
Title registration for a systematic review: Multisource feedback and work performance

Emilia Wietrak, Iulia Cioca and Jonny Gifford

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- Crime and Justice
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- No
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Title of the review

Multisource feedback and work performance

Background and relevance for management practice

Executives in organizations seek ways to maintain and improve their employees' performance. One of them is providing employees with feedback on how much progress they have made toward the goals they are supposed to accomplish. Moreover, some organizations try to enrich this feedback, offering information from multiple sources: supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, clients, etc. Nowadays, multisource feedback (MSF), also known as 360-degree feedback, multi-rater feedback or full-circle feedback, certainly appears to be a common management practice, although estimates on its prevalence vary substantially. For example, survey research has found MSF to be used by 34% of UK employers (CIPD 2016), a third of US companies (Bracken, Timmreck and Church 2001), 'up to 50% of medium and large organizations' in the US (Silverman et al., 2005) and 90% of Fortune 500 companies (Alexander, 2006; Edwards, Mark and Ewen 1996). Furthermore, MSF is used for multiple purposes. According to Warr and Ainsworth (as cited in Silverman et al., 2005) all employers who use MSF do so with a developmental purpose, half also use it to appraise employees' performance, and 7% also use it to determine pay. They also found that MSF was most frequently used with directors and managers.

Despite MSF being a common performance management tool, in popular management literature we find disparate opinions on its purpose or value. Some authors recommend it as a tool which can make employees feel they have a say in the managing process, help managers enhance their skills, and lead to overall improved performance, (e.g., Forbes Coaches Council, 2017; Kaplan, 2011). Others criticize its subjective nature and difficult implementation, and claim that when not used properly, MSF may do more harm than good (e.g., Buckingham, 2011; Ryan, 2015). Moreover, insights from some scientific studies are not much clearer. For example, the results of Kluger and DeNisi's (1996) meta-analysis on feedback interventions in general indicated that, although they were usually effective, in more than one-third of the studies feedback actually decreased employees' performance.

Given these ambiguous outcomes, a systematic review of the scientific literature on the impact of multisource feedback on work performance will help managers make better decisions regarding the implementation of the multisource feedback in their organizations.

Objectives

This systematic review aims to investigate whether the use of MSF processes predicts changes in work performance in organizations. The review will be guided by the following questions:

1. Does the use of MSF predict changes in work performance?
2. Do certain moderators affect the relationship between MSF and changes in performance?

Possible moderators will include the purpose of MSF (whether used for administrative or developmental purposes), feedback sources (e.g. whether it includes feedback from one's manager or colleagues), format of feedback (e.g. scores, ratings or qualitative descriptions), psychological individual differences (e.g. feedback orientation and beliefs about change), sociological individual differences (e.g. whether the employee is a people manager and organizational settings), employee reactions to feedback (e.g. perceived fairness and utility), and follow-up activity (e.g. training).

Existing reviews

Existing systematic reviews and meta-analysis relevant for the topic are the following:

- 1) Reviews on MSF as a predictor of performance outcomes

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis including 131 studies. Results show that, out of more than 20,000 feedback interventions, 38% were associated with negative outcomes. These findings question the assumption that feedback always improves performance.

Smither et al. (2005) published a systematic review and meta-analysis of 24 longitudinal studies on effects of MSF on performance improvement. They found that improvement in direct report, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings over time is generally small. The review lacks explicit and transparent quality appraisal of primary studies, and does not address the risk of publication bias. The authors suggested further research could investigate “under what conditions and for whom is multisource feedback most beneficial”.

Ferguson et al. (2014) developed a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines which included 16 studies published up to November 2012 involving physicians in healthcare settings from Canada, UK, the Netherlands, and US. The review aimed to assess the impact of MSF on the professional practice of medical doctors, and ascertain under what conditions MSF is most successful. The review found that MSF can lead to improved performance of medical doctors, contingent upon moderators (e.g., credibility of raters, factors affecting acceptance of feedback, facilitation of the feedback restitution). The main limitations of the study were an exclusive focus on healthcare settings, risk of publication bias, and inability of the study designs to demonstrate a causal relationship (i.e., only one randomized control trial

included). Overall, the findings confirm MSF as a promising intervention to improve in-role competence of physicians in healthcare settings.

2) Reviews that examine use/feasibility and psychometric properties of MSF

Al Khalifa et al. (2013) conducted a systematic review of 8 studies, published in English between 1975 and 2012, which aimed to describe the use and psychometric characteristics of MSF in healthcare settings. The review had an exclusive focus on surgeons in healthcare settings, contained risk of publication bias (only published research in English was sought), and has limited external validity. Overall, the study found that MSF is a promising, feasible, reliable, and valid means of assessing surgeons on a broad range of soft skills.

Donnon et al. (2014) produced a systematic review with the purpose of investigating the reliability, generalizability, validity, and feasibility of MSF for the assessment of physicians. Forty-three English-language articles were included. The review's results indicate that MSF was a useful method for providing feedback to physicians from a multitude of specialties about their clinical and nonclinical (i.e., professionalism, communication, interpersonal relationship, management) performance. The main limitations of the study were an exclusive focus on healthcare settings and risk of publication bias.

