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# Performance Measurement System in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions: Driving Success or Inducing Stress?

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**Abstract:** An effective performance measurement system (PMS) is crucial for higher education institutions (HEIs) to drive success, but an unfair one may lead to stress and negative behaviors. Currently, academics are expected to excel in various areas, leading to overwhelming tasks and responsibilities. The existing system for evaluating academic performance is considered unfair as it overly prioritizes quantitative measures. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are also perceived as inadequate in capturing the essence of the academic role, which should emphasize content and quality. This study aims to explore Malaysian academics' perceptions of the performance measurement system adopted by HEIs, their views on what constitutes a fair measurement system, and their opinions about the current system. This study targeted academics at Malaysian HEIs using convenience sampling due to the large number of institutions. A total of 379 participants responded to an online survey distributed via email with the help of university representatives. The instrument included sections on demographics, perceptions of PMS, opinions on fair PMS, and open-ended questions, utilizing a slider scale for precise data collection. The findings indicate that higher education institutions tend to adopt a directive performance measurement approach, relying heavily on quantitative indicators for monitoring. To create a fairer system, emphasis should be placed on effort and qualitative measures. Many academics express frustration over the numerous measures employed in the PMS, contributing to their excessive workload and work-life imbalance. Therefore, a fairer measurement system is needed to ensure a better work-life balance and reduce stress for academics.

**Keywords:** *Performance measurement; performance measurement system; work-life balance; academics; Malaysian higher education institutions*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, academics in higher education institutions (HEIs) have faced increased responsibilities. The pursuit of higher university rankings, such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE), has significantly impacted how universities are managed. In Malaysia, the Discipline-Based Rating System (D-SETARA) and Malaysian Research Assessment Instrument (MyRA) assess the research capacity and performance of HEIs, putting pressure on local universities to meet performance targets not only for recognition but also to secure government resources through budget allocation (Janudin & Maelah, 2016). Consequently, academics are anticipated to excel in diverse capacities such as teaching, research, securing grants, publishing, and engaging in community service, among other responsibilities (Abd Hamid, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2010).

The extensive responsibilities, such as teaching up to 18 hours a week (for certain institutions), conducting research, and participating in various activities, are compounded by reduced funding. Higher education institutions (HEIs) require academics to generate income while simultaneously limiting resources for them to perform their jobs effectively. While academics are driven by intrinsic motivation (Kallio & Kallio, 2014), excessive workload can lead to increased fatigue, causing individuals to disconnect their efforts from the value of their work. Adnan et al. (2022) discovered that the multitude of tasks assigned to academics in recent years could be a contributing factor to their diminished vitality. This results in reduced motivation and a tendency to invest minimal effort (Noman, 2021). Consequently, academics may experience decreased motivation, heightened stress, and job burnout (Chen et al., 2014). Many academics find it challenging to take breaks during semester breaks due to numerous responsibilities, leaving little time for personal life (Noman, 2021). Despite the importance of rest for rejuvenation and motivation, some academics find it difficult to spare time for such activities.

Despite the overwhelming tasks, academics lack the flexibility to choose their assignments due to the

evaluation system used by higher education institutions (HEIs). The system assesses their performance using key performance indicators (KPIs), encompassing various tasks (Che Omar et al., 2014). Failure to meet these KPIs can result in academics not receiving an annual salary increase, and even achieving satisfactory results may not guarantee bonuses. Many acknowledge that these KPIs, as highlighted by several sources (Kallio & Kallio, 2014), inadequately represent the nature and substance of academic jobs, focusing too much on quantity rather than the content and quality emphasized in academic roles. The current evaluation system is criticized as being unfair, causing unnecessary stress and fostering dysfunctional behaviors such as free-riding, back-stabbing, and plagiarism among academics.

