



Does the PER System Contribute to Institutional Performance? Assessing Employees' Awareness and Effectiveness in a Public Sector University

Muhammad Tayyab ul Rahman¹, Khuram Nawaz Sadozai^{2*}, Huaping Li³, Dr, Muhammad Ishaq⁴ & Fida Muhammad Khan⁵

¹Technical Assessment Manager, British Council, KSA.

²Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, The University of Agriculture, Peshawar.
Email: ksadozai@aup.edu.pk

³School of Education and Sociology Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Portsmouth, UK

⁴Secretary Pakistan Agriculture, Research Council, Islamabad

⁵Lecturer, Institute of Development Studies, The University of Agriculture, Peshawar.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

PER System, Institutional Performance, Employees' Awareness, Effectiveness, Public Sector, University

Corresponding Author:
Khuram Nawaz Sadozai
Email:
ksadozai@aup.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The Performance Management System (PMS) serves as a critical and complex mechanism for assessing employees' performance in the higher education sector. This research endeavor has mainly focused on the investigation of the performance evaluation system in one of the public sector universities in Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan about its understanding, effectiveness and empowerment of the employees within the system called Performance Evaluation Report (PER). Sampling respondents include lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors. The key findings of the research depict that most of the employees have good understanding of the PER in terms of its content and its clear linkage to their job targets and goals. However, majority of the participants have corroborated the substantial disagreement towards its effectiveness in some key components that include reward system, lack of counselling and support for the employees if they perform below the set standards and the issue of transparency in the current system. In addition, the issue of favoritism is mentioned by some of the staff which makes the current system more bias. Based on the results of the study it is recommended that either improve the current PER system with some modifications such as the feedback of all the stakeholders are taken about an employee rather than one person's decision such as the line manager.



Introduction

This research study investigates the employees' performance evaluation practices in a public university of Pakistan. This study has not only explored employees' understanding towards the current evaluation system, but it has also examined the effectiveness of the system through

teaching staff's point of view. The research has also considered employees' empowerment within the evaluation system.

According to Shaout and Yousif, (2014), performance management system (PMS) is one of the key tools for any organisation in which staff's performance is evaluated and based on the evaluation results, future decisions are made about the employees and organisation's structure. Institutes use different approaches towards PMS, for example, ranking method, management by objectives and 360 degree appraisal etc. (Shaout and Yousif, 2014). This research aims to investigate the current Performance Evaluation Record (PER) system of one of the public-sector universities in Pakistan. The PER is one of the main parts of the Performance Management System (PMS) of the said university.

The study has examined the current PER system from three different angles. The first area is the understanding of the staff towards the PER. It is very important to find out if the employees understand the PER system fully before evaluating its effectiveness. For example, if any employee is not fully aware of the performance evaluation system then it will be difficult for him/her to comment on the effectiveness of the PER. The study also emphasis to capture the staff's point of view about the effectiveness of the PER and the last areas is to find out how much empowerment employees feel within the PER. Kavanagh et al. (2007) identify that employees' participatory approach, positive relationship with their line managers and understanding of the PMS process add up towards staff's satisfaction and their believe in fairness of the PMS.

Furthermore, Dransfield (2002), reports that in the traditional form of PMS, institutes take the top-down approach where line mangers evaluate performance without employees' participation in the process whereas in the modern form of PMS, staff's voices are considered within the process. Therefore, this study has taken the direction where the employees' voice is captured towards their empowerment within PER in addition to the understanding and effectiveness of the evaluation system.

The specific objectives of this research endeavor are:

- 1) To determine the level of understanding of the employees towards the PER system.
- 2) To evaluate the effectiveness of the PER system of the university.

Research Methodology

This segment demonstrates the research methodology employed for this research study. The following sections explains more about the research site, research paradigm, research design which covers sampling, data collection instruments and analysis of data.

Research Site

For this study, a public university is selected which is situated in Peshawar, a capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. Most of the public sector educational institutes use the same PER system, however, owing to time and financial constraints this research study is limited to only one university. The university comprises of various disciplines in the fields of agriculture, management and social studies.

Sampling Frame

The list of the faculty members (which would be the sampled respondents) has been obtained from the HR department of the aforesaid university. The HR department of the university was initially

contacted for their permission for involving their staff members and the following tentative list (Table 1) has been gleaned which is depicting the total strength of each cadre.

Table 1: Cadre wise distribution of the Faculty Members

S. No	Designation	No of Employees
1.	Professors	38
2.	Associate Professor	42
3.	Assistant Professor	160
4.	Lecturers	80
5.	Total	320

Sample size determination is a vital step to undertake the research study. In this research study the Yamane’s formula (1967) is used to determine the sample size as utilized by previous research studies conducted by different researchers (Israel, 1992).

Yamane provides a simple formula which is given as below:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where

- n= sample size to be determined,
- N = population size, and
- e = level of precision = 0.05

By incorporating the data of faculty members in above equation, the estimated sample size is as under.

$$\begin{aligned} N &= 320 / (1 + 320(0.05)^2) \\ &= 320 / 1 + 320 * 0.0025 \\ &= 320 / 1 + 0.8 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Sample Size (n)} = 177$$

The sample size of 177 is further divided among the available job titles (See table 2).

Table 2: Cadre wise Sample Distribution

S. No	Designation	Sample size
1.	Professors	21
2.	Associate Professor	23
3.	Assistant Professor	89
4.	Lecturers	44
5.	Total	177

Conceptual Framework

The study mainly takes the quantitative approach in the form of Likert scale data which is collected through online survey. Muijs (2010) defines quantitative approach as the collection of numerical data which can be analyzed through mathematical and/or statistical approaches. According to Creswell (2003), Surveys are one of the quantitative strategies which include questionnaires where the results from samples are generalized to the whole population.

The study has also covered a small portion of qualitative approach where respondents are given an option to answer an open-ended question towards the end of the survey. By adding an open-ended question to the survey has eliminated the factor of biases inherent in any single approach, quantitative in this case (Creswell (2003).

