Bridging Quality Management and Performance Appraisal: Insights, Challenges, and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

The growing demand for organizational effectiveness has intensified interest in the integration of quality management (QM) and performance appraisal (PA). Yet, their relationship remains fragmented in both theory and practice. While QM emphasizes continuous improvement, customer focus, and operational efficiency, PA is primarily concerned with evaluating employee contributions and aligning them with organizational goals. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of consolidated insights into how these two domains intersect, particularly in terms of enhancing both organizational performance and employee engagement. This study aims to critically review the literature to identify consistent and emerging themes that define the relationship between QM and PA, as well as the associated challenges and future directions. The study employed a systematic literature review approach, synthesizing peer-reviewed research articles, conceptual papers, and case studies across management and organizational performance domains. Findings reveal three consistent themes: the enduring influence of Total Quality Management (TQM) on organizational performance, the role of performance management systems in employee motivation, and the adoption of innovative appraisal methods. In addition, two rising themes were identified: the integration of QM with innovation performance, and the expansion of QM systems in specialized industries such as healthcare and automotive. The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it bridges QM and PA as mutually reinforcing processes within organizational performance frameworks. Practically, it highlights the need for hybrid models that align QM practices with modern, technology-driven appraisal systems, offering pathways for sustainable growth, innovation, and employee engagement.

Keywords: Quality Management (QM), Performance Appraisal (PA), Organizational Performance, Total Quality Management (TQM), Employee Engagement

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, organizations have increasingly emphasized quality management (QM) and performance appraisal (PA) as critical mechanisms for driving sustainable growth, employee development, and organizational competitiveness. Quality management frameworks, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and ISO-based systems, have been widely adopted across industries to improve efficiency, customer satisfaction, and continuous improvement (Bounjerte et al., 2025). At the same time, performance appraisal systems remain a cornerstone of human resource management, serving as essential tools for evaluating employee performance, informing promotions, facilitating career development, and supporting retention strategies (Onyeaku, 2023). Despite their centrality to organizational success, the integration of QM principles with PA practices has often been viewed as incongruent, largely due to differing objectives of control versus learning (Liao et al., 2024).

Scholars and practitioners have highlighted that the misalignment between these two systems creates challenges in measuring and managing performance effectively, particularly when balancing individual contributions with broader organizational outcomes (Sudnickas, 2016; Kline & Sulsky, 2009). For example,

while PA is often oriented toward administrative decision-making and accountability, QM emphasizes collective responsibility and system-wide improvement (Soltani et al., 2003). Furthermore, contemporary shifts toward data-driven appraisal systems enabled by data mining, statistical analysis, and predictive modelling have opened new opportunities for generating actionable insights and enhancing decision-making in both human resource (HR) and operational contexts (Palshikar et al., 2017; Quan et al., 2018; Cui et al., 2022). However, challenges remain, particularly in integrating multi-source feedback, aligning incentives with organizational goals, and capturing performance in team-based or complex healthcare environments (Champagne-Langabeer & Delgado, 2018; Crema & Verbano, 2013).

While prior studies have explored performance appraisal effectiveness (Onyeaku, 2023), the evolution of data-based appraisal systems (Palshikar et al., 2017; Quan et al., 2018), and the application of QM models in healthcare and production systems (Bounjerte et al., 2025; Al Owad et al., 2013), research has yet to fully bridge these domains holistically. In particular, there remains a lack of comprehensive reviews that synthesize insights from both QM and PA, identify integration challenges, and map emerging themes to guide future research and practice. This study addresses this gap by systematically analyzing the intersections of QM and PA, drawing on existing literature to construct a concept map, highlight expert contributions, and identify evolving patterns within the field.

This paper aims to provide a critical review of the integration between quality management and performance appraisal, focusing on insights, challenges, and future directions. Specifically, it analyzes the research area through a structured synthesis of past studies, develops a conceptual understanding of how QM principles can enhance PA systems, and identifies emerging themes, including data-driven analytics, holistic frameworks, and continuous improvement cultures. By doing so, this paper contributes to advancing theoretical and practical perspectives, offering guidance to scholars, HR professionals, and quality managers on how to design more effective, quality-oriented appraisal systems.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the conceptual foundations of QM and PA, highlighting theoretical perspectives and historical developments. Section 3 presents key insights from the literature on integration and challenges. Section 4 discusses emerging themes and future research directions. Section 5 outlines the study's contributions, and Section 6 concludes with implications for research and practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a structured review methodology using Scopus AI (as of 1 October 2025) to critically examine the integration of QM and PA. The review aimed to synthesize insights, challenges, and future directions at the intersection of these two domains, addressing the study's objective of mapping the evolution of the field and identifying research gaps. The search was conducted using the following string:

("quality management" OR "quality control" OR "quality assurance" OR "total quality") AND ("performance appraisal" OR "performance evaluation" OR "employee assessment" OR "performance review") AND ("organizational performance" OR "productivity" OR "efficiency" OR "effectiveness") AND ("feedback" OR "evaluation" OR "assessment" OR "measurement") AND ("continuous improvement" OR "process improvement" OR "quality improvement" OR "performance enhancement"). This comprehensive query was designed to capture a wide range of studies focusing on both theoretical and applied aspects of QM and PA in organizational contexts.

Scopus AI provided several analytical layers to guide the review process. The Summary section generated an overview of the main trends, highlighting that research in this domain has increasingly emphasized data-driven performance systems, healthcare quality frameworks, and the integration of continuous improvement principles (Bounjerte et al., 2025; Palshikar et al., 2017). The Expanded Summary offered deeper insights, showing how early studies tended to treat QM and PA separately, while recent literature underscores the importance of aligning employee assessment with broader organizational effectiveness through holistic frameworks and advanced analytics (Liao et al., 2024; Cui et al., 2022).

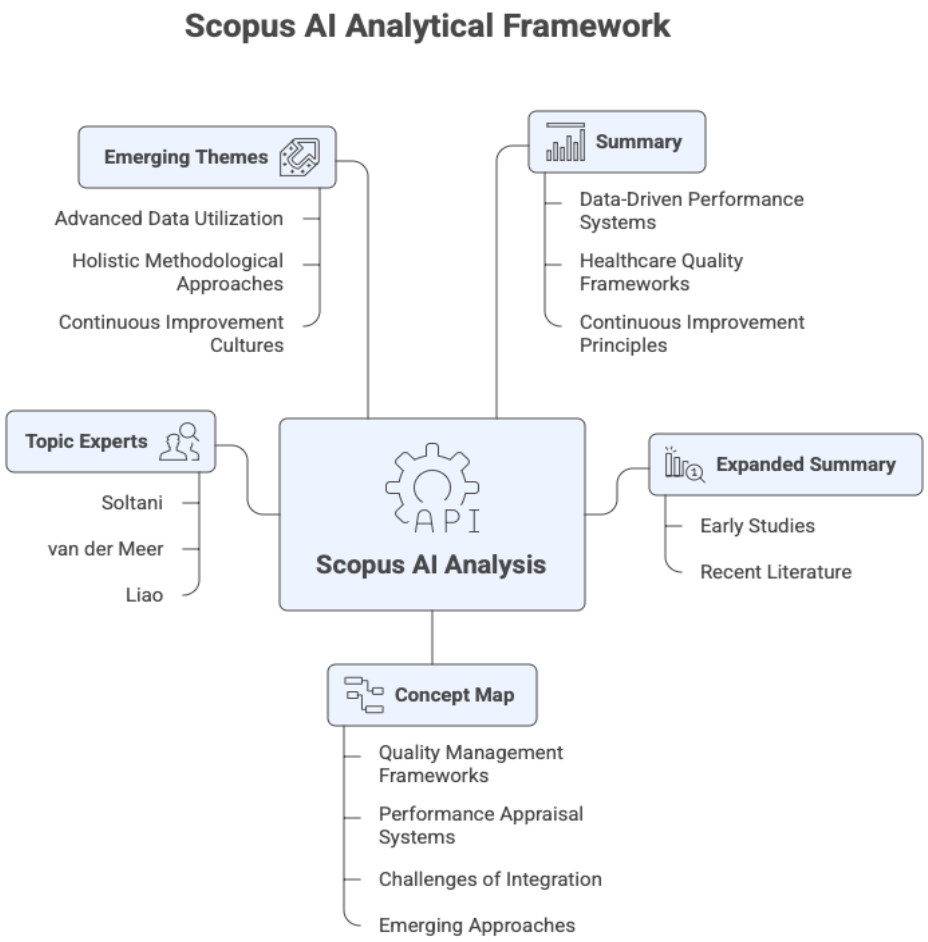

Figure 1: Five core elements of Scopus AI

To visualize the interconnections, a Concept Map was constructed by Scopus AI, clustering literature into four key domains: (1) quality management frameworks such as TQM and ISO; (2) performance appraisal systems and their evolution toward developmental and data-based approaches; (3) challenges of integration, including multi-source evaluation, alignment across organizational levels, and sector-specific complexities (e.g., healthcare and production); and (4) emerging approaches such as predictive analytics, Lean Six Sigma integration, and continuous learning cultures (Sudnickas, 2016; Al Owad et al., 2013). This mapping allowed for a structured synthesis of existing scholarship and helped to identify underexplored intersections.

