

# Impact of leadership approaches and appraisal practices on hospital workforce and environment

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## ABSTRACT

Hospital appraisal practices can directly impact workforce-based outcomes, including work performance, retention rate, and physical and emotional well-being. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of performance appraisals and leadership approaches on the overall job satisfaction of the workforce in healthcare settings. A descriptive cross-sectional method was employed to collect data from 258 randomly selected health workforce from different private hospitals in Bangalore, India. A structured questionnaire was used to evaluate the appraisal process, leadership approaches, and sentiments. SPSS version 26 and Python 3.13 were used for statistical analysis. Most of the participants (62.2%) had a good understanding of the performance appraisal process, viewing it as essential for professional growth (95%) and work quality (96.5%). However, 53.8% felt that appraisal requirements were poorly communicated, with 58.9% reporting common unfair practices. Over half of them (56.3%) acknowledged their manager's influence, but only 43.6% expressed moderate satisfaction. This study found that despite the good understanding of the performance appraisal among the study participants, the lack of communication and the unethical work environment contributed to dissatisfaction. Thus, organizations should develop a more transparent, fair, and employee-centric appraisal system to enhance job satisfaction, workforce stability, and overall patient care quality.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Operation efficiency and quality of care provided by healthcare systems depend a lot on the foundation established by a skilled and motivated workforce [1]. The leadership systems in hospitals are not just about productivity it is also about developing a culture of collaboration and resilience [2]. The job satisfaction of healthcare professionals is significantly impacted by these leadership approaches as well as the performance appraisal systems [3], [4]. Appraisal practices in hospitals can have a direct impact on healthcare professional-based outcomes like productivity, retention rate, and physical and emotional well-being [5]. In a healthcare setting these outcomes directly impact the quality of care provided and the satisfaction and well-being of patients. Job satisfaction can be defined broadly as a fulfilling work experience for employees.

Performance appraisals are critical to human resource management and a significant tool in effectively managing and improving an employee's performance [6]. They are important in decision-making processes associated with promotions, recognizing achievements, career development, and pay raises. When aligned with clear and fair criteria appraisal systems can enhance employee satisfaction and motivation [7].

Performance appraisal is not just about the measurement of employee performance, it focuses on identifying and nurturing the skills that an employee should build to enhance their skills [8]. A standardized performance appraisal system can guide managers regarding requirements that align with individual and organizational goals.

Leadership styles in hospitals can vary in different spans of styles and can be transformational, authoritarian, or democratic in approach [9]. Effective leadership practices contribute heavily to a positive work environment, they can contribute to creativity, innovation, and enhancing human relationships thereby improving the potential of the employee [4]. Hospital leaders with the ability to adapt to the evolving needs of their teams are critical for a productive and positive work environment [10]. Studies over the years have identified that the satisfaction of staff depends a lot on leadership practices that are relational-focused and transformative [11]. The rapid evolution of healthcare services over the years and the aging population have created a demand for skilled healthcare officials. This also emphasizes the need for nurturing a supportive and considerate work environment that can enhance employee satisfaction [12]. Fair pay, a manageable amount of work, and prospects for skill enhancement and professional growth are vital in fostering the well-being of employees [13]. By prioritizing the needs of the employees, organizations can achieve commitment of their employees and ultimately positive organizational culture and patient satisfaction [7].

This study aims to explore the nuanced impact of performance appraisals and leadership styles on the overall job satisfaction of employees in healthcare settings. Performance appraisal is a crucial mechanism for understanding employee feedback and the leadership approach has a significant role in understanding workplace culture and a sense of belonging among employees. These elements when combined can provide valuable insights on job satisfaction and quality of work experience.