While organizations use performance measurement systems to ensure goal alignment and motivate employees, Cuguero-Escofet and Rosanas (2016) argue that modern organizations increasingly prioritize quantitative aspects over qualitative ones in their evaluation and reward systems. The use of numerous Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can also contribute to stress and burnout among academics (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017; Kallio & Kallio, 2014). In the Malaysian higher education system, academic leaders prioritize achieving goals, KPIs, and standards (Ghasemy et al., 2018). This paper aims to: i) explore Malaysian academics' views on their HEIs' performance measurement system; ii) gather opinions on a fair measurement system; and iii) examine academics' reactions to the current system. The goal is to provide insights into academics' workloads for top management and assist the Ministry of Education in developing a more effective system for the future of tertiary education in Malaysia.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 explains the review of literature; Section 3 on research methodology; Section 4 elaborates the results and discussion; and Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Literature Review

### Performance Measurement System (PMS): An Overview

An organization's success, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, relies on employee performance. The Performance Measurement System (PMS) plays a crucial role in evaluating and influencing employee satisfaction with their performance assessment. Flamholtz (1996) notes that PMS is employed to control specific behaviors and align decisions with organizational objectives. Franco-Santos et al. (2012) emphasize PMS as a valuable resource that improves decision-making, enhances competitive advantage, and consequently boosts organizational performance. PMS also transforms organizational strategy into measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), evaluating both employee and organizational performance (Zuriekat, et al., 2011). This process aims to strengthen organizational quality and reputation (de Waal & Kourtit, 2013) and create shareholder value (Maisel, 2001).

Undoubtedly, the Performance Measurement System (PMS) plays a crucial role in achieving organizational goals, providing several advantages for both employees and the organization. For employees, PMS aids in enhancing performance and building expertise continuously (Mone & London, 2018). Empowering employees to participate in developing measures, as suggested by Groen et al. (2017), gives them control over their performance, indirectly motivating and supporting their professional development (Kim & Holzer, 2016). This effectiveness is further heightened when linked to a reward system (Lawler, 2003). For organizations, PMS is instrumental in measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of actions, including client satisfaction, efficiency, and workload completion (Melnyk et al., 2014; Groen et al., 2017). Implementing and using PMS correctly yields various benefits for organizations, including higher results orientation, better strategic clarity, increased personnel commitment, and enhanced organizational quality, as concluded by de Waal & Kourtit (2013).

While the implementation of Performance Measurement Systems (PMS) offers numerous organizational benefits, it also encounters challenges related to system requirements and implementation methods. De Waal and Kourtit (2013) highlight issues such as internal competition, high costs, excessive bureaucracy, low information quality, and an abundance of indicators that can render the PMS unreliable. Challenges also arise in the acceptance of PMS by employees and managers due to resistance to change and disagreements with the set measures and targets for performance assessment (Maisel, 2001). In all organizations, including educational institutions where academic matters are central, having an effective Performance Measurement System (PMS) is crucial. This ensures that the system's implementation aligns with strategic objectives and is

accepted by both employees and managers. For instance, higher education institutions (HEIs) implement PMS designed to suit the nature of academics, complementing their strategies, aligning behaviors, and supporting top management decisions (Janudin & Maelah, 2016). However, research on PMS in university settings, particularly focused on academics, is limited. This is partly due to the challenge of measuring performance based on activities and processes, especially when academic performances are not directly linked to pay (Kallio & Kallio, 2014). Lately, a proposal has emerged for an Islamic performance measurement model that considers both material and spiritual aspects, along with the efforts exerted by employees (Adnan et al., 2021).

**The Practice of Performance Evaluation - PMS Practice: Directive vs Enabling**

Setting up a successful PMS is a crucial task for any organization. How an organization manages performance measurement determines its ability to identify performance issues and motivate excellence. According to Mujeeb (2011), a well-implemented performance management system not only establishes career paths for employees but also contributes to shaping the organizational culture. This system becomes ingrained in management practices, fostering job security and career development. The PMS also influences how performance is handled, either through a directive or enabling approach, as conceptualized by Franco-Santos and Doherty (2017).

The directive approach is traditional and hierarchical, involving a top-down method. In this approach, managers or supervisors set goals, define performance criteria, and give specific instructions to employees. The focus is on compliance, meeting set targets and control. Feedback and evaluations are usually given by managers, emphasizing monitoring to align individual performance with organizational objectives. In contrast, enabling performance management takes a collaborative approach, aiming to empower employees to own their performance. It creates an environment that encourages growth, development, and autonomy. In this approach, managers serve as facilitators and coaches, offering guidance and support to employees. Goals are commonly set together, and feedback is sought from various sources, including peers and subordinates. The focus is on learning, continuous improvement, and fostering employee engagement.