The Topic Experts function highlighted leading scholars and contributors, including Soltani and van der Meer, who have examined tensions between TQM and Human Resource Management (HRM)-driven performance systems (Soltani et al., 2003), and more recent contributors such as Liao et al. (2024) on control versus learning approaches in appraisal systems. These experts provided authoritative perspectives that shaped the interpretation of findings and the positioning of this review.

Finally, the Emerging Themes identified by Scopus AI reinforced the relevance of advanced data utilization, holistic methodological approaches, and continuous improvement cultures as key drivers of integration between QM and PA (Quan et al., 2018; Firza & Mazzitelli, 2025). These themes highlight the growing importance of digital transformation in performance appraisal, the need for cross-disciplinary frameworks in quality improvement, and the call for balanced approaches that integrate both organizational control and employee learning.

By triangulating these analytical outputs, summary, expanded summary, concept map, topic experts, and emerging themes, the methodology ensures a comprehensive, evidence-based synthesis. This approach not only consolidates fragmented knowledge but also provides a foundation for mapping future directions. In doing so, the study contributes to advancing theoretical understanding and guiding practical applications of QM–PA integration in diverse organizational contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this review were derived through a structured analysis of Scopus AI outputs as of 1 October 2025, synthesizing insights across four key components: Summary and Expanded Summary, Concept Map, Topic Experts, and Emerging Themes**.** Together, these outputs provide a multi-layered understanding of the experience loyalty nexus, highlighting both established knowledge and underexplored dimensions that warrant scholarly attention.

Summary and Expanded Summary

The findings from the review highlight important insights regarding the integration of QM and PA. Evidence suggests that aligning PA with a strategic emphasis on quality can support rather than hinder organizational outcomes (Haines, St-Onge, & Marcoux, 2004). This perspective recognizes that performance management systems in quality-driven organizations must go beyond individual accountability and instead embrace a broader systems-level approach. For example, Soltani, Van Der Meer, and Williams (2004) emphasized that both individual contributions and structural features are critical in sustaining quality management practices. Such integration points toward a more holistic model in which QM and PA function complementarily to improve organizational performance. Moreover, a multidimensional approach, including customer focus and collaboration with suppliers, has been positively associated with performance appraisal processes that evaluate both results and behaviors (Bayo-Moriones & de la Torre, 2022). These insights reinforce the idea that PA should not only serve as a control mechanism but also as a developmental tool that aligns with the continuous improvement philosophy of TQM.

Despite these potential benefits, several challenges hinder the effective integration of QM and PA. One recurring issue is the inconsistency between HR appraisal practices and the principles of TQM. While some scholars argue that PA should be eliminated in TQM-driven contexts, others advocate for adapting rather than discarding the practice (Soltani, 2005). This debate reflects the tension between appraisal's traditional evaluative role and the developmental emphasis of quality management. Furthermore, the weakness of linking appraisal with developmental objectives often results in performance appraisals being dominated by incentive structures, thereby neglecting employee learning and growth (Mosoge & Pilane, 2014). Similarly, Liao, Soltani, Iqbal, and van der Meer (2024) pointed out that an exclusive focus on either control or learning in PA design may reduce its effectiveness, particularly in environments that demand alignment with quality goals. These findings underscore the persistent dilemma of reconciling divergent purposes evaluation, reward, and development within performance management systems that aim to support quality initiatives.

Looking ahead, several future directions emerge from the literature. First, scholars recommend that organizations design performance management systems that are not only consistent with their strategy but also with their culture of quality (Soltani, 2005). This implies moving toward holistic frameworks where PA complements, rather than contradicts, TQM principles. Second, there is a need for more empirical research to validate theoretical assumptions about the interaction between HR practices and organizational performance in quality-driven contexts (Soltani, 2005). Such empirical evidence would provide stronger foundations for integrating QM and PA. Finally, integrating PA with pay-for-performance mechanisms that are adapted to quality principles appears promising, as studies show that incorporating quality-oriented metrics into appraisal and reward systems can enhance the effectiveness of quality initiatives (Bayo-Moriones & de la Torre, 2022). This highlights the importance of balancing fairness, accountability, and developmental goals to build trust in appraisal systems.