Data Collection Instrument

The approach of internet-based survey has been taken due to time limitation and the researcher's current location (the UK). It is very important to consider all the limitations of data collection and select the appropriate tool according to the researcher's own context. Many researchers end-up with time constraint challenge due to the selection of inappropriate question types or data tools (Howel, 2013). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017), one of the methods of internet-based survey is to request the research participants to respond to web-based questionnaire. Therefore, the web-based survey was created using "Forms" web tool that is used by many previous researchers to collect data for their research studies (Cohen, et.al, 2017).

Questionnaire

The online survey questionnaire comprises two sections. Section A covers personal data of the participants such as gender, age group, designation and work experience whereas Section B has 21 questions based on 5-point Likert scale and 1 open ended question. Cakir (2012), points out that a 5-point Likert scale allows participants to respond from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree' for a given question.

Data analysis

The data is presented into graphs and tables which is the most desired way for such kind of study. Descriptive statistics is used when the researcher wants to analyze the present data and there is no prediction involve (Cohen, et.al, 2017). This is very true for this research because the study has analyzed the opinions of the employees towards the current PER so all the results are about the current state and no predictions were made. The graphs, charts and tables has accompanied the commentary and key findings are discussed in line with the literature available.

Data Analysis and Findings

The major findings are reflected in this segment. Initially demographic analysis was made to capture the participants' age, gender, designation and number of years in service. In the main part of the analysis, the analysis emphasized on understanding of the PER and effectiveness of the PER system.

Response Rate of the Survey

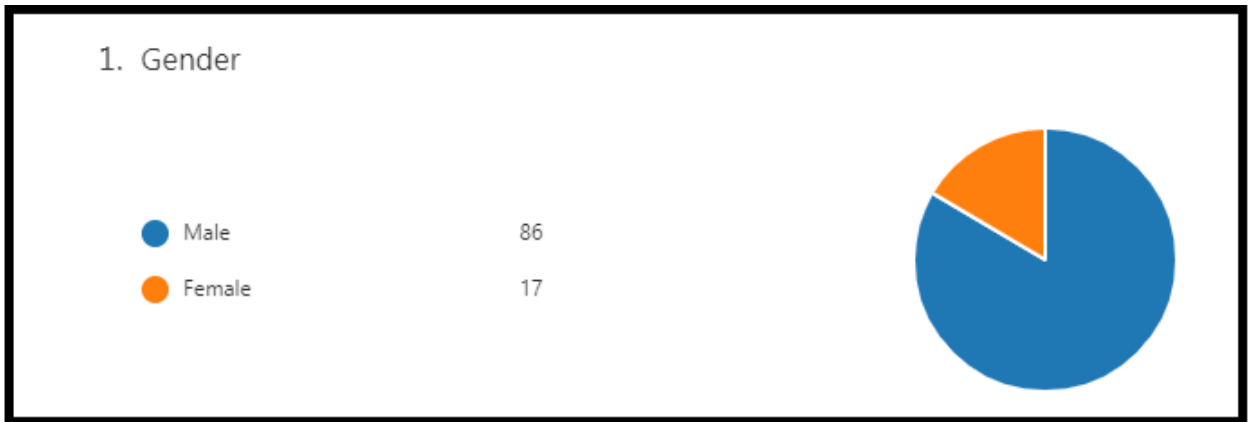
Based on the research design discussed in methodology, the consent form and information sheet were sent to all staff via email. Due to limitations of the online surveys, it was expected that at least 177 would respond to the survey but due to summer holidays in the university, 103 participants completed the questionnaire which makes 58% response rate of the sample size.

Background of the Participants

Background of the participants was captured in the form of gender, age group, designation and work experience in years. In terms of gender split, there were 86 (83%) males and 17 (17%)

females as shown in Figure 1. Females comprise about 20% of the total university staff, therefore, these figures are in line with the actual staff split in terms of gender.

Figure 1



Almost half of the participants were from age group 36 – 45 (see figure 2) whereas lecturers and assistant professors (64%) were in majority compare to other participants (see figure 3). Also figure 3 gives us the response rate of the participants and when compared to table 2 (sample size), it confirms that the response rate of lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors are 70%, 39%, 83% and 85% respectively of the sample size.

Figure 2

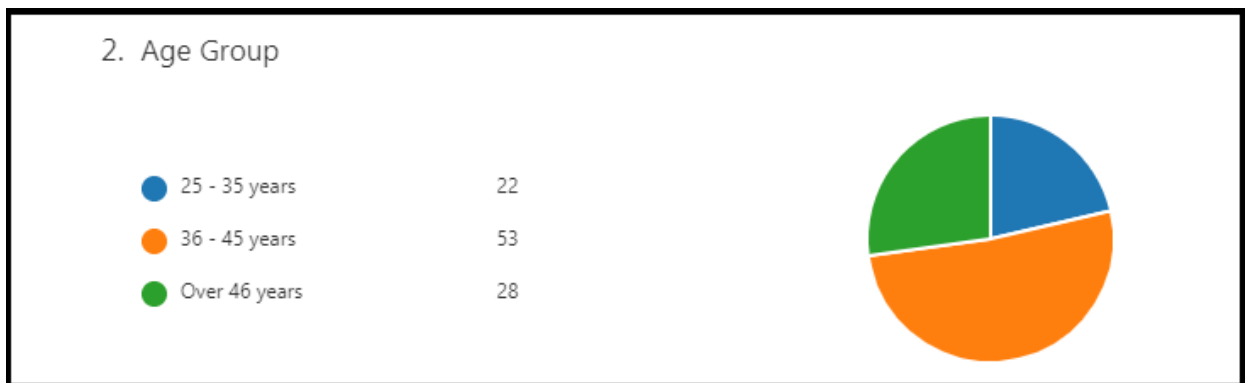


Figure 3:

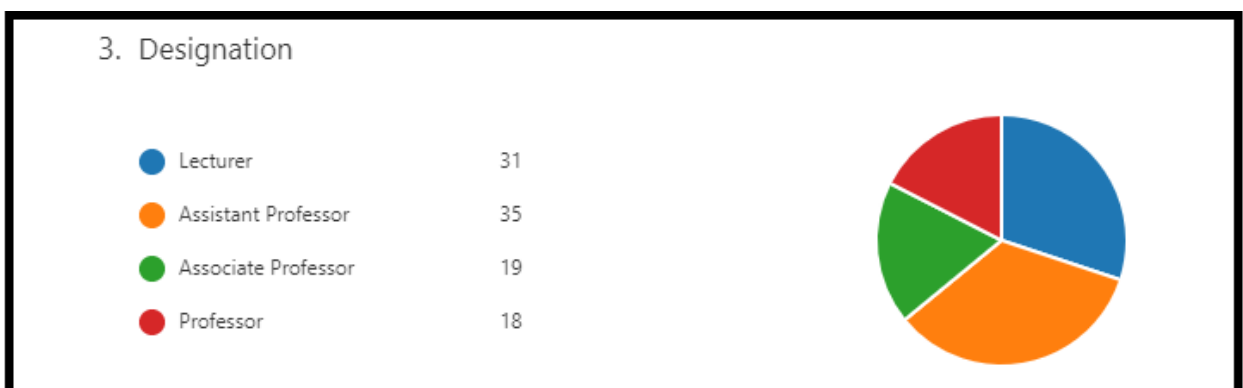
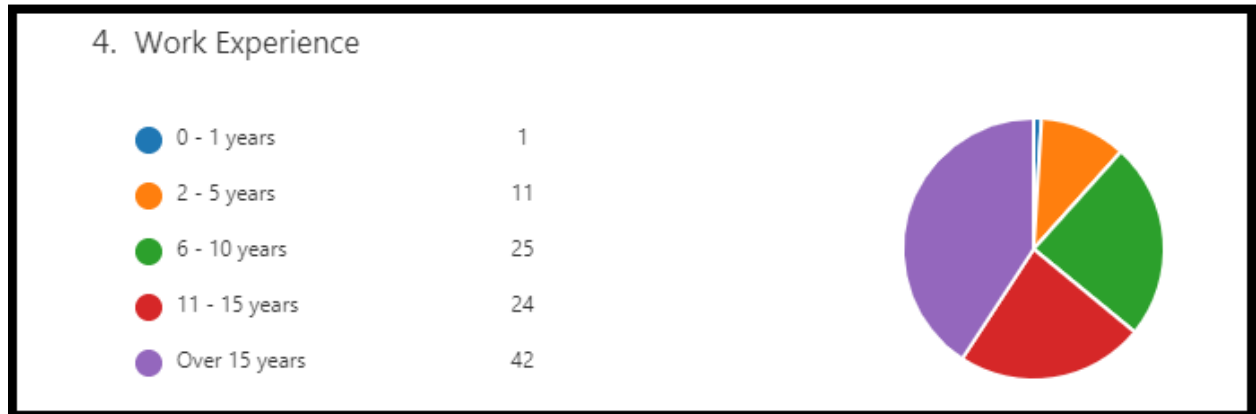


Figure 4 shows the distribution of the participants in terms of their work experience at the university. About 65% of the respondents have work experience of more than 11 years which means most of the participants are well familiar with the PER system of the university because their performance is evaluated on this system every year.

Figure 4



Analysis of Responses

Total of 22 (21 close-ended and 1 open-ended questions) statements/questions included in the questionnaire and each question except the open-ended question was directed to the research questions. The questions were designed in such a way that it captures the responses towards the research questions from different angles.

The summary of the responses is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Respondent’s Responses

Questions	Total Respondents	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Don't know %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total Respondents %
1	103	20%	62%	3%	12%	3%	100%
2	103	14%	46%	10%	28%	3%	100%
16	103	10%	70%	3%	16%	2%	100%
17	103	5%	59%	13%	22%	1%	100%
18	103	6%	43%	23%	26%	2%	100%
6	103	5%	16%	11%	35%	34%	100%
9	103	5%	13%	15%	39%	29%	100%
12	103	5%	45%	17%	25%	8%	100%
3	103	8%	49%	13%	29%	2%	100%
4	103	7%	37%	12%	42%	3%	100%
5	103	9%	32%	9%	47%	4%	100%
7	103	10%	51%	10%	23%	6%	100%
8	103	11%	17%	17%	41%	16%	100%
10	103	5%	54%	17%	19%	4%	100%
11	103	7%	25%	11%	47%	11%	100%
13	103	3%	22%	12%	55%	8%	100%
14	103	7%	17%	12%	52%	13%	100%
15	103	6%	14%	13%	50%	18%	100%
19	103	3%	41%	28%	27%	1%	100%
20	103	5%	40%	26%	27%	2%	100%
21	103	7%	60%	14%	17%	3%	100%

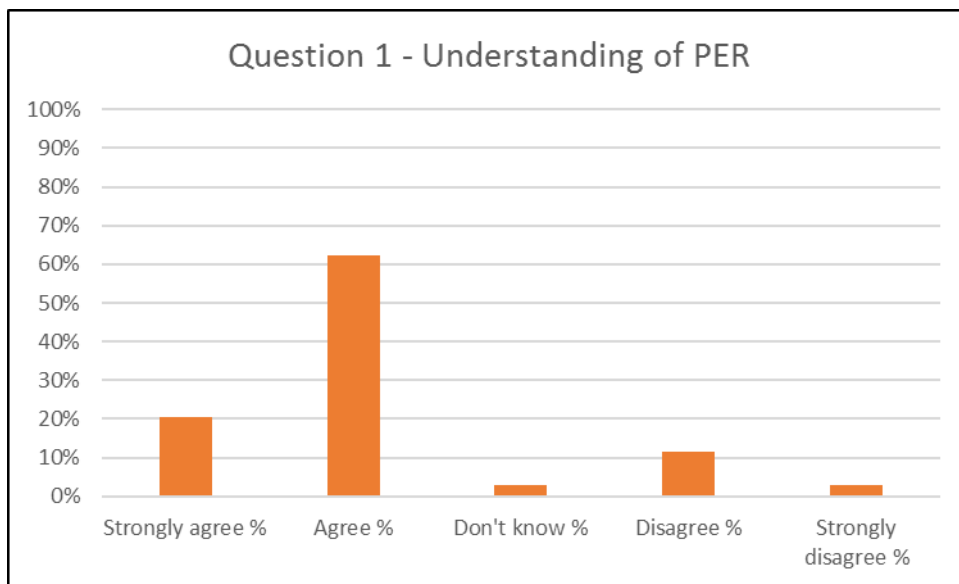
The analysis of the responses is divided into two major areas which include understanding and effectiveness of the employees within the PER system.

