

# Performance Management in the New Normal

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## Abstract

*Performance management is one of the key areas that has been hugely impacted by the pandemic COVID-19. This study is an exploratory study that has delved into investigating the role of performance management. Managing remote workers and management of the challenges coupled with key implications for future research are delineated.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, new normal, performance appraisal, performance management, challenges.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive disruption to various sectors and performance appraisal is one key areas that has been hugely impacted as workers moved their physical workspaces to virtual work spaces as a result of the shifting work requirements due to the pandemic. With the restrictive movement policies by Governments globally and the advent of the implementation of social distancing, the new normal mandated different challenges, and ways of managing performance appraisal. This scholarship is an attempt to explore the challenges and elucidate on the management strategies in the new normal in performance management.

## Literature Review: Performance Management Key Challenges in the New Normal

COVID-19 and its influence on performance appraisal has been echoed in the literature (Balani, 2020; Chatterjee, 2020) and scholars stress that the role of human resources within an organisation in stimulating guidelines, guidance, enhancing strategies and implementing supportive structures is significant (Balani, 2020) ie: through performance management.

The pandemic has altered work arrangements and due to social distancing, workers have opted for remote work conditions (Verbeemen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there have been numerous organisations that have defied the evaluation of employees' performance in remote conditions, stressing that many employees have been challenged via remote work (McIlvaine, 2020). Scholars have deliberated on supportive infrastructure to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on job performance (Mcillvaine, 2020), as well as the need for worker flexibility (Aldogan et al., 2021; Mayer, 2020; Mihus et al., 2021).

The changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in a shift in employee prospects regarding evaluation and successive remuneration. During COVID-19, many organizations endeavoured to design and redesign their remuneration system to meet the real needs of employees (Aldoghan et al., 2021).

Rudolph et al. (2020) study deliberates on work stressors escalating during the pandemic which influences work performance. Erlina (2020) and Dwivedi et al. (2020) highlight that the biggest challenge

facing leaders in today's organizations is how to develop a culture of employee engagement and leveraging it as a driving force for performance (Govender and Bussin, 2020).

Performance management is a continuous process of detecting, assessing, and expanding the performance of individuals and workgroups and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization (Aguinis, 2019).

Performance appraisal is one element of performance management. Leaders/managers in the new era are like “cop on the beat” and in order to get the employees cart across, they need to steer forward by driving performance. Scholars state that employees are the very engines that drive the activities of organizations to attain goals.

This pandemic has had a profound impact on employees, raising anxieties and doubts, leading to stress and depression (Ariawaty, 2020; Opatha, 2020).

Scholarships prove that the pandemic has impacted employees’ performance and wellbeing and it is prudent for leaders and managers to maintain frequent contact with their employees and the significance of communication should not be underscored (Gandhi, 2020; Wigert and Barrett, 2020).

### **Methodology**

The study utilized exploratory research and depended on scholastic reviews of the literature to explain “performance in lieu of COVID-19” as well as to comprehend the challenges. Key implications based on the reviews are elucidated in the study.

### **Discussion**

Based on the literature reviews the significance of performance management cannot be underscored. Generally speaking, the pandemic has swung the pendula both ways where some workers have been “displaced” whilst others have been struck by “work from home” options, and therefore worker performance has been impacted by a number of variables during the crisis. This pandemic maybe seen by some as a crisis at the same time as a revolution for others. However, the risks posed to employees cannot be overlooked.

Human capital is viewed as a stock and this stock needs to be capitalised on through social capital. Performance management requires enhanced communications, teambuilding and engaged leadership, self-reliance and resilience, empathy, trust building, mental models and systems approach coupled with an agile/adaptive approach. It is noteworthy to bear in mind that fixating on certain metrics to assess or appraise performance and neglecting the impact of the pandemic may lead to a biased evaluation and mediocre performance management system. It is prudent to consider one’s teams approaches to communication and complex thinking processes.

Goal-setting in the pandemic would be quite distinct in comparison to prior the pandemic. Managers have to be meticulously diligent in framing goals with an “agile mind-set” and the social feedback system should be instituted to avail feedback to the employees in the pandemic.

### Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, it is significant for organizations to re-evaluate aspects of their performance management system to better respond to the current context of their organizations. Performance management can be a daunting experience, however failing to be agile and adaptable in application of performance management processes and systems in COVID-19 in vacuum without a participatory and planned intervention will lead to failure.

Thus, proper HR and managerial planning is critical for success of interventions in the pandemic. Future research can be based on empirical data sets and thus, the topic can be investigated and strengthened through primary data collection and expanded to different sectors.

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