targets are used to distinguish ‘good’ from ‘poor’ performance at all levels.	- The role of performance-related data is to encourage understanding, learning and improvement. - Aspirational targets may be adopted but they are only used as guidance for learning.
<i>Reviewing Performance</i>	- Measured performance is periodically reviewed and evaluated against targeted performance (at least once a year) to better understand the extent to which goals have been achieved. - Performance appraisals are used to assess individual measured performance and provide feedback.	- Performance-related data is reviewed (mostly at the group level as the work of individuals is highly interrelated). - Individuals exercise self-management of their performance. - Individuals’ work and situation are reviewed by knowledgeable individuals for developmental and learning purposes.
<i>Rewarding performance</i>	The main focus is on extrinsic rewards linked to measured performance results (e.g., part of the overall pay is at risk using incentive schemes)	- Extrinsic rewards (salary) meet basic needs. - Intrinsic rewards are fostered (sense of autonomy, sense of community, sense of development, sense of meaningfulness).
<i>Employing for performance (selection and probation)</i>	- Selection is mainly based on past achievements. - Employees’ probation period is often short and based on measurable performance criteria	- Recruitment is mainly based on individual potential, attitudes and motivation - Probation is based on internal and external peer-reviews of the individual contributions and potential to contribute further - Tight control of who joins the organisation and on who stays after the probation period
<i>Coordinating/leading performance</i>	‘Command and control’ leadership approach - Leaders pay close attention to the results of performance measures and operate accordingly. - Typical leaders’ beliefs: “you can’t manage what you can’t measure”, “pay is the best motivator for people to perform”	- Shared leadership - Leaders pay attention to what is meaningful for the organisation and for staff (even if what is meaningful cannot be measured) - Typical leaders’ beliefs: “What counts cannot always be counted”, “money motivates, but excellent performance needs an intrinsic drive”
What are top managers focused on?	- On monitoring performance - On incentivizing performance	- On learning and performance improvement - On providing an enabling context for aligned individuals to conserve their motivation

To improve the clarity and comprehension of these complex systems, we have described the two ideal types of performance management systems as independent. Meaning that the choice of directive controls implies that enabling controls are not considered. However, in their intended designs, organizations may emphasise one of these ideal types, for example a directive type, whilst adopting in specific circumstances control practices more suited to an enabling system. Alternatively, formally designed mechanisms may be enacted in ways that do not follow their intended purpose. For example, a directive system comprising clear output measures and targets designed with a corporate intention to be used as monitoring devices may be overlooked or completely ignored at the local level by managers who question their utility and instead chose enabling mechanisms to ensure their unit performs. These situations are more likely to be the norm than the exception due to the dynamic and path-dependence nature of these systems (Merchant and Otley 2020). After describing these two ideal types of performance management systems, we now provide a brief review of the role they play in enhancing or weakening

employee well-being. Our intention here is to illustrate key insights from extant research rather than to provide a comprehensive literature review.

Performance management and wellbeing research

Ouchi and Johnson (1978) were among the first scholars to investigate the relationship between the use of control mechanisms and employees' wellbeing in American corporations. In their work, they identified two ideal types of organizational control systems. Those used in 'type A' and 'type Z' organizations. Although their research was conducted more than forty years ago, their control types resemble the fundamental characteristics of the different performance management systems described above as *directive* and *enabling*. They find two very distinct management philosophies or rationalities in 'type A' and 'type Z' companies. They labelled them as control-oriented and learning or involvement-oriented respectively. Ouchi and Johnson's (1978) interpretation of management philosophies resonates with the management rationalities described by Davis et al (1997) as the ones underpinning agency theory and stewardship theory premises and predictions. Ouchi and Johnson (1978) argued that insofar as controls satisfy the relational needs of employees, they affect their emotional wellbeing. In their research, they found greater sense of autonomy among the employees working for 'type A' organizations and greater emotional wellbeing among employees in 'type Z' organizations. After the publication of Ouchi and Johnson's (1978) research, the management literature seemed to primarily focus on investigating how specific control mechanisms or sub-systems, rather than the overall system, affected wellbeing.