Understanding of the PER

Awareness among employees about PER

The data analysis shows that majority of the respondents (80%) are familiar with the content of the PER as shown in Figure 5. Only a fraction of staff showed disagreement to this statement where majority are lecturers. This can be concluded that they have joined the university recently or their department did not put enough resources to introduce the PER. This is also evidenced from the responses of the lecturers where 22% showed dissatisfaction which is highest figures of the analysis based on the designations.

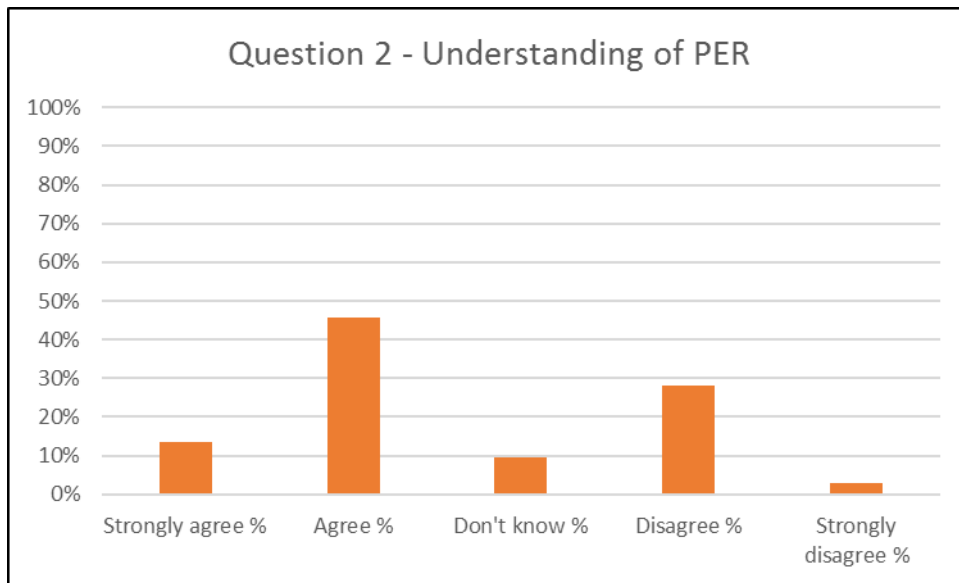
Figure 5:



Key performance indicators (KPIs) are covered in the PER

About 60% respondents agree that their KPIs are covered in the PER (see figure 6) whereas the rest either disagree or don't know about this. There could be several reasons that 40% of participants do not agree such as lack of understanding of PER and some staff might have specific KPIs which are not included in the PER which can also raise the issue of effectiveness etc. For example, a few respondents commented to the open-ended question that participation in the international conferences should be considered in the PER system.

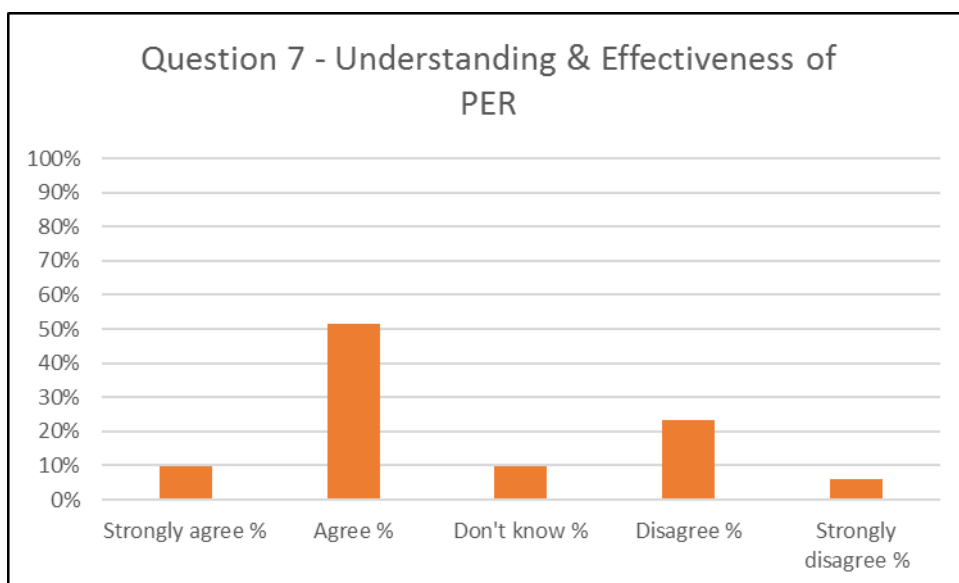
Figure 6:



Job goals/targets are clearly specified in the PER

This question tried to gather the same data as in question 2 and the similarity of the results of questions 7 and 2 confirm that about 60% of employees agree with the statements of the both questions. The responses to question 7 also proved that the PER is effective in a way that it covers the job goals of the participants. Rasheed et.al. (2011) found in their research that about 78% staff at another university in Pakistan was not aware of their performance evaluation indicators and their job descriptions. Although the findings in this study shows more agreement towards clear link of job goals with the PER, there is still disagreement by some staff members (25%) which shows lack of understanding towards job description or the PER or both.

