

## THE INFLUENCE OF SUPERVISORY FEEDBACK FREQUENCY ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

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### Abstract

The frequency of supervisory feedback plays a strategic role in sustaining employee motivation and performance, particularly in relation to profit attainment, which serves as the basis for determining salaries, bonuses, and incentives. This literature review analyzes how the intensity of feedback, both positive and negative, influences employee expectancy and motivation. The findings indicate that regular positive feedback strengthens employees' belief in the connection between effort and outcomes, whereas repeated negative feedback diminishes goal expectancy and weakens work morale. These insights are reinforced by evidence showing that modern technology facilitates real-time feedback systems, accelerating evaluation processes while also aligning with millennials' increasing demand for instant evaluation. On the other hand, excessive feedback intensity can trigger information overload, frustration, and dissatisfaction, especially when employees perceive it as linked to reduced compensation opportunities. Interventions such as goal-achievement reminders, target flexibility, charismatic leadership, and granting employees control over feedback frequency have been shown to mitigate demotivating effects. The practical implication for managers is to design a proportional feedback system that takes into account individual characteristics and integrates evaluation mechanisms into management accounting practices. With this approach, feedback functions not only as a performance evaluation tool but also as a management control instrument that supports the organization's financial success.

Keywords: *Management Accounting; Employee Motivation; Profit Attainment; Expectancy Theory; Supervisory Feedback.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations employ performance goals oriented toward profit attainment as a dominant motivational strategy. Locke and Latham (2013) explain that clearly defined, specific, and challenging performance goals enhance motivation, strengthen effort, and lead to higher employee performance. Supervisors play a critical role by providing feedback related to progress in profit attainment (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). Within management control systems, such feedback is positioned as a core element because the information delivered by supervisors assists employees in evaluating achievements, revising strategies, and maintaining motivation to consistently reach established targets (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The dynamics of modern workplaces demand more adaptive feedback systems, making advances in information technology pivotal in broadening the ways organizations deliver feedback to employees.

Technological progress has significantly improved organizational capacity to provide feedback with greater frequency (Jung *et al.*, 2010). Gellman and Baer (2016) highlight that various digital performance management systems now offer notifications, reports, and achievement indicators accessible directly by both employees and supervisors, thus accelerating the evaluation process. Many organizations have leveraged technology to introduce real-time feedback systems that allow employees to immediately recognize successes or failures in profit attainment, as exemplified by employees at Bank X who receive instant feedback from their supervisors (Kelly *et al.*, 2017). The

preferences of millennials, now the dominant cohort in the workforce further reinforce this trend, as they demonstrate a heightened need for feedback that is immediate, continuous and frequently delivered by supervisors (Tsang, 2015).

Research by Ilies and Judge (2005) shows that intensive supervisory feedback can enhance employee performance. However, Carver and Scheier (1998) report contrasting findings: frequent and negatively framed feedback from supervisors may reduce employee motivation. These results are corroborated by Vroom (1964) and Klein (1991), who argue that when individuals repeatedly receive feedback indicating that their progress toward profit goals falls short of expectations, they tend to experience a decline in expectancy for successful goal attainment, ultimately leading to decreased motivation. This phenomenon raises an important question for managers: how can they sustain employee motivation in the face of frequent and unfavorable supervisory feedback regarding profit targets? This question has become even more relevant in the context of increasingly widespread remote work, where managers face constraints in providing direct interaction and motivational support to employees (Kropp, 2021).

This study aims to examine the literature on the frequency of supervisory feedback, its impact on employee motivation, and potential interventions to mitigate the demotivating effects of frequent unfavorable feedback. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Analyze the impact of supervisory feedback frequency, particularly unfavorable feedback, on employees' expectancy of goal attainment and their effort.
2. Identify theory-based interventions that can reduce the demotivating effects of frequent unfavorable feedback.
3. Discuss practical implications for managers in managing feedback systems.