Organizations using a directive approach typically increase employee stress, while those using an enabling approach reduce stress and enhance employees' work experience (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017). This aligns with the idea that excessive command-and-control management, as suggested by Franco-Santos et al., (2014), doesn't improve employee motivation and performance, neglecting certain aspects of human behavior. Newton-Lewis et al. (2021) suggested that directive approaches work better in simpler systems with clear outcomes, sufficient resources, and extrinsically motivated workers while enabling approaches are more effective in complex, uncertain environments with high trust, teamwork, intrinsic motivation, and strong leadership. Previous literature also suggests that directive and enabling approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Designers of PMS need to find a balance between the two as they are complementary: directive approaches can drive short-term innovation and improvement while enabling approaches are essential for long-term strategic renewal and change.

The study's findings may provide insights into how academics perceive current performance evaluation practices in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – whether these practices truly motivate academics to be more productive and committed or, conversely, dampen their motivation.

## 3. Methodology

**Population and Sampling**

The population of this study comprises all academics employed at universities across Malaysia. However, given the large number of institutions—20 public universities and 47 private universities, as reported by StudyMalaysia.com (2020)—it was not feasible to include all of them in the study. Therefore, convenience sampling was employed to select a manageable sample of universities for data collection. To ensure a practical approach, all academicians within the selected universities were considered potential respondents. However, in the initial phase, only those who were willing to serve as enumerators were chosen to facilitate the data collection process. Consequently, the final sample included a total of seven public universities, three private universities, four polytechnics, and two university colleges, ensuring a diverse representation of higher education institutions in Malaysia. This selection aimed to capture a broad range of academic experiences and

perspectives while maintaining feasibility in data collection.

**Data Collection Method**

Data collection was conducted through an online survey administered via SurveyMonkey. To facilitate distribution, designated representatives from each selected university were responsible for disseminating the survey by sending out emails containing both the cover letter and the survey link to academics within their respective institutions. This approach ensured that the survey reached a broad audience while maintaining a structured distribution process. Additionally, to capture respondents' levels of agreement effectively, the slider scale feature provided by the SurveyMonkey application was utilized, allowing participants to indicate their responses on a continuous scale rather than selecting fixed categorical options. This method enabled more precise data collection and a detailed understanding of respondents' perceptions.

**Instrument**

The instrument consisted of four sections, namely demography, the perception of PMS currently practiced at their respective HEIs, the opinions on a fair PMS and an open-ended section. Perception of PMS employed in HEI was captured using an 11-item instrument developed by Franco-Santos and Doherty (2017) which was meant to measure how academics perceived the implementation of their current evaluation system. Franco-Santos and Doherty (2017) and Kallio et al. (2016) proposed two dimensions of directive and enabling performance management. Sample items are (a) My institution uses specific performance indicators to monitor performance; (b) My institution rewards us based on whether the objectives set have been met.

Opinions on the fair performance measurement were measured using five items. These items were created based on available literature, like Colquitt et al. (2001) and Cooman et al. (2009). The literature agreed that work effort should consider persistence and intensity of completing a task. Sample items are (a) To have a fair performance measurement and appraisal, I think it should consider the effort that we put into work, and not just the output or outcome; and (b) To have a fair performance measurement and appraisal, I think discretionary work or activities should be recorded in the specified format as a basis for performance appraisal.

An open-ended question was asked to elicit the effect of performance measurement on academics' work life, which is 'Think about your Key Performance Index set by your institution and annual performance appraisal. How do they affect your work life?' This question was, however, optional. The slider scale in Survey Monkey was used with percentage (%) as the measurement unit for the scores for each questionnaire item. The use of percentage as a measurement unit for each item is suggested by Yusoff and Janor (2014) and Yusoff (2019). Each respondent was asked to rate their agreement on each item on a scale of 0 to 100% which provides more discriminative options.

## 4. Results and Discussion

**Respondents' Profile**

Table 1 presents a comprehensive breakdown of the respondents' demographics. A total of 379 academics from universities in Malaysia participated as respondents, although only 344 of them provided complete answers for the demographic section. The respondents consisted of 72% females, and most of them fell within the age range of 30 to 39 years. In terms of work experience, 79.7% of the respondents had been working for more than eight years. Most respondents (75.7%) were married, and 67.4% of them had one to five children. Furthermore, a significant portion of the respondents (88%) belonged to public universities, and 72.4% of them reported earning a monthly income ranging from RM5,000 to RM15,000.