In summary, the review illustrates that bridging QM and PA requires organizations to balance competing demands of control, development, and alignment with quality principles. Insights from the literature indicate that when strategically aligned, PA can serve as a driver for quality outcomes. However, challenges such as theoretical and practical inconsistencies, misalignment of appraisal goals, and the neglect of employee development remain. Addressing these gaps will require more integrative approaches, empirical validation, and a cultural shift toward continuous improvement in performance management systems.

Concept Map

The concept map generated by Scopus AI (1 October 2025) presents a conceptual overview of how the

literature organizes insights, challenges, and future directions in this research domain [as shown in Figure 2]. At the center is the core theme QM and PA, which branches into three major analytical dimensions. The Insights highlight the positive outcomes of integrating quality practices with appraisal systems, emphasizing cost-effectiveness and customer satisfaction as critical organizational benefits. The Challenges reflect the complexities in aligning appraisal practices with quality management principles, particularly issues related to employee performance evaluation and the reliance on control mechanisms that may create tension between developmental and evaluative goals. Finally, the Future Directions point to strategic pathways for advancing this integration, including embedding environmental management, strengthening performance management, leveraging TQM principles, and adopting learning approaches that balance control with development. Overall, the graph illustrates how the field has evolved by mapping interconnected priorities, tensions, and opportunities for future research and practice.