## 2. METHOD

A descriptive cross-sectional method was employed to collect data from a randomly sampled 258 health workers. The health workers who have experienced the appraisal process for at least two years were included in the study. This ensured that they had some experience in the appraisal at least two times. The health workers who were newly joined or had only one-time experience with appraisal were not included in the study. We believed this would bring some uniformity in having some basic idea about the appraisal for these participants. The sample size was determined using power analysis with medium effect (0.50) and two-tailed p-value  $\leq 0.05$  and 0.80 as power [14]. All health workers, satisfying the inclusion criteria were listed from each of the hospitals, and 258 participants were selected using the lottery method. The researchers developed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. Performance appraisal and leadership were the key outcome variables that reflect how the employees feel valued and supported within the role, contributing to their overall satisfaction within their organization. The questionnaire includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions mainly focused on the experiences of health workers with the appraisal process and also gathered information on socio-demographic data, and leadership. After preparing the questionnaire, it was shared with industry experts (3) who had more than 5 years of experience in managerial and non-managerial roles in healthcare institutions and public health experts (2) who had more than 5 years of experience in healthcare management research for establishing face validity. Modifications were made to the final questionnaire as per the suggestions from the experts. The final data collection tool included measurement scales like (Yes/No), and a Likert scale (Rating from 1-5 on strongly disagree to strongly agree). Means and frequencies were calculated and the data were further summarized to meaningful categories of health workers' experience with appraisal. The descriptive analysis was done using SPSS version 25. The use of open-ended questions helped in collecting textual responses from the participants on different aspects of job satisfaction. The sentimental analysis of these responses was done using Python version 3.13. Sentiment scores were determined by categorizing the responses into positive, negative, and neutral sentiments based on their nature, and insights were generated. Before administering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and written consent was obtained from the participants. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and could withdraw from the study if they chose to do so.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the study participants, 192 (74.4%) were female and 66 (25.6%) were male. Among the participants, 144 (55.8%) were in the age group of 20-39 and 119 (42.2%) were in the 30-39 age group as shown in Table 1. Regarding their educational qualifications, a majority of them were degree holders (54.7%), followed by masters (23.6%) and diploma holders (21.3%). Regarding their service profile, 102 (39.6%) had 1-3 years of experience and 73 (28.2%) had 4-6 years of experience.

The results depicted that the majority of the participants (62.2%) had a proper understanding of the performance appraisal process in their respective organizations, as shown in Table 2. They believe that the appraisal process is an integral part of professional growth (95%) provides motivation, improves the quality of work, and helps them thrive in their roles (96.5%). Many of the participants (68.6%) revealed that they are dissatisfied with the appraisal process followed in their organization. Even though the majority of them stated that they clearly understood the performance appraisal process, but many had concerns (46.1%) about its accuracy.

Among the study participants (53.8%), a majority felt that the appraisal process and requirements were not clearly communicated and lacked clarity. Regarding the fairness of the process involved in the appraisal process, many (56.2%) have raised concerns over it. Many believe that (58.9%) unfair appraisal practices have contributed to attrition in their organization.

When it comes to employees' perceptions of leadership approaches followed by their immediate supervisor, more than half of them felt (56.3%) that their manager has an idealized influence on them as shown in Table 3. Regarding individualized considerations, there was a moderate level of satisfaction; 53.6% believed that their supervisor spends adequate time assisting them in work. Only 43.5% felt their manager acted as an inspirational motivator.

Table 1. Socio-demographic data of the participants

Demographic data	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Female	192 (74.40)
Male	66 (25.60)
Age	
20-24	26 (10.07)
25-29	118 (45.76)
30-34	72 (27.90)
35-39	37 (14.34)
40 years and above	5 (1.93)
Educational qualifications	
Diploma	56 (21.70)
Degree	141 (54.69)
Masters	61 (23.64)
Years of experience	
1-3 years	102 (39.53)
4-6 years	73 (28.20)
7-9 years	65 (25.19)
10 years and above	18 (6.97)

Table 2. Knowledge and perceptions of the performance appraisal process

Statement	Yes	No
Understanding of the appraisal process	160 (62.02)	98 (37.98)
Importance of appraisal in professional growth	245 (94.96)	13 (5.04)
Appraisal provides motivation and improves performance	249 (96.51)	09 (3.49)
Satisfaction with the appraisal process	81 (31.39)	177 (68.60)
Accuracy of performance appraisal process	136 (52.71)	122 (47.28)
Explanation and communication regarding the appraisal process	139 (53.87)	119 (46.12)
Fairness of approval process	113 (43.79)	145 (56.20)
The appraisal process has contributed to attrition	152 (58.91)	106 (41.09)

Table 3. Knowledge and perceptions on leadership approaches and interactions with immediate supervisor on job satisfaction

Statement	Yes	No
The supervisor has an idealized influence	144 (55.80)	114 (44.19)
Provides individual considerations to improve work	135 (52.32)	123 (47.67)
Act as an inspirational motivation	112 (43.41)	146 (56.60)
Receives proper support and guidance from the manager	110 (42.63)	148 (57.36)
Provides opportunities to discuss appraisal concerns	151 (58.52)	107 (41.48)
Provides performance updates and feedback	106 (41.08)	152 (58.90)
Communication about performance expectations	109 (42.24)	149 (57.75)
The manager is partial in the appraisal process	159 (61.62)	99 (38.37)

Regarding support and guidance from managers, many (57.3%) felt a lack of encouragement. Respondents felt (58.5%) that their manager provides opportunities to discuss about appraisal process but was reluctant to provide timely feedback on performance. A significant number shared (61.3%) that they experienced partiality in the appraisal process and lacked guidance regarding performance expectations.