Within management research, Human Resource Management (HRM) scholars have been the most active at investigating how control mechanisms such as performance appraisals relate to employee wellbeing. Within the HRM field, two distinct streams of literature examine these phenomena: mainstream HRM and Critical HRM (Tweedie et al. 2019). Mainstream HRM research tends to adopt an instrumental logic with a focus on employee performance and wellbeing to the extent that they are considered to mediate the relationship between performance appraisals and organizational financial results. Over the years, this research has found that employees' work experiences associated with appraisal processes are affected by factors such as perceptions of justice, leader's support or the provision of feedback with a development orientation (e.g., Schleicher et al. 2018). Recommendations for addressing these factors have been put forward as means to enhance individual performance (believed to be aggregable into firm performance), rather than a genuine interest in employee wellbeing (Tweedie et al. 2019).

Critical HRM (CHRM) incorporates research adopting a critical stand and directly focuses on wellbeing as an 'end-goal' that must be pursued in its own right. CHRM research emphasises that it does not endorse a managerial philosophy that assumes people are opportunistic and performance management is instrumental for both strategic alignment and financial success. When describing CHRM research, Tweedie et al (2019) include the work of labour process theorists, Foucauldian debates and 'conflicting rationalities' studies. They argue that labour process theorists understand performance appraisals as a "control mechanism that enables managers to maintain domination over workers" (Tweedie et al. 2019, p. 81). From this perspective, control mechanisms are seen as a disciplinary device that limits employee autonomy and acts as a subtle ideological instrument, promoting efficiency, competition, surveillance and materialistic values (Barlow 1989; Newton and Findlay 1996). Foucauldian-based performance management debates emphasise managers' power over employees and questions the extent to

which performance management can ever act as “an aid to subjective wellbeing” (Townley 1993, p. 235). A third strand of CHRM research, they contend, draws from sociology and philosophy research and finds that performance management tools, when used as surveillance or monitoring mechanisms, can be harmful (Townley et al. 2003). Overall, Tweedie et al. (2019) contribute to the Mainstream HRM-CHRM research by building on recognition theory research and encouraging new work that looks into how performance management may negatively affect wellbeing by influencing individual identities and relations with self and others.

Following Ouchi and Johnson (1978) holistic approach, recent research has gone back to analyse how different types of performance management systems influence wellbeing, considering multiple sub-systems and not only appraisals. For instance, research conducted in UK universities found that most universities adopted hybrid performance management systems that included directive and enabling (or collegial) control mechanisms (Franco-Santos and Doherty 2017; Franco-Santos et al. 2017). In general, enabling controls were positively related to the wellbeing of all university staff regardless of their role and job position. The presence of directive controls was positively related to the wellbeing of leaders (regardless of their academic or non-academic role) and non-leaders in professional service roles. Yet, directive controls negatively affected staff in academic roles both in terms of their vitality and stress (Franco-Santos et al. 2017).

Decramer et al (2015) investigated the impact of performance management systems on nurses working in a Flemish hospital. They found that the planning and evaluation of strategy-aligned goals yield higher affective commitment, but lower job satisfaction. The authors speculated suggesting that these findings could have been due to the fact that the use of performance management systems enhanced perceptions of workload imbalance and intensification with damaging effects for nurses’ wellbeing. The work of Van Thielen et al (2018) examined the role of performance management systems in fostering the wellbeing of police officers in Belgium. Their data demonstrated that the combination of performance planning (clarity of expectations without targets) and performance evaluation (discussions about progress and results) was positively related to performance management satisfaction, which in turn was negatively related to strain and positively to job satisfaction. In their research, Van Thielen et al (2018) and Decramer et al (2015) do not explicitly distinguish between directive or enabling performance management systems. They describe what could be considered a directive system oriented to make the police service or hospitals more efficient and effective. However, in the empirical part of their studies, the way they measure performance management system characteristics seems to integrate both directive and enabling elements (e.g., lack of targets, and focus on performance-related discussions without any mentioning of potential monetary or disciplinary consequences). This may suggest the systems studied could have been directive in their original design, but the researchers paid attention to the potential enabling aspects in which these systems were used, researching, without intending to, what we here consider ‘hybrid’ systems. This interpretation may explain their various findings.