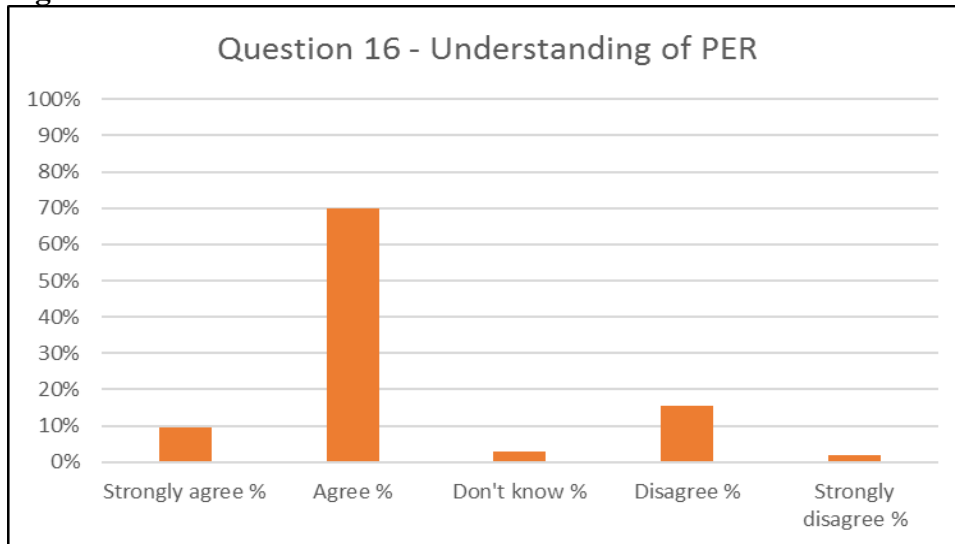
Figure 7:



PER is user-friendly and easy to follow

The aim of the question was to find out if the respondents are fine with the format of the form and its content. According to figure 8, the staff have a strong tendency (80%) towards the statement which confirms that the PER is not complicated enough and it is easy to follow to most of the employees.

Figure 8:



The PER form in Urdu & English version helps the RO and the employee to understand it fully.

The PER form is bilingual (English and Urdu) but the responses need to be reported in English language only. About 65% of employees are happy with the form being in two languages but at the same time 50% reported to have it in English language only for more efficiency (See figures 9 and 10). A good number of employees selected 'don't know' options for both questions (13% for question 17 and 23% for question 18) which means the responses are not very reliable in nature as the staff don't have experience of being the PER only in English and it would be good to pilot the PER in English language only and then get feedback from the employees.

Figure 9:

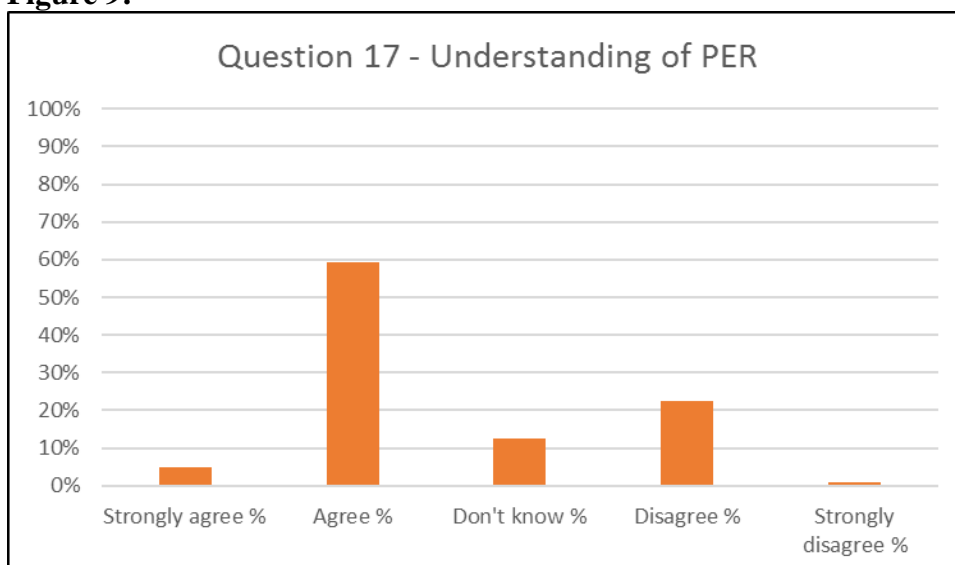
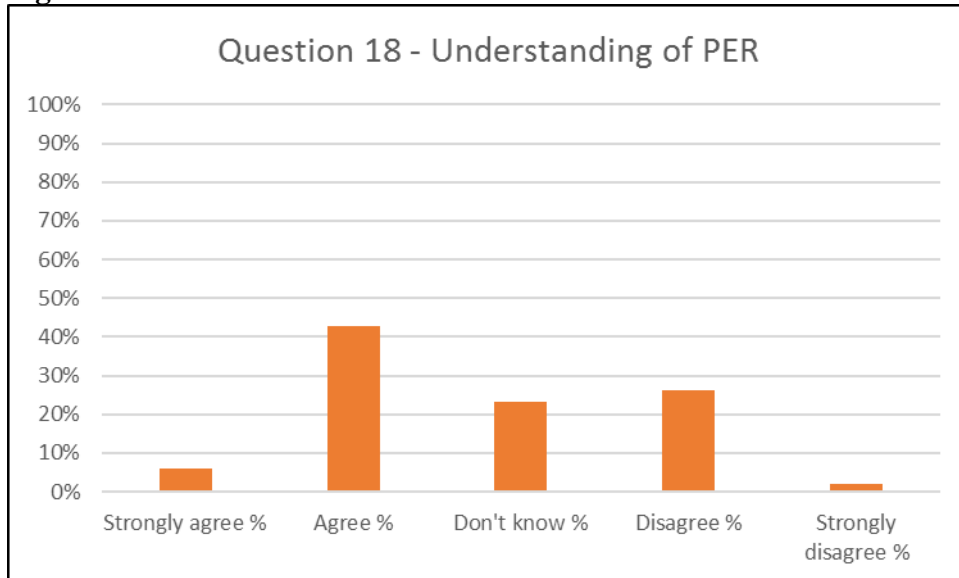
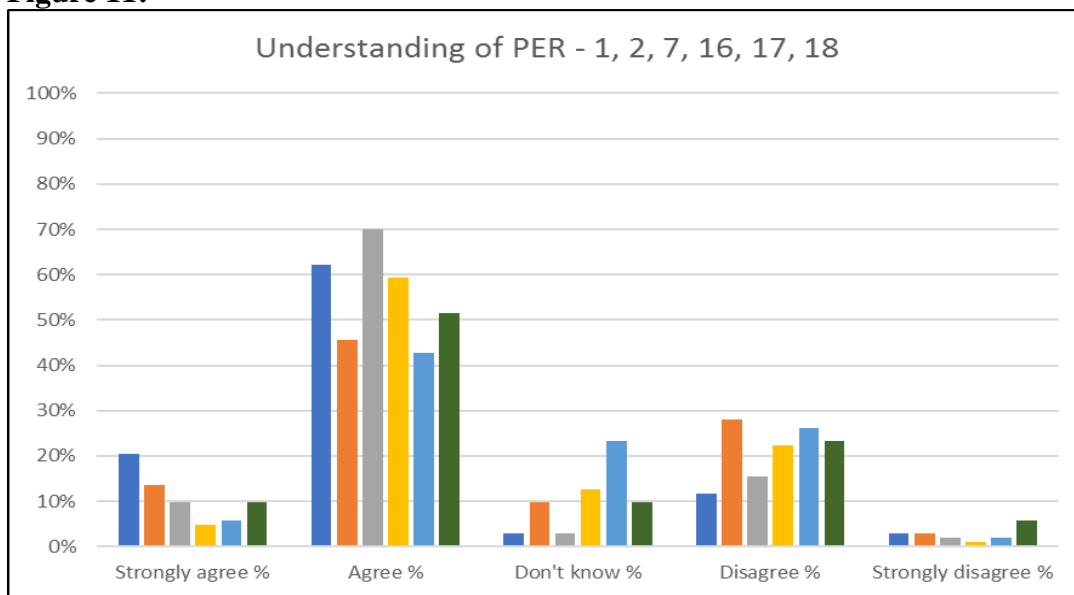