The employee's perceptions regarding the different aspects of the appraisal process such as performance appraisal process, communication on performance, concerns of partiality, and recognition of work were evaluated using sentiment analysis, as shown in Figure 1 the results indicated a similar distribution between neutral and negative sentiments, across, categories. Regarding concerns over partiality and the performance appraisal process, negative sentiments were more compared to the other two. A similar distribution of negative and neutral sentiments was observed regarding communication of the appraisal process and recognition of work.

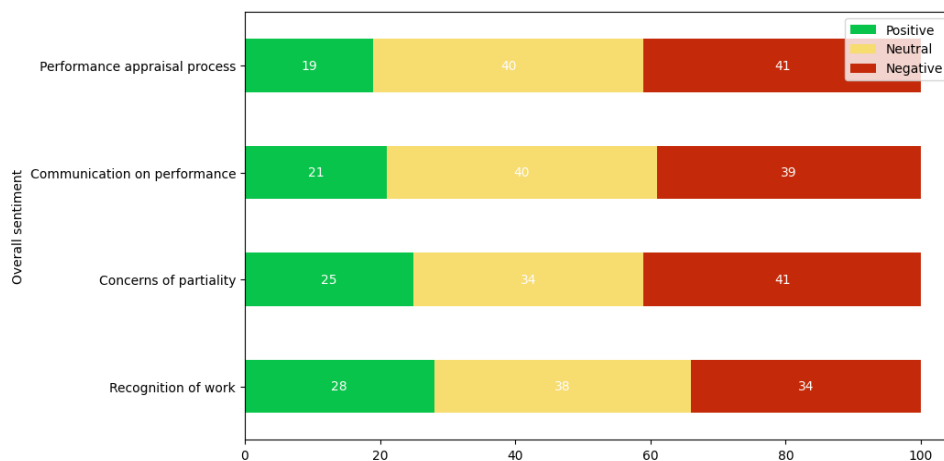


Figure 1. Overall sentiment scores on different aspects of performance appraisal

### 3.1. Discussion of the findings

Performance appraisals and leadership are critical in healthcare settings to ensure employee satisfaction and maintain the quality of patient care in health workers. When the appraisal system is transparent, fair, constructive and communicates clearly, the employees feel confident and acknowledged which significantly contributes to their overall job satisfaction. Majority of the participants felt that they had a clear understanding of the performance appraisal process and recognized that it is an integral part of professional growth and development. They also believe that performance appraisals can be a source of motivation and significantly improve performance, aligning with other studies. Thus, this shows a positive perception towards the appraisal system among the participants in general. However, many of them also expressed their dissatisfaction with the appraisal process in their organization and raised concerns over the fairness and accuracy of the process. This is attributed to a clear lack of communication about the appraisal process, as many studies have pointed out the importance of communication in the process and how that can affect the perception and performance of the participants [15], [16]. A clear communication ensuring proper feedback on employee performance helps the employees to understand the expected standards and clarity with the evaluation process can in turn improve employee performance and professional growth. Participants believed that unfair practices and unsatisfactory appraisal processes have contributed to employee attrition in their respective organizations. The absence of transparency in the process and perceived biases may contribute to the instability within the health workforce. This finding aligns with the findings of Varma and Chavan, which emphasize that a fair and transparent appraisal process is integral to the turnover intention rates of employees [17]. Thus, if the appraisal process is biased and unethically applied, the employee is more likely to feel insecure in their roles which in turn leads to higher attrition rates. Addressing these issues through a structured, fair, and transparent appraisal process can actually benefit the companies as these can improve satisfaction leading to greater retention among the employees [18].