In sum, the evidence reviewed suggests that the effect performance management has on wellbeing is dependent on the type of performance management system designed, the way it is used, the nature of job roles, and job positions. Control mechanisms that are perceived to threaten autonomy, collaboration and professional knowledge seem to emotionally affect some individuals (not all). People in highly vocational professions (e.g., teaching, research, nursing, policing), who could be considered ‘stewards’, seem to be more seriously and negatively

affected by this type of control mechanisms. This may be so because directive mechanisms are perceived as a threat and affect their sense of identity. Controls that are perceived to be enabling, supportive and humane as well as useful in the provision of clarity of direction and learning seem to enhance employee wellbeing in general.

Building on these evidence-based insights, we now describe a conceptual framework. This framework is meant to be a ‘thinking tool’ to guide managerial decisions about the design of performance management systems that aims to foster rather than hinder wellbeing. Our point of departure is anchored on two basic premises: First, we argue that employee wellbeing is a key requirement for any organization that must be satisfied because it is morally and ethically desirable. Second, we argue that it is important organizations take into account the elements included in the ideal-types of performance management systems, but according to the nature of their goals and idiosyncrasies they attempt to craft a hybrid system. In that sense, we reject the idea that ‘one-size fits all’ when dealing with performance management systems due to their complexity and the dynamism of factors beyond the organization (e.g., economic, social and political circumstances) (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018; Merchant and Otley 2020).

Fostering employee wellbeing: A guiding framework for managers

Any organization that wishes to be considered ethically and morally sound, should aspire to be a healthy workplace (World Health Organization 2020). Healthy workplaces are those providing a context in which employees feel they are doing meaningful work; they are learning and advancing in their careers; they have a certain amount of autonomy; they know what is expected from them; and they are supported by leaders and colleagues (Kelloway and Day 2005; Day et al. 2014). Management research has shown people-related practices associated with the delivery of organizational goals have a significant effect on such context, so how leaders design and use these practices directly affects how people experience their life at work (Van De Voorde et al. 2012; Peccei and Van der Voorde 2019). In the past, organizations have paid little attention to employee wellbeing as an expected ‘end’ objective; even though, it should be considered a moral duty to do so (Guest 2017; Tweedie et al. 2019). Based on previous knowledge looking at performance management, we now offer a framework that can help organizations engender mutual-gains, systems that aim to facilitate wellbeing and performance. To do so, we first need to explain in greater detail the nature of organizational goals and people’s motivational characteristics play in deciding what type of performance management system (directive, enabling or hybrid) is going to be more appropriate in terms of delivering both wellbeing and performance.

The role of organizational goals in performance management systems

As clarified earlier, the overall purpose of performance management systems is to facilitate the agreement and shared understanding of organizational goals. Goals or objectives depict intentions (Latham and Locke 1990). Typically, organizational leaders and their stakeholders agree to focus on a reduced list of goals, which are used to clarify direction, focus attention and guide individual and group efforts (Cyert and March 1963; Obloj and Sengul 2020). Organizational goals differ in terms of their *scope*, *measurability*, *aggregability*, *replicability*, and *temporality*. Goal *scope* or *dimensionality* refers to how performance is defined. Organizational goals can be defined in terms of a unique performance dimension (e.g., financial) or diverse dimensions (e.g., financial and non-financial). A focus on a unique performance dimension tends to assume that success is determined by the interests of a single stakeholder, that