Expectancy Theory, as introduced by Vroom (1964), serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study. The theory posits that an individual's motivation to achieve a goal is a function of the expectancy that effort will result in desired performance outcomes, and the attractiveness of those outcomes (valence). In the context of supervisory feedback, this theory predicts that individuals who repeatedly receive unfavorable feedback will experience a decline in their expectancy of achieving performance goals. Such a decline in expectancy leads to weakened motivation and reduced performance. This review thus provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how supervisory feedback frequency influences employee motivation and how specific managerial interventions can be employed to sustain persistence and performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Expectancy Theory*

Expectancy Theory, first introduced by Vroom (1964), provides an essential framework for understanding how supervisory feedback influences employee motivation. The theory posits that motivation is a function of three elements: expectancy (the belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to specific outcomes), and valence (the perceived attractiveness of those outcomes). Supervisory feedback directly affects these three components by shaping employees' perceptions of their ability to achieve profit targets and the likelihood that such achievements will be rewarded. When feedback is positive, employees are more likely to maintain a high level of expectancy, reinforcing their belief that effort will translate into performance and, ultimately, valued outcomes such as bonuses and promotions (Ilies & Judge, 2005). Conversely, frequent negative or unclear feedback can reduce expectancy by signaling that additional effort will not necessarily lead to goal attainment, which undermines motivation and persistence (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Chen & Fang, 2008). This effect is particularly salient in performance environments where compensation and evaluation systems are strongly tied to profit outcomes (Casas-Arce *et al.*, 2017).

Expectancy Theory also provides insight into why individual differences matter in the interpretation of feedback. Employees with high self-efficacy are more likely to maintain positive expectancy even under critical feedback, whereas those with lower self-efficacy may interpret negative feedback as evidence of inevitable failure (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Therefore, the interaction between supervisory feedback frequency and expectancy processes explains variations in employee motivation across organizational settings. Integrating Expectancy Theory into the discussion of supervisory feedback highlights the importance of designing proportional, clear, and constructive feedback systems.

#### *Goal Setting as a Motivational Tool*

Performance goals have long been recognized as an effective motivational instrument in modern organizations. Locke and Latham (2002) argue that specific, challenging yet realistic goals are more likely to generate higher performance compared to goals that are either too easy or vague. Performance goals serve to direct individual attention, mobilize effort, enhance persistence, and encourage the development of more adaptive strategies for achieving desired outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2013). Proper goal setting also provides employees with a clear framework for evaluating the direction and quality of their efforts. Understanding the characteristics of effective goals forms an important foundation for examining how employees continuously respond to organizational demands (Anderson *et al.*, 2010).

#### *Goal Difficulty and Motivation*

Merchant and Manzoni (1989) show that organizations generally tend to set goals that can be achieved with a reasonable level of effort. Goals that are excessively difficult reduce motivation because individuals perceive them as unrealistic, even after exerting their best efforts (Klein, 1991). Conversely, goals that are too easy provide little motivational drive, as employees perceive low levels of challenge to be insufficient for stimulating significant effort. This highlights the importance of balance in goal difficulty so that goals can effectively function as a motivational instrument (Locke & Latham, 2002). The effectiveness of performance goals depends on the quality of goal design and its alignment with employees' abilities and expectations. Feedback acts as a complementary factor that ensures employees remain consistent in their efforts to achieve targets (Ilies & Judge, 2005).

#### *The Role of Feedback in Goal Attainment*

Feedback is a critical component that determines the effectiveness of performance goals. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) emphasize that feedback serves two primary functions: a learning function and a motivational function. The learning function relates to the development of new skills and more effective strategies for addressing work challenges, while the motivational function enhances persistence and effort intensity (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Feedback enables employees to assess the extent to which actual outcomes align with targets, identify performance gaps, and adjust strategies to increase the likelihood of success (Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009). This concept positions feedback as a bridge between goal-setting design and actual performance outcomes. The literature indicates that without clarity in the delivery of feedback, performance goals may lose much of their motivational force (Casas-Arce *et al.*, 2017).

#### *Technological Developments and Feedback Frequency*

Advances in information technology have brought significant changes to the way organizations deliver feedback. Jung *et al.* (2010) note that modern performance management systems enable feedback to be provided in real-time and at higher frequencies. Technological progress accelerates the flow of information and expands the function of feedback as a tool for continuous evaluation (Gellman & Baer, 2016). Hoffman (2017) provides an example from Goldman Sachs, where employees receive daily feedback from both peers and managers. This system strengthens the linkage between performance goal attainment and individual motivation, while also reflecting a shift in organizational culture toward more responsive systems (Kelly *et al.*, 2017). The integration of technology into