Figure 10:



In a nutshell, the overall result for understanding shows that majority of the staff tend to agree with the statements means there is a good understanding of the employees towards the current PER (See figure 11). According to Jain and Gautam (2016), for effective performance management system, organisation should devote enough resources in order to make sure that the staff understand the system otherwise it will not give the results. This means the university administration give enough time and resources to make sure the staff understands the content of the PER, however, there are some employees who showed disagreements which needs to be considered in terms of further support and help to them.

Figure 11:



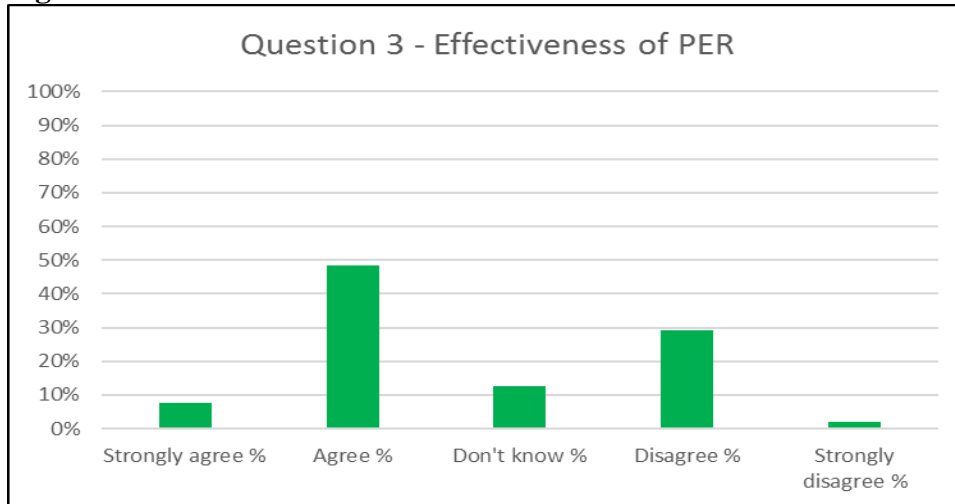
Effectiveness of the PER

The second major focus of this research endeavor was to investigate the effectiveness of the PER and that is why more questions are targeted towards this area.

PER helps the employee to set the professional targets

About 57% responses are in the agreement with this statement but approximately 30% and 13% of staff either disagree or they don't know if PER can help them to set their goals respectively (see figure 12). On the other hand, when this question is analysed based on the designations, some interesting results revealed where most of the junior staff (65% lecturers) agreed with the statement and associate professors showed 42% of the agreement.

Figure 12:



Job performance in terms of teaching & research improves due to current PER system

Based on the estimated results of the study, the areas of teaching and research are divided into two questions because the staff members' responsibilities within teaching and research is not divided equally most of the time which means some employees' performance is assessed more on teaching than research and vice versa (Bussin, 2010). Both figures 13 and 14 depict almost the same trend where the respondents are almost 50% in favour and against the statements respectively. This shows that the PER helps some employees to improve their teaching and research practices whereas for the others it does not help them at all. From designation based analysis, one key result is found for the professor's group where 62% of respondents either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with question 5 only. This means that the PER should add some sections where the senior staff members can develop and report their research activities more effectively.

Figure 13:

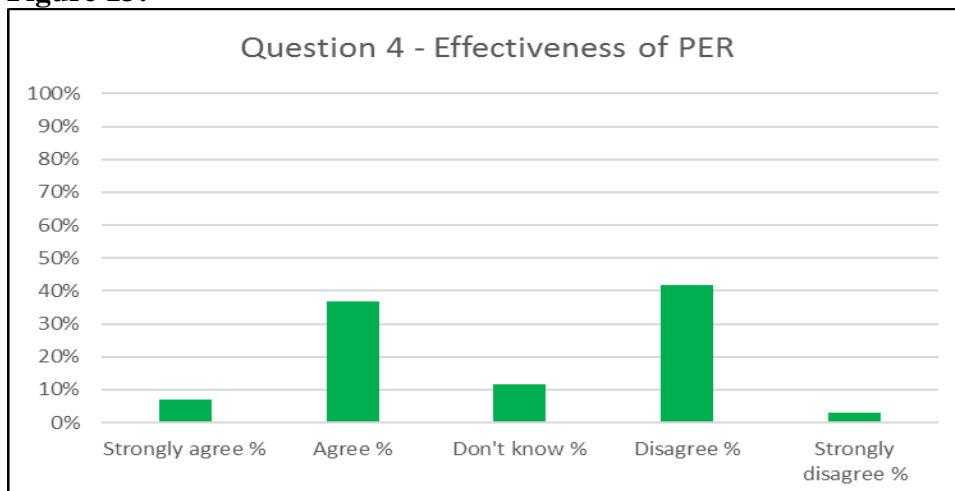
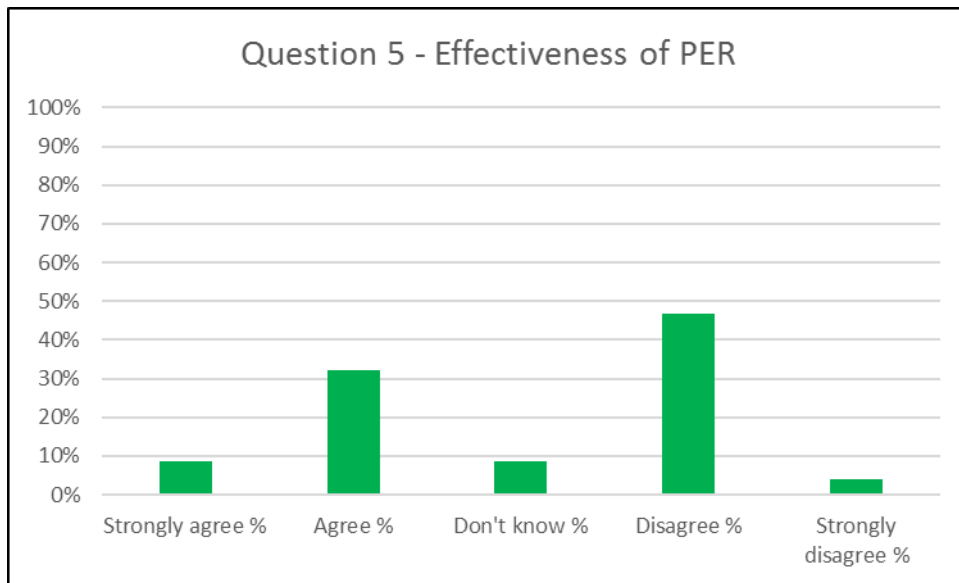


Figure 14:



How RO captures integrity, morality, uprightness and honesty of employees in the PER form?

About 67% of staff agreed and strongly agreed to this last statement which confirms that the ROs are effectively using the PER to capture these subjective areas with evidence (see figure 15). The agreement to this statement goes down from senior staff (professors 73% and associate professors 79%) to junior (assistant professors 66% and lecturers 58%) which means there are some areas which needs to be investigated especially towards junior employees.

Figure 15:

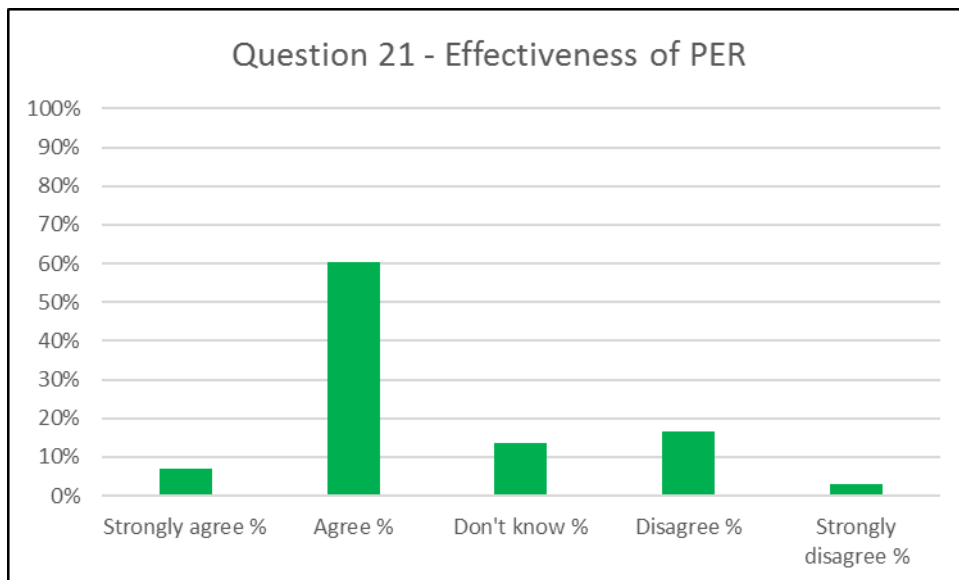
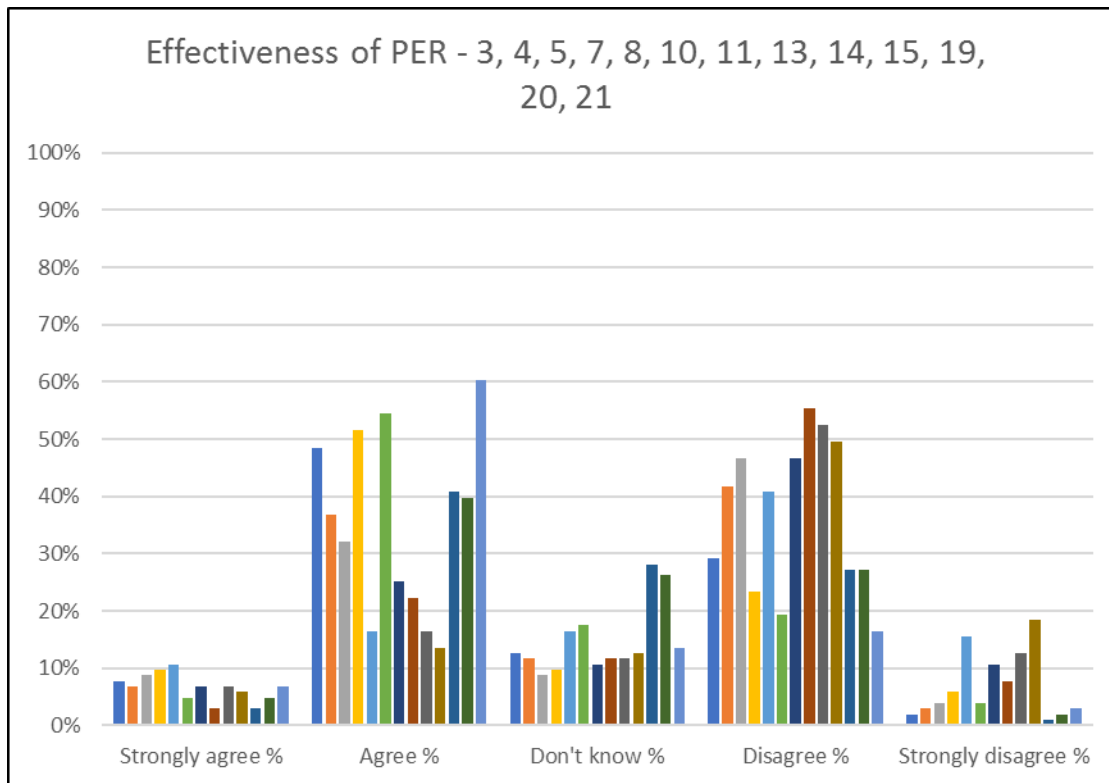