is shareholders (this is why this dimension tends to be financial), and that maximization is the overall aim as “it is logically impossible to maximize in more than one dimension at the same time” (Jensen 2002, p. 238). For example, an organization solely focusing on shareholder’s financial returns may focus on maximising that ‘end’ considering other stakeholders’ interests (e.g., employee engagement, customer satisfaction) as ‘means’ that can be traded-off as substitutable parts, rather than the necessary parts of a whole. Defining performance in terms of diverse dimensions all of which are equally valuable and necessary (e.g., cost-efficiency, quality of service and wellbeing) implies that the means-end logic may be unhelpful as the ends cannot be treated as if they were exchangeable. In that case, a part-whole logic focused on understanding interconnections to be able to balance or harmonize the attention and actions needed for delivering the different dimensions appears more appropriate (Rocha et al. 2006).

Goal *measurability* refers to the extent to which goals can be measured with valid and reliable indicators. Some goals can be easily measured (e.g., profit), others will always have imperfect measures (e.g., innovation, customer service). For example, a health care provider may be focused on delivering excellence in quality of care and measures this particular goal with key indicators such as waiting times and patient satisfaction. These two indicators capture some aspects of the quality goal, but many other aspects related to quality itself are left unmeasured leading to an imperfect measure of the quality-of-care goal. Measurement imperfection can be due to various factors such as the multidimensionality or the dynamic nature of the goal (Meyer and Gupta 1994; Dahler-Larsen 2014).

Goal *aggregability* relates to the extent to which goals have a multilevel nature that enables them to be cascaded down within the organization. Goal aggregability is commonly taken for granted. This is why most organizations do not even question whether an organizational goal can be cascaded down to the division, department, team and individual level. The assumption is that if a goal can be measured, it can also be cascaded. However, some goals can only be delivered at higher-order levels as their delivery emerges from the interactions of units or individuals at lower levels. That is, some goals reflect a ‘whole’ that is more than the sum of its parts. For instance, excellent customer experience in an organization may be the result of multiple interdependent factors that occur beyond a particular department or team so it may be that assessing this goal at each level of the organization does not make much sense due to its costing, wasted effort and potential unintended consequences (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018).

Goals *replicability* refers to how much knowledge does the organization possess about the process that leads to the goal being delivered so it can be predicted, and its attainment replicated overtime. In other words, this characteristic relates to the level of uncertainty between potential paths and their desired outcomes. It could be that multiple independent paths lead to an expected goal. If these paths have similar known chances of success, then leaders can identify the most effective path and ensure that this path can be replicated regardless of time and context. For instance, many organizations believe that profit maximisation is likely to be delivered through engaged employees, who enable operational excellence that leads to customer satisfaction and eventually to higher profits (Kaplan and Norton 2000). However, there may be goals which delivery is difficult to predict as paths are interrelated, may suffer changes overtime or generate uncertain consequences that are highly dependent on contextual factors. For example, an organization such as the Red Cross, which is focused on “protecting life and health and to ensure respect for the human being” may have more difficulties replicating and monitoring the process

that facilitates the delivery of their goals. Regularly, they may need to experiment and innovate with new paths based on the situational factors they face.

Finally, goal *temporality* considers whether the goal needs to be delivered in a short or long period of time. Most organization have a time orientation already associated with the delivery of their goals. A short-term orientation often refers to one year or less. A medium-term orientation would be two to three years. A long-term orientation for a goal would be more than three years. Below, Table 2 summarises the different characteristics of organizational goals. We posit that the more a set of goals encompasses multiple dimensions of performance with low measurability, aggregability and replicability, the higher their degree of complexity will be. In the interest of clarity, we have described these goal characteristics as being dichotomous and independent. For empirical research, it is more appropriate to consider them as continuous and interrelated. It is important to highlight here that these characteristics focus on the nature or content of the goal rather than its context. Although, it is worth noting that how context, especially extreme contexts such as a pandemic or a financial crisis, interacts with the nature of organizational goals can significantly affect it. For instance, a highly predictable financial goal may turn out to be unpredictable due to an economic crisis. This change will increase the complex nature of the goal.