The effective leadership is another key factor, characterized by individualized support, which fosters motivation and trust in among the employees. The specific leadership qualities play a critical role in job satisfaction. Among our participants, the majority believed that their manager had an idealized influence on them and favored that style of leadership as it was vital in building trust and admiration. This is consistent with the studies, on leadership styles, which also identified the influence of managers among employees and preference for idealized influence [11], [19], [20]. However, the participants had mixed opinions on the

levels of individual considerations provided by their managers. While they do recognize the importance of understanding individual strengths for their career advancement, the extent to which the managers provided individualized support varied [21], [22]. Studies highlighted the importance of support and encouragement from their immediate managers and how it improves performance among employees. Despite this, many participants felt that their manager lacked enthusiasm and vision, and failed to become an inspirational motivator for them. Participants felt undervalued and underappreciated in the absence of proper guidance and support from their immediate managers, echoing similar findings reported by Ouyang *et al.* [23] and Kriz *et al.* [24]. The lack of motivational leadership and guidance diminishes the confidence and limits the performance of these employees. By fostering a positive and inspiring work environment with effective leadership and individualized support can enhance their connection with their managers and can act as a source of motivation for the employee.

While most of the participants agreed that their managers have provided them space to discuss their concerns on the appraisal process, many felt these discussions rarely led to any significant outcomes. Participants often felt that there was a tendency among the managers to overlook the importance of giving constructive feedback. This lack of constructive feedback is a significant issue noted by [25], [26] which highlighted the impact of this feedback on maintaining performance standards among the employees. The perceived bias of managers in the appraisal process was a major concern voiced by the participants. Research by Almaro *et al.* [27], Belle *et al.* [28], and Tran *et al.* [29] discusses these biases and their detrimental effect on employees' trust in organizational standards and transparency in the appraisal process. To improve employee trust, organizations should focus on providing high-quality constructive feedback as well as develop strategies to address perceived biases. Creating an unbiased appraisal process with clear and actionable feedback can strengthen the confidence of the employee in the fairness of the appraisal process and the integrity of the appraisal evaluations.

We believe the sentiment analysis gives a clearer definition of participants' feelings on the performance appraisal process, and helped us to interpret their feelings on job satisfaction. The performance appraisal process and concerns over partiality had a higher proportion of negative or neutral sentiments emerge may be due to the common perception of unfair favoritism or bias that may affect the trust in the process. Overall all the responses drew negative or neutral sentiment suggesting that the employee may have a misconception regarding the fairness in the process or may be disappointed regarding the outcomes of the appraisal process, similar studies, also reported that the bias in the appraisal process such as partiality, communication gaps, and lack of increments can undermine the trust and result in dissatisfaction among the participants [30]–[32]. Together, performance appraisal and leadership roles shaped the perceptions of our study participants and their intention to stay in their job leading to satisfaction. This study offered a novel approach to differentiating the sentiments of participants on job satisfaction and the performance appraisal process. Using this, the researchers were able to identify the specific areas that are in need of improvement. Even though this study provided a detailed understanding of various aspects that contributed to the overall satisfaction, this study collected only samples from private hospitals in the metropolitan city of the country, which may limit the generalizability of our findings. In addition to sentiment analysis, this study mainly offers a descriptive analysis of the quantitative variables to understand the effectiveness of performance appraisals and leadership approaches on the overall job satisfaction of the workforce in healthcare settings. Future studies could carry out a thorough qualitative analysis that further explores the perception of work culture or motivation or further investigates work engagement and organizational commitment.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Ensuring satisfaction with performance standards among healthcare professionals is essential for fostering continuous skill development and enabling them to excel in their responsibilities. It is also a critical part of an organization's mission to achieve organizational goals which ultimately results in enhanced quality of patient care. The study emphasizes the significance of a performance appraisal system and leadership in employee job satisfaction. The major concerns expressed include the fairness, accuracy, and transparency of the appraisal process and the lack of individualized support in leadership. Performance feedback and guidance from managers are crucial for employee retention and performance standards. Establishing a structured and unbiased appraisal system that ensures transparency, and fairness, as well as creating effective leadership, for a supportive work environment, should be the top priorities for the health organizations. Strategies that focus on these not only promote job satisfaction but also enable a steady and confident workforce, which eventually, fulfill the bigger goal of providing high-quality patient care.

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Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Subodh S Satheesh	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anila Cholleti		✓				✓		✓		✓				

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state no conflict of interest.

### INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

### ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research related to human use has complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the author's institutional review board.

### DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, [SS]. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.




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