modern feedback systems is particularly important in maintaining the effectiveness of performance goals, especially for millennial employees, who demonstrate a preference for instant and continuous evaluation (Tsang, 2015).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach based on a literature review. This method allows the researcher to collect, examine, and compare various relevant studies and synthesize them into a comprehensive understanding. The research focuses on supervisory feedback frequency as the independent variable (X) and employee motivation as the dependent variable (Y). Variable X is conceptualized as the intensity of feedback provided by supervisors, both positive and negative. Variable Y is understood as the work drive that influences the direction, strength, and persistence of employees in achieving goals. The analysis is conducted through a review of existing theories and empirical findings. The literature review is directed at assessing the extent to which the relationship between variable X and variable Y is explained by expectancy theory and goal-setting theory. This approach enables the researcher to identify general patterns, uncover research gaps, and formulate practical implications for managers in managing feedback systems.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research on the frequency of supervisory feedback has produced diverse and complex findings. High-frequency feedback often brings benefits, as employees receive clearer information regarding goal attainment. Ilies and Judge (2005) explain that positive feedback delivered regularly enhances work enthusiasm, motivation, and performance. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) add that intensive feedback accelerates learning and improves employees' work strategies. Employee responses to supervisory feedback are generally positive when the message is constructive and encouraging. In the context of management accounting, employees who receive positive feedback tend to perceive a direct linkage with the company's profit performance, which has implications for compensation and bonuses. This indicates that supervisory feedback frequency can function both as a managerial control instrument and as a source of employee motivation.

However, research also reveals negative consequences of overly frequent feedback, particularly when the feedback is unfavorable. Carver and Scheier (1998) emphasize that repeated negative feedback reduces motivation, as employees become increasingly aware of the gap between actual performance and predetermined targets. Lurie and Swaminathan (2009) found that excessive feedback intensity may create information overload, rendering employee strategies ineffective. In such conditions, employees often respond with frustration, loss of morale, and the perception that their efforts are not fairly recognized by supervisors. From a behavioral accounting perspective, this phenomenon may lead to dissatisfaction, as employees associate negative feedback with reduced opportunities for incentives or salary increases. Hence, managers must exercise caution when delivering frequent feedback to avoid damaging motivation and working relationships.

Field studies conducted by Casas-Arce *et al.* (2017) further demonstrate that the effects of feedback frequency and detail vary. In some cases, frequent and detailed feedback improves employee performance by providing a clearer sense of direction. Yet, in tasks of higher complexity, such feedback may impede strategy development and reduce work effectiveness. Employees in such contexts often exhibit confusion and fatigue due to excessive informational pressure. Moreover, supervisor-subordinate relationships may deteriorate when overly detailed feedback is perceived as excessive control. From a management accounting perspective, such conditions may increase labor costs, as employees require additional time to adjust strategies. These findings reinforce the importance of balancing the quality and frequency of feedback to ensure that it continues to add value to corporate profit attainment.

Johnson *et al.* (2021) illustrate that employee responses to feedback frequency are also influenced by personality traits. Individuals with high levels of narcissism tend to demonstrate greater persistence when receiving frequent feedback, viewing it as an opportunity to affirm their

competence. In contrast, individuals with low narcissism often respond with reduced work motivation under the same conditions. In this context, the supervisor's communication style plays a crucial role in shaping employees' interpretation of the message. The supervisor–employee relationship becomes central, as feedback flows from authority to subordinates. Complementary findings from Holderness *et al.* (2020) highlight the importance of granting employees autonomy in determining feedback frequency. Their study shows that employees perform better when allowed to decide how often they receive feedback. Positive responses arise because employees feel greater control over the evaluation process. In such cases, the supervisor–employee relationship becomes more balanced, with feedback perceived as supportive rather than controlling. From an accounting perspective, this policy contributes to managerial cost efficiency, as internally motivated employees require less intensive monitoring. These insights demonstrate that perceptions of control and individual preferences can mediate the relationship between feedback frequency and work motivation.

#### A. Expectancy Theory and the Impact of Unfavorable Feedback

Expectancy Theory, as proposed by Vroom (1964), provides a relevant conceptual framework for understanding how supervisory feedback affects employee motivation. The theory posits that motivation is shaped by three core components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy reflects employees' belief that their effort will lead to desired performance, instrumentality refers to the belief that performance will result in specific outcomes, and valence denotes the value or benefit attached to those outcomes. Valence is often realized in financial compensation such as salaries, bonuses, and profit-based incentives. Supervisors who provide positive feedback reinforce employees' belief in the link between effort and profit attainment, which ultimately influences compensation. Conversely, supervisors who repeatedly deliver negative feedback weaken this belief, thereby undermining motivation.

Employees who continuously receive negative feedback from supervisors are more likely to experience reduced expectancy of achieving performance goals. Klein (1991) and Locke and Latham (2002) demonstrate that perceived task difficulty increases when supervisors emphasize that outcomes remain below target. This heightened perception of difficulty reduces employees' expectancy of goal attainment, which in turn diminishes motivation and performance. Typical employee responses in such contexts include reduced enthusiasm, lower persistence, and doubts about the relevance of their efforts to organizational profit goals. From an accounting perspective, these responses are problematic as declining motivation lowers productivity and increases labor costs.