Table 2. The nature of organizational goals

Dimensions	Low goal complexity	High goal complexity
Scope	Single dimension (it can be maximized)	Multiple dimensions of equal value (they need to be balanced as some goals may be conflicting but have equal priority).
Measurability	Goals can be measured with valid and reliable metrics.	Goals can only be measured with metrics that have low validity and reliability.
Aggregability	The whole is the sum of individual parts. Goals can be cascaded down the organization (from organizational to teams, to individuals).	The whole is more (or less) than individual parts. There are limits to cascading goals down to the individual level.
Replicability	The goal delivery process is known (or assumed to be known) to those setting the goal; it can be replicated. A predictive model can be formulated.	There is little knowledge about the overall goal delivery process; it is difficult to replicate the process. Developing a predictive model is unlikely.
Temporality:	Short-term oriented	Long-term oriented

An understanding of the nature of goals is central not only for its interest, but for the implications it has for the design of performance management systems as well as their consequences on employee wellbeing. The way goals are portrayed reflects the values and beliefs of the people who select them and are more likely to accept them (Seijts and Latham 2012). The nature of goals has serious implications for the means required to facilitate their delivery (Locke and Latham 2002). The level of goal complexity and time orientation is associated with people's information processing and motivation characteristics (Schroder et al. 1967; Campbell 1988), which in turn influence the choice of control mechanisms that would increase the likelihood of obtaining mutual gains in terms of performance and wellbeing. Based on these premises and the literature reviewed here so far, the following framework can be derived.

Organizational goals and performance management systems types

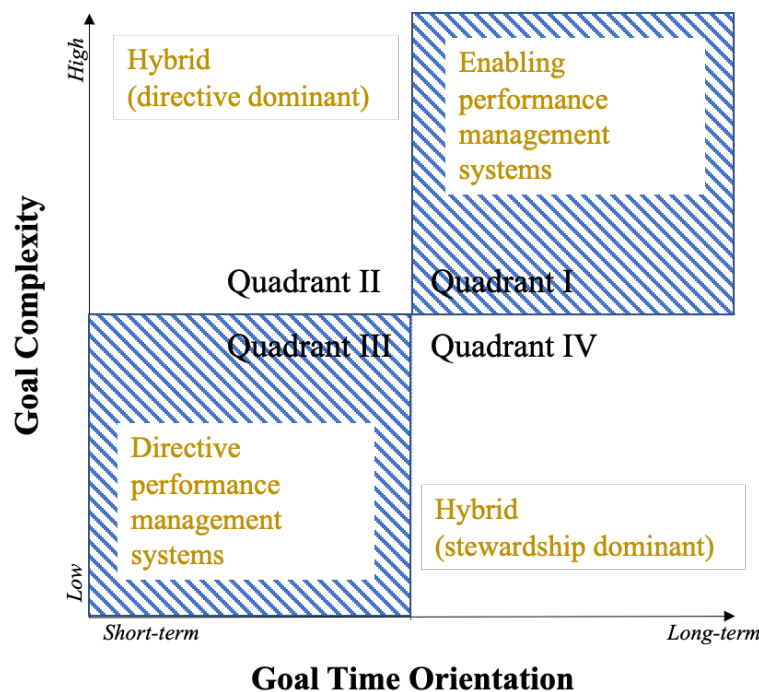
Distinguishing between high complex and low complex organizational goals and their time orientation seems potentially fruitful as a way to illustrate how different types of performance management systems affect performance and wellbeing. As mentioned earlier, the design of a performance management system is triggered by the performance problem organizations (their leaders and key stakeholders) believe they have. The way the performance problem is framed is informed or anchored in the management rationality dominating the organization. Organizations where an instrumental rationality or logic dominates will tend to frame the performance problem as a goal-misalignment problem and define organizational performance in terms of organizational goals that are mainly financial, measurable, aggregable, replicable and short-term oriented. It is important to note, that leaders may not be fully cognisant of their problem framing or managerial rationality. They may have internalised it without questioning it through their education or previous work experiences (Ghoshal and Moran 1996). Yet they imply it in their daily interactions with others. For example, comments such as “alignment in this organization is elusive” or “we need to ensure strategic alignment” epitomise an alignment framing. In many organizations, this particular framing is taken-for-granted or understood as a given (Ghoshal and Moran 1996).