Regarding the field of study, 34.4% of the respondents were from the social science discipline, while the remaining respondents were from science and technology backgrounds. A notable portion of the respondents (24.3%) held administrative positions at their respective universities. Concerning the assessment of academic performance, most of the respondents (60.5%) mentioned that their performance was evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Additionally, 25.1% stated that they were primarily assessed quantitatively, 9.6% reported being evaluated solely based on quantitative measures, and only 4.8% of the respondents indicated that their performance was measured qualitatively.

**Table 1: Respondents' profile**

| VARIABLES | SUBGROUPS | NO. | % | VARIABLES | SUBGROUPS | NO. | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 242 | 72.5 | Types of institution | Private university | 22 | 6.6 |
| | Female | 92 | 27.5 | | Private university college | 10 | 3 |
| Marital status | Divorced/ Widowed | 10 | 3 | | Public university | 294 | 88 |
| | Married | 253 | 75.7 | | Public University College / Others | 8 | 2.4 |
| | Single | 71 | 21.3 | Household monthly income | Less than RM5,000 | 25 | 7.5 |
| Age | 21 - 29 | 8 | 2.4 | | RM5,000 – 9,999 | 136 | 40.7 |
| | 30 - 39 | 125 | 37.4 | | RM10,000 –14,999 | 106 | 31.7 |
| | 40 - 49 | 123 | 36.8 | | RM15,000 – 24,999 | 51 | 15.3 |
| | 50 - 59 | 74 | 22.2 | | RM25,000 - 34,999 | 9 | 2.7 |
| | 60 and above | 4 | 1.2 | | RM35,000 – 44,999 | 2 | 0.6 |
| No of children | None | 88 | 26.3 | | RM45,000 & above | 5 | 1.5 |
| | 1 - 3 | 158 | 47.3 | Work experience | 1 – 3 years | 24 | 7.2 |
| | 4 - 5 | 67 | 20.1 | | 4 – 7 years | 44 | 13.2 |
| | 6 and above | 21 | 6.3 | | 8 – 11 years | 72 | 21.6 |
| Field of work | Science and Technology | 219 | 65.6 | | 12 – 15 years | 61 | 18.3 |
| | | | | | 16 years and above | 133 | 39.8 |
| | Social Sciences | 115 | 34.4 | Administrative post | With post | 81 | 24.3 |
| Current PMS adopted | Both qualitatively and quantitatively | 202 | 60.5 | | Without post | 253 | 75.7 |
| | Mostly quantitatively | 84 | 25.1 | Current PMS adopted | Only quantitatively | 32 | 9.6 |
| | Mostly qualitatively | 10 | 3 | | Only qualitatively | 6 | 1.8 |

**Perceptions of Performance Evaluation Practiced**

Table 2 shows the respondents' perception of the current performance evaluation being practiced at their institutions. The coefficients of variation (CV) for almost all items are more than 30%, indicating that mean values are not appropriate to describe the data on perception of the evaluation style (Cui, 1989). Therefore, median values are used to describe how the respondents perceived the performance evaluation practiced. Based on the median, the agreement ranged between 57.5% to 81.5%. The highest score is for item 1 (85%) which is "my institution uses specific performance indicators to monitor performance" followed by item 2 (80%) which refers to "my institution sets specific performance targets to differentiate between good and bad performance".

The upper quartile is also used to indicate respondents' level of agreement, with percentages of 81% and above reflecting strong agreement with the specified items. Item 1 and item 2 show the upper quartile which is more than 90%. This indicates that it is strongly agreed that the academic institution has set the target to be achieved by the academics and uses performance indicators to measure and monitor the performance of the academics.