Figure 16 confirms that some areas of the PER working more effectively than others.

Figure 16



Conclusions

The paper mainly tried to find the answers to the three research questions which were about the understanding, effectiveness and the empowerment of the staff within the PER system. In terms of the understanding of the PER, majority of the respondents agreed that they have a good knowledge of the PER system and its content. Participants of this study showed some concerns towards the effectiveness of the system which is mainly related to the rewards, lack of counselling and transparency of the system. However, majority of the respondents showed their agreement that the PER works well when it comes to clear linkage of the PER with their duties and goals. About half of the respondents agreed that they can provide their teaching and research performance in the form of statistical data as an evidence of their performance to the Reporting Officers (ROs). The study also concluded that there is a lack of employees’ voice in the current PER system. Employees mentioned that there is a lack of coordination between the ROs and themselves and they can’t challenge the decision of the ROs if there is disagreement between them about the results of the PER. The concerns are also raised on the transparency of the system and some employees commented that the factor of baseness/favoritism is evident in the process. It is also mentioned by some of the participants of this study that the results of the PER should be shared with them as these results are kept confidential. A few of staff members commented in the favour of the PER where they claimed that the whole system is working fine for them.

Recommendations

The format of the PER is like the typical Annual Confidential Report (ACR) where employees are not given the PER results nor they have the right to challenge the decisions of the RO. This approach is practiced by public sector organizations mostly which is found to be inconsistent and corrupt.

Although participants show a good understanding of the PER but they raised their concerns towards the effectiveness and their lack of voice in the current system. Therefore, there is a need to improve the current practices or to implement other PMS tools based on the modern research findings within education sector.

To make the current system more efficient, more resources need to be employed towards the understanding of the PER as some employees (mostly lecturers) showed disagreement on the questions of the 'understanding PER'. One way to tackle this issue is to have more sessions on the PER throughout the academic year and attention should be given to the new staff members with extra support and help by their line managers. In addition, the current PER's content is in English and Urdu language (national language of Pakistan) but the RO reports the findings in English language only which is the official language of the university, therefore, it would be good to have a pilot study by implementing the PER only in English language and if the participants show their agreement then the content of the PER can be presented in English language only.

References

1. Bussin, M. (2010). Performance management for government, universities, schools and NGOs : A practical and informative textbook for managing performance in service delivery-orientated organisations. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
2. Cakir, M. (2012). Epistemological Dialogue of Validity: Building Validity in Educational and
3. Social Research. Education, 132(3), 664-674. Retrieved from
4. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pbh&AN=73342113&site=eds-live>
5. Creswell, J. W. (2003). Research Design; Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches. (Second Edition). Sage Publications: USA
6. Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2017). Research methods in education. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
7. Cullen, J., Joyce, J., Hassall, T., and Broadbent, M. (2003). Quality in higher education: from monitoring to management. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11(1), 5-14.
8. Dorweiler, V. P., and Yakhou, M. (2005). Scorecard for academic administration performance on the campus. *Managerial Auditing Journal*, 20(2), 138-144.
9. Dransfield, R. (2002). Human resource management for higher awards. Heinemann.
10. Gallant, M. (2012, November 29). Performance management. Retrieved from
11. <https://www.halogensoftware.com/blog/a-simple-definition-of-performance-management-and-why-everyone-plays-a-role>
12. Howel, K.E. (2013). An Introduction to Philosophy of Methodology. London: SAGE Publications
13. Israel, D. (1992). Sampling the Evidence Of Extension Program Impact. Program Evaluation and Organizational Development, IFAS, University of Florida. PEOD-5.
14. Jain, S., and Gautam, A. (2016). Employees' perception towards performance management system: A study of selected PSUs of Uttarakhand. *International Journal in Management and Social Science*, 4(3), 235-245.
15. Kagaari, J., Munene, J. C., and Mpeera Ntayi, J. (2010). Performance management practices, employee attitudes and managed performance. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(6), 507-530.
16. Kavanagh, P., Benson, J., & Brown, M. (2007). Understanding performance appraisal fairness. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 45(2), 132-150.
17. Muijs, D. (2010). Doing Quantitative Research in Education in Education, 2nd Ed. London: Sage

18. Mumtaz, A., Khan, I., Aslam, H. D., and Ahmad, B. (2012). Impact of HR practices on job satisfaction of university teacher: evidence from universities in Pakistan. *Industrial Engineering Letters*, 1, 10-17.
19. Rasheed, M. I., Humayon, A. A., Awan, U., and Ahmed, A. U. D. (2016). Factors affecting teachers' motivation: An HRM challenge for public sector higher educational institutions of Pakistan (HEIs). *International Journal of Educational Management*, 30(1), 101-114.
20. Rasheed, M. I., Yousaf, H. S., and Noor, A. (2011). A critical analysis of performance appraisal system for teachers in public sector universities of Pakistan: A case study of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB). *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(9), 3735-3744.
21. Shaout, A., and Yousif, M. K. (2014). Performance evaluation—Methods and techniques survey. *International Journal of Computer and Information Technology*, 3(5), 966-979.
22. Yamane, T. (1967). Elementary sampling theory. Prentice-Hall, Inc.