In Figure 1 below, these low complex and short-time oriented goals will be positioned in quadrant III. Underpinned by a dominant instrumental rationality, we are likely to find control mechanisms which resemble a *directive* performance management type (for reference see Table 1). The overall purpose of these controls will be to monitor and incentivise alignment. These organizations will tend to attract, motivate, retain and manage the performance of individuals that already behave as ‘agents’ as presumed by agency theorists (Eisenhardt 1989) or eventually will behave like ‘agents’ as time goes by (Ghoshal and Moran 1996). Examples of these extreme organizations are places such as Enron or Well-Fargo. Both of these organizations enjoyed great financial success for years following an extreme version of instrumental rationality and adopting highly directive performance management systems. Their success was, however, affected by shifts in the economic environment which uncertainty drastically undermined the predictability and validity of the measures used to assess their goals. Leaders should have responded to this situation by reframing their performance problem towards a hybrid one which incorporated uncertainty and alignment. They did not change course. As a result, unintended perverse consequences emerged (e.g., unethical behaviours such as gaming, data or manipulation) as others have explained elsewhere (Boje et al. 2006; Witman 2018).

Organizations where a relational or involvement rationality dominate will tend to frame the performance problem as an uncertainty-related problem. That is, a ‘wicked’ problem that requires constant work and continuous learning (Rittel and Webber 1973). In these organizations, performance is likely to be defined in terms of organizational goals that are multidimensional, difficult to measure and aggregate, with reduced replicability and long-term oriented. In Figure 1, these goals will be positioned in quadrant I. Accordingly, organizations operating under this dominant relational logic, are more likely to design stewardship-based or enabling performance management mechanisms. These mechanisms will be focused on creating a context in which people can learn and maintain their internal drives to be able to cope with the uncertainty and risk associated with organizational goals. These organizations will aim to attract, motivate and retain “stewards” (Davis et al. 1997), rather than “agents”.

An example of an organization in quadrant I could be the idealised view of what a university is (or ought to be) (as faculty members, we cannot help but wonder where this idealised view has gone, how, and most importantly why, most of our current universities are very distant from this idealised view). As traditionally defined, a university is a place where scholars are focused on delivering excellence in education and research that benefits the economy, culture and the environment (Ortega y Gasset 1946). For example, places such as The University of Cambridge (2020) still has a mission which resembles this purpose: “to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence”. For many centuries, the control mechanisms associated with an enabling performance management type operated in English universities; however, for the last thirty years, scholars in diverse disciplines have begun to notice how the relational (and collegial) rationality is being eroded and a ‘neo-liberal’ logic, which resembles the ideas of an instrumental rationality and the premises and predictions of principal-agency theory, is shaping the control mechanisms adopted by universities and consequently faculty behaviour and motivations (Kalfa et al. 2018).

Figure 1. Performance Management Systems and wellbeing framework



Organizations operating in quadrant I and III are likely to be extremes or ideal types. However, in present times, we expect most organizations to be positioned in quadrants II or IV with hybrid systems as they experience conflicting rationales, which result in organizational goals that have a mixed nature. It is also plausible that organizations (as a whole or some of their parts) dynamically move from quadrant to quadrant as the conditions in their environments change. To date, there has been little research looking at hybrid performance management systems (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). Little empirical knowledge exists describing what these hybrid systems look like and the extent to which they facilitate the delivery of performance and wellbeing.