Item 4, "my institution monitors what we do and do not do", item 7, "my institution equally promotes and recognizes excellence in whatever shape or form it comes in'' and item 11, "my institution gives recognition to high performance, which motivates us to work harder" are all rated at a median of 70%. Referring to Table 2

indicates that respondents moderately agreed that their HEIs monitor the progress of their achievement, and the recognition given did motivate them to work harder. It is also moderately agreed that academic institutions promote and recognize all types of performance in accordance with the predetermined KPIs. As for item 8, "my institution provides constant opportunities for learning and development" which is rated at 75% indicating that respondents moderately agreed that academic institutions provide constant opportunities to the academics for their learning and development.

**Table 2: Perception of Performance Evaluation Practiced**

| | ITEM | Mean values (%) | SD (%) | CV (%) | Lower quartile (%) | Median (%) | Upper quartile (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | My institution uses specific performance indicators to monitor performance. | 78.38 | 20.67 | 26.8 | 70 | 81.5 | 94 |
| 2 | My institution sets specific performance targets to differentiate between good and bad performance. | 73.59 | 22.25 | 30.2 | 59.75 | 80 | 90 |
| 3 | My institution rewards us based on whether the objectives set have been met. | 61.54 | 28.16 | 45.8 | 52 | 66 | 84 |
| 4 | My institution monitors what we do and do not do. | 67.28 | 25.17 | 37.4 | 50 | 70 | 87 |
| 5 | My institution is effective at informing individuals how the work of individuals contributes to their overall institutional success. | 63.31 | 25.8 | 40.8 | 50 | 69 | 83 |
| 6 | My institution provides us with the necessary resources to do our work well. | 59.98 | 25.47 | 42.5 | 47 | 62.5 | 80 |
| 7 | My institution equally promotes and recognizes excellence in whatever shape or form it comes (e.g. teaching, research, management/ administration). | 63.36 | 25.07 | 39.6 | 50 | 70 | 81.25 |
| 8 | My institution provides constant opportunities for learning and development. | 68.89 | 23.76 | 34.5 | 54.75 | 75 | 87 |
| 9 | My institution provides us with a lot of autonomy to choose how we meet our output goals in whatever way we think is best. | 62.7 | 24.75 | 39.5 | 50 | 68.5 | 80 |
| 10 | My institution allows us to express our disagreement with our appraiser regarding the rating that we get. | 54.5 | 26.75 | 49.1 | 39 | 57.5 | 77 |
| 11 | My institution gives recognition to high performance, which motivates us to work harder. | 67.22 | 25.18 | 37.5 | 50 | 70 | 88.25 |

Two items with the lowest scores are item 10, "my institution allows us to express our disagreement to our appraiser regarding the rating that we get"; and item 6, "my institution provides us with the necessary resources to do our work well" (57.5% and 62.5% respectively). The upper quartile values for these two items are less than 81%. This indicates low agreement with the statements. The agreement on the provision of necessary resources for academics to perform their work better is also low, indicating academic institutions do not sufficiently provide the necessary resources to the academics.

Item 3, "My institution rewards us based on whether the objectives set have been met" is rated at 66%, indicating low agreement on the rewards to the academics based on their performance. This is expected as academics' rewards are not contingent upon performance (Kallio & Kallio, 2014; Kallio, et al., 2016). The

agreement on item 5, "my institution is effective at informing how the work of individuals contributes to its overall institutional success" is almost low (rated at 69%), like item 9, "my institution provides us with a lot of autonomy to choose how we meet our output goals in whatever way we think is best" (rated at 68.5%). These indicate that the HEIs are not that effective in communicating academics' performance, and do not give sufficient autonomy or empowerment to the academics to change or modify the learning instructions which are necessary to create effective teaching and learning (Struyven et al., 2004).

Performance management practices are important in HEIs as suggested by Franco-Santos and Doherty (2017) since academics' perceptions of the use of performance management practices, either directive or enabling, will affect their stress level or vitality. Based on the discussion of the results and previous literature, it can be concluded that HEIs are more prone to directive performance management as they highly rely on performance indicators to monitor performance (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017). This relates to the high agreement level on items 1 and 2, which provide evidence that specific targets have been set and used to evaluate performance.

The use of directive performance can also be related to the low agreement of items 6, 9 and 10 which demonstrate that HEIs may not provide sufficient necessary resources for academics, and some may not allow flexibility to academics to meet their output goals that may dampen their work motivation and increase stress and job-burnout. This is in tandem with the findings by (Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017) which suggested that directive performance management will negatively affect well-being.