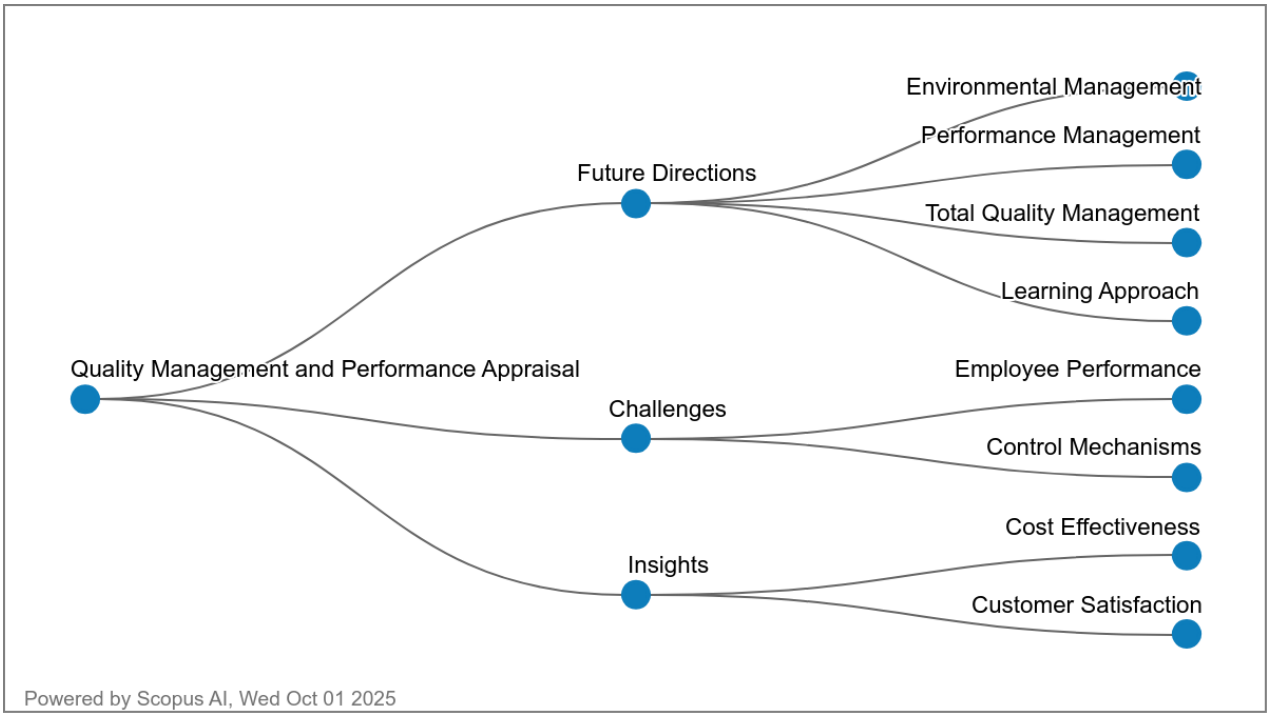

Figure 2: Concept map of quality management and performance appraisal

A Review of quality management and performance appraisal

The review highlights that QM and PA are closely interlinked through several shared dimensions. QM is inherently multidimensional, involving supplier collaboration, customer orientation, and the application of quality tools that directly contribute to organizational performance (Bayo-Moriones & de la Torre, 2022). These practices are positively associated with PA systems that emphasize both results and behavior, while also supporting pay-for-performance schemes. Furthermore, organizations that successfully integrate quality principles into their PA frameworks are more likely to achieve higher effectiveness, as employees perceive the evaluation system as fair, developmental, and aligned with organizational objectives. This synergy creates a performance-driven culture where employee contributions are systematically evaluated, thereby enhancing morale and engagement (Muhammad et al., 2025).

Despite these positive insights, the integration of QM with PA poses notable challenges. One of the most pressing issues lies in balancing the evaluative and developmental functions of PA. While QM advocates for continuous improvement and learning, PA often emphasize accountability through control mechanisms (Haines et al., 2004). This creates tensions where employees may perceive appraisals as punitive rather than supportive, undermining their motivational impact. Additionally, difficulties arise in measuring employee performance fairly, particularly in complex environments where collaborative and customer-centric behaviors are harder to quantify than output metrics. These challenges highlight the need for more robust appraisal systems that can capture both tangible and intangible aspects of performance without eroding trust between employees and management.

Looking ahead, several future directions emerge in bridging QM with PA. The literature suggests embedding TQM principles, environmental management practices, and learning-oriented approaches into appraisal systems to achieve long-term effectiveness (Bayo-Moriones & de la Torre, 2022; Haines et al., 2004). Integrating sustainability goals, knowledge sharing, and innovation within appraisal criteria could foster a culture that prioritizes both organizational excellence and employee growth. Moreover, performance management frameworks must evolve toward a more holistic design, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives while maintaining fairness and transparency. Such advancements will not only improve employee satisfaction and customer outcomes but also strengthen organizational competitiveness in dynamic global markets.

Quality Management–Performance Appraisal *and* Future Directions

The relationship between QM and PA is increasingly viewed through the lens of future-oriented organizational practices. Research indicates that QM is moving beyond traditional efficiency models to embrace value enhancement, lifecycle service integration, and the strategic use of data as a resource for continuous improvement (Wen et al., 2022). This evolution directly impacts PA, as appraisal systems must adapt to assess employee contributions not only in terms of immediate outputs but also in their ability to contribute to long-term value creation. By aligning appraisal processes with emerging dimensions of quality, organizations can ensure employees are incentivized and recognized for fostering innovation, sustainability, and customer-focused practices, thereby reinforcing the dynamic integration of the two systems.

Despite these promising insights, several challenges emerge in bridging QM with PA for the future. One challenge lies in the need for cross-organizational collaboration and connectivity, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, where quality outcomes depend on shared decision-making and interdepartmental integration (Champagne-Langabeer & Delgado, 2018). Traditional appraisal systems, which tend to be individual-focused, may struggle to capture and reward collaborative performance effectively. Additionally, the multidimensional nature of quality management complicates appraisal design, as it requires measurement frameworks that extend beyond unidimensional metrics to account for diverse contributions such as innovation, teamwork, and long-term sustainability (Bayo-Moriones & de la Torre, 2022). These complexities highlight the risk of misalignment if organizations fail to modernize appraisal systems in tandem with evolving QM practices.

Looking toward future directions, scholars emphasize that performance management must evolve into a continuous, organization-wide responsibility, rather than a periodic evaluation conducted by HR or senior leaders (Rao & Chawla, 2024). Embedding continuous improvement principles into PA will require more dynamic, real-time feedback systems that integrate digital technologies, data analytics, and collaborative platforms. Such approaches can enhance transparency, increase employee engagement, and better align performance evaluations with strategic objectives. Ultimately, by embracing multidimensional quality management, strengthening cross-organizational collaboration, and evolving performance management into a holistic, future-driven exercise, organizations can ensure that both QM and PA contribute synergistically to long-term growth and excellence.