Intervention

MSF is a process that attempts to provide feedback to individuals ('ratees') from multiple feedback providers ('raters'). A central assumption of MSF is that aggregated information from several raters will result in a more accurate representation of an individual's work behavior or performance than feedback from a single rater.

The MSF process frequently starts with data collected through a multi-item survey. The data are then aggregated through statistical methods and the results presented in a report. The report is then provided to the ratee (the 'feedback'), either directly, through a facilitated session, or through some other process. The feedback is a basis to possible further actions aimed at the ratees, which can be either developmental (e.g. set development goals), administrative (e.g. salary increase), or both. Finally, the process can conclude with a follow up review or discussion intended to assess if the whole process was worthwhile.

Following the general process described above, we define 'multisource feedback' as **feedback in any format aggregated from more than one source.**

MSF can, but need not necessarily include:

- a) Ratings of behavior or performance based on standardized questions and normed-response options.
- b) Evaluative components
- c) Descriptive components

- d) Feedback from an employee's supervisor(s), peers, direct reports, customers and suppliers.

Population

In the current study we will include employees at any level of seniority, working in any industry, from any demographic or socio-economic groups; and individuals recruited specifically in order to take part in experimental studies. We will also include studies conducted in educational or training settings in which feedback is given to learners alongside training or teaching to help their educational performance. We will investigate context as a moderator.

Outcomes

The primary outcome of the review is individual task performance, meaning the extent to which a person accomplishes his/her goals and produces the intended results, without consideration of the costs or inputs needed for achieving these results, or follow-on impacts on wider organizational performance. Thus, we will include empirical studies that quantitatively measure one of the following types of outcomes:

- Production or output
- Attainment of goals or objectives
- Decision making
- Creativity/innovation
- Problem solving
- Interpersonal skills, such as in communication, collaboration or team building.

Performance outcomes can be measured using both, standardized and unstandardized instruments. In the current review we will include studies in which performance outcomes are based on objective measures (e.g., financial performance, number of correct answers), as well as studies in which performance is measured subjectively (e.g. through ratings by individuals). Studies that use qualitative measurement methods or studies that measure only attitudinal outcomes (e.g. satisfaction, commitment) will be excluded.

Study designs

Our meta-analysis will include the longitudinal studies consisting of a MSF measure which precedes a performance measure. Cross-sectional studies, as well as qualitative studies, will be excluded.

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Review authors

Lead review author:

Name:	Emilia Wietrak
Title:	MSc in Work, Organisational and Personnel Psychology - University of Barcelona
Affiliation:	University of Barcelona
Address:	C/Lleida
City, State, Province or County:	Barcelona
Post code:	08004
Country:	Spain
Phone:	+34 633 336 610
Email:	emilia_wietrak@hotmail.com

Co-authors:

Name:	Iulia Alina Cioca
Title:	MSc in Work, Organisational and Personnel Psychology - University of Valencia
Affiliation:	
Address:	5 Luceafarului street ap.8
City, State, Province or County:	Cluj-Napoca, Cluj
Post code:	400343
Country:	Romania
Phone:	+40 758 321 123
Email:	iulia.a.cioca@gmail.com

Name:	Jonny Gifford
Title:	MA in Social Research with specialism in Comparative Labour Studies – University of Warwick
Affiliation:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
Address:	Brookside, Spook Hill
City, State, Province or County:	Dorking

Post code:	RH5 4HN
Country:	UK
Phone:	(+44) 7780837192
Email:	j.gifford@cipd.co.uk

Roles and responsibilities

- **Content:** Emilia Wietrak, Iulia Cioca and Jonny Gifford will bring content expertise, having conducted research on performance appraisal and feedback, as well as a range of other aspects of people management, occupational psychology and organisational behaviour. In addition, Emilia Wietrak will lead discussions with Iulia Cioca, Jonny Gifford and an advisory team consisting of content experts, which will be installed to provide the team with feedback and support.
- **Systematic review methods:** Emilia Wietrak, Iulia Cioca and Jonny Gifford will conduct the systematic reviewing, drawing on their experience in conducting literature searches and evidence reviews and their ongoing training with the Campbell Collaboration. In particular:
 - Emilia Wietrak has experience in research (systematic searches, data analysis). As a Writer at Science for Work she participated in critical appraisal of meta-analyses and experimental-design studies in the field of I/O Psychology.
 - Iulia Cioca has experience in research synthesis (conducting rapid evidence assessments) and conducting research. She critically appraised meta-analyses and quantitative research reports as a Writer for Science for Work.
 - Jonny Gifford has experience working on rapid evidence assessments with CEBMa and for the CIPD, and conducted systematic searches and critical appraisal as part of a team at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) conducting systematic reviews on sickness absence for National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).
- **Statistical analysis:** the listed team will be involved in statistical analysis but will require additional expertise in this area.
- **Information retrieval:** the listed team will be involved in information retrieval but may require additional expertise in this area.

Additional expertise required: the current team will also need an information retrieval scientist or librarian and a statistician familiar with meta-analysis.

Funding

The team will not receive or seek any funding to complete this work. Training will be provided and funded by the Campbell Collaboration.

Potential conflicts of interest

The review authors have no conflicts of interest with this systematic review. Campbell conflict of interest policies are submitted with this title registration.

Preliminary timeframe

- Our preliminary timeframe is:
- 31 August 2019: submit a draft protocol
- 31 August 2020: submit a draft review.