**Academics' Opinion of Fair Performance Measures**

Table 3 below shows the results from descriptive analysis of responses to issues that should be considered to have fair performance measures. Looking at the mean values, all the issues stated in the items were highly agreed upon by respondents. The coefficient of Variation (CV) of less than 20% for three items implies that the variation among respondents' agreement was small. The highest mean agreement (86.1%) was given to the item that states, 'A fair performance appraisal should consider the effort that we put into work, and not just the output or outcome'.

Similarly, the lower quartile, median, and upper quartile values were also highest for this item. Respondents also highly agreed with the other two items that state, 'discretionary work or activities should be recorded in the specified format as a basis for performance measure', and 'it should consider the level of job demands required of us'. Only one item, 'working time or hours spent on a task should be recorded as a basis for performance measure', scored a mean of less than 80% (76.88%) and CV more than 20%.

This shows that there are respondents who highly agreed with this item, but the variation in the agreement is quite big. These findings were also agreed by the interviewees who strongly supported the inclusion of effort in the evaluation of performance, in line with the proposal by Adnan et al. (2021).

**Table 3: Academic's Opinion of Fair Performance Measures**

| Item | Mean values (%) | SD (%) | CV (%) | Lower quartile (%) | Median (%) | Upper quartile (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To have a fair performance measurement and appraisal, I think it should consider the effort that we put into work, and not just the output or outcome. | 86.10 | 16.48 | 19.1 | 79.00 | 90.00 | 100 |
| To have a fair performance measurement and appraisal, I think discretionary work or activities should be recorded in the specified format as a basis for performance appraisal. | 82.30 | 15.99 | 18.6 | 72.00 | 85.00 | 96.75 |
| To have a fair performance measurement and appraisal, I think working time or hours spent on a task should be recorded as a basis for performance appraisal | 76.88 | 22.73 | 29.6 | 65.00 | 82.00 | 98.00 |
| To have a fair performance measurement and | 83.46 | 16.19 | 19.4 | 75.00 | 86.00 | 100 |

appraisal, I think it should consider the level of job demands required of us.

**What Do Academics Feel About Their Current Evaluation System?**

An open-ended question, adapted from Kallio et al. (2016), was included in the survey: "*How does the current performance measurement system practiced by your institution affect your life as an academician*?" This question aims to gather qualitative insights into the personal impact of the performance management system on academics' professional and personal lives. Basically, responses to an open-ended question on how the academics feel about their current evaluation system demonstrated that they are truly unsatisfied with the system. Many of them use this question to express their dissatisfaction with the system to the extent that they are pouring their heart and soul when answering the question. Responses like, *"They want us to have superpowers"* simply reflect academics' disappointment over the current system. Another response was, *"There are so many components in the appraisal form that must be filled. The score must be a minimum of everything, and I cannot fill them all if I work 8.00 to 5.00 every day. To obtain a minimum score for each component in the appraisal form, I must find some time at home to do my work. Otherwise, I will not be able to maintain that minimum score required"* portrays how demanding the academic work nowadays is. Adding to the disappointment is the practice of not involving the academics in the setting of the KPIs like one comment made, *"KPI was never discussed with us, a given top-down KPI is adding stress to my work life."*

In terms of goal or target setting, many agree that the target set is unrealistic and leads them to be unmotivated, besides making them stressed and causing burnout. Some of them reported having a high teaching load of as high as 18 hours a week which makes fulfilling other tasks highly difficult. One comment, *"I am ok with having KPI, but I would like the appraisal to be fair to other aspects as well such as being a committee member in a conference, a committee in documentation such as for accreditation, new curriculum - if we are busy doing these things how can be published in a good journal? How can we make a proper research proposal?"* is a sign of frustration over excessive workload.