Quality Management–Performance Appraisal *and* Challenges

The integration of QM and PA is significantly challenged by issues of measurement and assessment. Accurately defining and improving PA ratings has long been a concern, particularly when addressing the complexities of team-based evaluations and multisource feedback mechanisms (Kline & Sulsky, 2009). These challenges are compounded by the difficulty of aligning quality management tools, which often emphasize process efficiency and customer satisfaction, with appraisal systems that focus on individual or team contributions. Without reliable and valid measures, PA risk is perceived as inconsistent or biased, ultimately undermining employee trust and reducing their effectiveness as tools for supporting quality initiatives.

Another critical challenge lies in the social and contextual factors influencing PA. As highlighted by Onyeaku (2023), adopting a “one size fits all” approach often fails because employee roles, responsibilities, and cultural contexts vary widely. Performance appraisal systems that ignore these differences risk discouraging employees rather than motivating them. Moreover, leadership support and adequate training play a vital role in

overcoming procedural fairness issues, as shown in the Zimbabwean health sector case study, where a lack of vision and insufficient managerial preparation hindered the success of performance management systems (Chiware & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023). These findings underscore the need for context-sensitive frameworks that consider social, cultural, and organizational realities when integrating quality management and appraisal systems.

Cultural and human factors further complicate the implementation of unified QM systems in multinational organizations. Research shows that firms, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, encounter barriers such as cultural resistance, insufficient preparation of employees, and lack of managerial engagement in quality-focused initiatives (Karaszewski, 2004). These challenges suggest that the integration of PA into QM requires not only technical adaptation but also strong cultural alignment and workforce readiness. Addressing these issues will involve rethinking appraisal systems to balance global quality standards with local practices, ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and employee empowerment. Collectively, these challenges highlight that bridging QM and PA is not merely a structural exercise but a deeply contextual and human-centered process requiring adaptive strategies.

Quality Management–Performance Appraisal *and Insights*

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Topic Experts

The role of topic experts in shaping the discourse on QM and PA is evident from their contributions to both theoretical and applied domains. Rodolfo Miranda De Barros has significantly advanced the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) management with human performance, emphasizing continuous management models that improve team effectiveness. His research underscores the importance of aligning performance appraisal systems with quality management practices to foster continuous improvement in ICT-driven organizations (De Barros, 2023). By tailoring PA mechanisms to information technology (IT) professionals, De Barros highlights how human performance management can serve as a foundation for sustainable quality outcomes, thereby bridging a crucial gap between technological infrastructures and organizational performance.

In addition, Marcus Vinicius Alencar Terra provides a more focused perspective on team performance within ICT environments, highlighting supportive models that enhance the effectiveness of PA. His contributions demonstrate that team dynamics and collaborative structures are central to achieving success in quality-driven settings. Terra's research reinforces the need for PA systems that recognize not only individual contributions but also collective outcomes, aligning well with the principles of QM (Alencar Terra, 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant for organizations navigating digital transformation, where teamwork, knowledge sharing, and adaptability are vital to maintaining high-quality standards.

Finally, Pitchai Shanmugavadivu contributes a critical lens through agile practices and performance metrics, particularly in software development contexts. Her work on behavior-driven development and metrics frameworks demonstrates how PA can be integrated into agile QM practices, especially within Scrum teams. Shanmugavadivu's emphasis on balancing quality assurance with high performance highlights the challenges of managing appraisal processes in fast-paced, iterative environments (Shanmugavadivu, 2022). By embedding agile principles into appraisal systems, her research points to future directions where quality management and performance evaluation are seamlessly aligned to foster adaptability, innovation, and sustained organizational competitiveness. Collectively, the expertise of these scholars illustrates the multidimensional nature of bridging quality management and performance appraisal across ICT and agile contexts.

Emerging themes

Consistent Theme

A major consistent theme is the enduring connection between TQM and organizational performance. Research consistently affirms that TQM principles such as continuous improvement, customer focus, and employee involvement positively impact operational efficiency, service quality, and competitive advantage (Sadikoglu & Olcay, 2014; Talib et al., 2020). The integration of TQM with HRM practices has also been linked to enhanced employee engagement, thereby reinforcing organizational outcomes (Psomas & Antony, 2017). This consistency underscores that TQM remains a critical foundation for ensuring sustainable performance.