Hybridity is not a new phenomenon. It has been previously investigated in other management literatures (O'Reilly III and Tushman 2013; Dalpiaz et al. 2016; Luger et al. 2018). Without enough empirical data on this matter, we can only tentatively outline a few ideas that seem to converge from these diverse literatures to help us visualise what a hybrid performance management system looks like. For instance, it is reasonable to expect that organizations facing a hybrid framing will follow either a structural approach with dual systems in different contexts, for example, sales department adopting a directive-type system whilst the research and development department adopting a more enabling-type system; a time-based approach with the organization stressing different control mechanisms overtime based on their different priorities; or a contextual approach with the organization developing 'requisite variety' (Ashby 1958) or a repertoire of responses and behavioural capabilities that allows it to integrate directive and enabling mechanisms in a seamless manner without resistance.

Performance management systems for wellbeing and performance

If we understand wellbeing as a constrain or necessary condition that every organization needs to contemplate (Guest 2017), the type of controls adopted need to fit the nature of that organizational goal. Interestingly, this positioning of wellbeing as a key goal that reflects the needs of employees and society at large already implies the humanistic values that underpin an involvement management rationality. Based on previous research, we already know that wellbeing is a contested concept, indicating that its complex nature allows for its definition to vary depending on the beliefs and values of the people defining it and responsible for its delivery. Interpreting wellbeing as "the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work" (Grant et al. 2007, p. 52), suggests that wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that is difficult to measure validly and reliably; it is not aggregable or easily predictable; and it is long-term oriented. This definition positions the delivery of wellbeing as a 'wicked' problem. A problem that requires flexibility, high involvement, and continuous adaptation. It goes without saying, that we expect every employee to be genuinely aligned with or interested in this particular organizational goal.

Based on this characterization and following the ideas discussed so far, the most appropriate means to enhance wellbeing seem to be the adoption of enabling or hybrid control mechanisms (quadrants I, IV and II). The least desirable approach will be to design a pure directive performance management system (quadrant III). Although, it is possible that a system in quadrant III enhances wellbeing as an unintended positive side-effect. Enabling mechanisms are thought to generate the conditions that wellbeing research has already identified as antecedents of wellbeing (see, for example, the work of Kelloway and Day 2005; Day et al. 2014). Enabling mechanisms are associated with work contexts in which people feel they have autonomy, a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of development and growth and a supportive community of colleagues and superiors. Due to the high complexity nature of wellbeing, organizations in 'quadrant I' will muddle or navigate through its delivery as individual and environmental factors will always influence this particular goal. Their overall purpose will be the continuous improvement of wellbeing at all levels rather than its "maximization". It is unlikely that we find organizations with 100 per cent of their people professing high wellbeing and, if we do, chances are gaming, lying, data manipulation or other factors indicating bigger problems are at play (Franco-Santos and Otley 2018). Furthermore, in organizations adopting enabling performance management systems (quadrant I), having a particular target will be meaningless. This is because knowing an organization is purposefully seeking to achieve, for example, 65 per

cent of their people in a high wellbeing category means that this organization is fine with having 35 per cent of their staff under a low wellbeing category, which is morally and ethically questionable. Nevertheless, we may see organizations in quadrants II and IV with more flexible arrangements as they aim for wellbeing together with other indicators of performance such as profit or quality.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have explained how different types of performance management systems can create stress and anxiety, as well as positive effects on wellbeing at work. Organizations need to pay attention to how people feel at work and to how managerial practices affect them, not just because it is financially beneficial, but because it is morally and ethical to do so. To inform leaders' approach to the design and use of performance management systems, we offer a framework or 'thinking tool' which aim is to facilitate their decision making. Following this framework, leaders need to be aware of the management rationality influencing the way in which they frame their performance problem, define organizational goals and the means they select to facilitate their delivery. To address people's wellbeing needs, the use of enabling performance management mechanisms is highly recommended. Although if wellbeing needs to be balanced with financial performance a hybrid performance management system might be more desirable. A directive performance management approach can have harmful effects on wellbeing, especially of people exerting pure 'stewardship' behaviours often associated with vocational professions. A directive system can, however, enhance the wellbeing of individuals exerting pure 'agent' type behaviours even though it may do it as an unintended (positive) consequence rather than as an intended objective of the performance management system.

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