Some were frustrated when their teaching aspect was not given sufficient recognition even when they were choosing the teaching track, "*Unrealistic expectations in research on lecturers whose main workload is teaching. Our KPI focuses more on research. I feel useless that I'm not being recognized for my excellence in teaching despite my positive evaluation by my students."* Unrealistic targets may not motivate academics to give their best as suggested by this statement, *"It makes me do work based on what to fulfill in KPI. Sometimes I deny tasks that do not contribute to KPI."* Not only it will make them unmotivated, but it may also lead to disappointment as some KPIs set are not even within their control, as stated by this respondent, "*When the appraisal system focuses more on the quantity, it leads to more pressure because I have to achieve a certain quantity of research funding, publication, etc. which sometimes involve process that is beyond my control within the evaluated year."*

In terms of the impact that the evaluation system has on motivation, it is not surprising that many exhibit a downward trend. Consider how badly serious this statement is, *"The set KPIs sometimes are impossible to achieve within a year plus the unnecessary extra workload. After 10 years, I do not feel motivated to go to work anymore."* Just imagine the quality of our education if many academics feel like this, *"I don't enjoy my job anymore. Feeling anxious, mentally, and physically tired, thinking of early retirement."* It would certainly result in uncommitted academics that cannot bring knowledge to a level that makes it meaningful to students. Somehow, the same academics just manage to stay positive amidst the excessive workload. *"I usually focus on teaching and administrative work during the semester. During the semester break is time to focus on others, e.g. research, innovation, etc. This is quite hectic because it is one thing after another. But we got to do what we got to do."*

Such excessive workload undeniably has also affected the work-life balance and both the physical and mental health of the academics. Most of the academics responding to this open-ended question expressed their disappointment at how their personal life has been infringed, especially the family time that has been sacrificed to fulfill the work requirement. *Respondents stated this, "Fulfilling the KPI when teaching load is overwhelming causes stress in managing time and tasks. It took much time from personal life and an imbalance between work and life,"* or "*the KPIs deter achieving quality of work life as there is too much work to do. Sometimes I have to work till late at night and over the weekend. Work is never finished because KPI is result-oriented and does not*

*consider effort and time spent."*

These comments evinced that Malaysian academics are now sunk in the excessive workload that has no doubt manifolded in this era (McCaffery, 2018 as cited in Khan, 2019) making the job highly demanding (Abd Hamid, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016; Khan, 2019). The effects of such a manifestation have been expressed by the respondents of this study. Though some still show a high vitality level to many others, their jobs have certainly badly affected their work-life balance as well as their health. Perhaps findings from this study can provide some evidence to the top management or the Ministry of Education to revise their performance measurement system in motivating the academics to give quality service delivery and improving the satisfaction of the academics with regards to their performance evaluation, thus the university's goals to achieve academic excellence and promote moral and spiritual values are achieved.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Performance Management System (PMS) significantly influences employee motivation and satisfaction by shaping how their performance is evaluated. This study's findings reveal that Malaysian higher education institutions lean more towards a directive approach than an enabling one, in line with the characteristics described by Franco-Santos and Doherty (2017). There's a strong consensus that universities set targets for academics, using performance indicators to measure and monitor their performance. However, universities may not fully recognize all aspects of academic performance when relying solely on predetermined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Additionally, they may not provide sufficient autonomy or empowerment for tasks such as modifying learning instructions, which are crucial for effective teaching and learning, as noted by Struyven et al. (2004).

Open-ended questions reveal that academics feel disheartened when they are not informed about awarded marks or when there's no room for discussion. This indirectly lowers their motivation, and some work only to meet Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) rather than striving for their best. This aligns with Franco-Santos and Doherty's suggestion (2017) that the well-being of employees suffers under a directive approach. The university ought to contemplate incorporating effort as a measurement item (Adnan et al., 2021) since some KPIs may require more than a year to achieve, and certain roles are highly demanding (Abd Hamid, 2020; Khan, 2019).

Future research could investigate deeper into the perspectives of superiors responsible for assessing academics' performances, specifically examining their perceptions of the performance measurement system and its overall effectiveness. This exploration would help determine whether their viewpoints align with those of academics, particularly in terms of fairness, motivation, and job satisfaction. Understanding these dynamics could provide valuable insights into potential gaps between evaluators and those being evaluated, allowing for improvements in the system's design and implementation.

Furthermore, expanding the scope of this study beyond the academic sector to include diverse industries would offer a broader understanding of performance management practices. Different industries may have unique challenges and expectations regarding performance measurement, and comparing various sectors could highlight the best practices and areas for improvement. Such an expansion would also contribute to the development of more flexible and adaptable performance management frameworks that cater to a wide range of professional environments.

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