Another consistent theme is performance management systems and employee motivation. PA processes are increasingly recognized as central to enhancing employee self-efficacy, motivation, and productivity. Research highlights that effective feedback mechanisms within performance management systems are essential for fostering organizational performance (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Moreover, studies stress the importance of tailoring performance management practices to cultural contexts, particularly in multinational organizations, to maximize their effectiveness (Aguinis, 2019). This reinforces the continuing relevance of appraisal systems in shaping employee behavior and organizational success.

A third consistent theme is the rise of innovative PA methods, particularly those driven by digitalization and AI. Recent studies show that AI-enhanced appraisal tools can reduce bias, increase accuracy, and deliver real-time feedback that boosts employee engagement and satisfaction (Pulakos et al., 2019; Jain & Singh, 2022). These findings indicate a transformation of traditional appraisal systems, positioning innovation as a consistent driver in making performance management more equitable, dynamic, and effective across industries.

Rising Themes

Among the rising themes, the intersection of QM and innovation performance has gained momentum, especially in the context of Industry 4.0. Scholars argue that embedding quality management within advanced digital technologies like IoT, AI, and big data analytics enhances innovation capabilities and strengthens long-term competitiveness (Sony & Naik, 2020). Additionally, quality systems that emphasize sustainability are increasingly recognized for driving innovative practices and securing long-term organizational success (Antony et al., 2021). This indicates a shift toward seeing QM not only as a standardization mechanism but also as an enabler of innovation.

Another rising theme is the adoption of QM systems in specialized industries, such as healthcare, automotive, and construction. In healthcare, implementing QMS has been shown to improve patient safety, clinical outcomes, and operational efficiency (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Similarly, in the automotive sector, quality

practices enhance product reliability and customer satisfaction, while in construction, they help improve compliance and reduce waste (Abdullah et al., 2021). This trend reflects how QMS are being adapted beyond traditional manufacturing sectors, signalling their increasing relevance in diverse industry contexts.

Collectively, the consistent themes emphasize the well-established importance of TQM, performance management, and innovative appraisal tools, while the rising themes highlight how QM is evolving through integration with innovation and industry-specific practices. Together, these themes illustrate both stability and transformation in the relationship between QM and PA.

CONCLUSION

This review highlights the intricate relationship between quality management (QM) and performance appraisal (PA)**,** emphasizing both consistent and rising themes in contemporary research. The findings underscore that Total Quality Management (TQM) principles remain central to enhancing organizational performance, while effective performance management systems continue to play a vital role in employee motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the increasing adoption of innovative appraisal methods, particularly AI-driven tools, signals a paradigm shift toward more dynamic, accurate, and equitable performance evaluation systems. Rising themes such as the integration of QM with innovation performance and the application of QM systems in specialized industries further illustrate the field's growing scope and relevance.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to bridging two traditionally separate domains, QM and human resource PA, by highlighting their synergistic potential. It suggests that theories of organizational performance must increasingly account for the dual role of quality systems in standardization and innovation. Moreover, PA theories should integrate insights from QM to design fairer, more context-sensitive, and technologically adaptive evaluation frameworks.

In terms of practical implications, organizations are encouraged to adopt hybrid models that align QM principles with PA practices. Managers should focus on leveraging digital technologies to reduce bias, enhance real-time feedback, and ensure cultural adaptability in multinational contexts. Additionally, embedding quality practices within innovation-driven strategies and sector-specific operations (e.g., healthcare or automotive) can generate sustainable competitive advantage and improved stakeholder outcomes.

However, this review also acknowledges several limitations. The existing literature does not comprehensively address the intersection of QM and PA across all industries, and most studies remain context-specific, limiting generalizability. Moreover, while emerging research on AI-based appraisal tools shows promise, empirical evidence on their long-term effectiveness and ethical considerations remains sparse.

For future research, scholars should explore cross-industry comparative studies that assess how QM–PA integration varies across different cultural, technological, and organizational contexts. Longitudinal studies on AI-driven appraisal systems would also provide valuable insights into their sustainability, fairness, and employee acceptance. Furthermore, future work should investigate how QM principles can support not only innovation but also resilience and adaptability in times of crisis, such as global pandemics or economic disruptions.

In conclusion, bridging QM and PA offers both opportunities and challenges. While consistent themes highlight the enduring importance of TQM and employee-focused appraisal systems, rising themes point toward innovation, digital transformation, and sector-specific adoption as critical directions for future advancement.

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