Arnold and Artz (2015) extend the application of expectancy theory by demonstrating the role of target flexibility. Flexible targets reduce the negative effects of overly challenging goals, as employees perceive that achievement remains attainable despite unsatisfactory initial results. Feedback accompanied by flexible targets provides employees with room to adjust strategies and sustain motivation. This has accounting implications when flexibility is linked to budget adjustments, bonus distribution, or realistic profit goals. Recent research by Berger *et al.* (2023) adds a novel perspective by exploring reward types. Their findings suggest that prosocial, goal-oriented rewards can strengthen motivation in certain contexts. In this case, valence is manipulated as employees perceive that goal achievement generates not only financial benefits but also social value and reputation. Feedback that links performance to prosocial rewards increases employee commitment to organizational goals and persistence even under difficulties. From an accounting standpoint, this highlights the role of non-financial performance measures that complement traditional compensation systems, stabilizing motivation even in the presence of negative feedback.

#### B. Interventions to Mitigate Demotivating Effects

Recognizing the demotivating effects of frequent and unfavorable feedback necessitates the design of targeted interventions. Anand *et al.* (2023) propose a simple intervention in the form of "goal achievement reminders." Their experimental results show that reminders emphasizing the attainability of goals significantly reduce demotivation, even when negative feedback is present. Employees receiving such reminders respond more positively because they continue to believe that

goals are within reach. In accounting terms, goal achievement reminders are particularly relevant since profit attainment is directly linked to compensation and incentives.

Bordalo *et al.* (2012), through saliency theory, further explain the effectiveness of reminders. The theory suggests that individuals' attention is drawn to salient features that dominate decision-making. Reminders of past achievements make prior successes more salient in employees' minds, boosting confidence and reinforcing persistence. Similarly, Garland and Adkinson (1987) and Latham and Saari (1979) highlight the motivational impact of verbal encouragement, which increases employee effort and perseverance. Cassidy and Lynn (1989) and Howard and Crayne (2019) add that perseverance is a critical quality for sustaining motivation under negative feedback. Goal achievement reminders strengthen perseverance, as employees feel their efforts remain valuable even when temporary setbacks occur. Supervisors who reinforce perseverance serve as providers of psychological energy that stabilizes motivation.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) expand the discussion of interventions by emphasizing charismatic leadership. Their study shows that leaders who express confidence in subordinates' abilities significantly enhance motivation and performance. Employees in such environments typically demonstrate higher loyalty, greater enthusiasm, and stronger willingness to exert effort. From a management accounting perspective, charismatic leadership contributes to increased productivity and profit attainment. This underscores the effectiveness of leadership-oriented interventions in countering the negative effects of unfavorable feedback.

### C. Practical Implications for Management

The findings from prior studies carry critical implications for managers seeking to optimize the effectiveness of performance goals and feedback systems. Supervisors act as primary mediators between organizational targets and employee motivation, with their communication determining how employees interpret progress toward profit attainment. Positive feedback fosters confidence, while repeated negative feedback can erode morale. In management accounting practice, this dynamic directly affects performance evaluations, which serve as the basis for salaries, bonuses, and incentives.

Managers must pay special attention to the risk of demotivation resulting from excessively frequent negative feedback. Feichter *et al.* (2018) emphasize that external factors outside employees' control may influence short-term performance, making uncontextualized negative feedback particularly harmful. In such cases, employees often respond with decreased motivation and perceptions of underappreciation. This can reduce loyalty and lower organizational profitability due to diminished effort levels. Thus, managers should strive to balance internal and external factors when delivering feedback.

Practical interventions can help maintain motivation despite unfavorable feedback. Anand *et al.* (2023) confirm that goal reminders significantly suppress demotivation, while Holderness *et al.* (2020) show that granting employees autonomy over feedback frequency improves performance. Employees respond positively when they feel involved in the control process, perceiving feedback as support rather than surveillance. The growing prevalence of remote work further amplifies the need for structured interventions. Kropp (2021) highlights that in post-pandemic contexts, managers face fewer opportunities for face-to-face interaction and must rely on digital tools for feedback. The effectiveness of such systems depends heavily on consistent supervisor communication. From an accounting perspective, remote work requires more accurate performance recording since financial reports serve as the primary evaluation basis. Managers must therefore integrate digital feedback mechanisms into management accounting systems to preserve motivation and profit accuracy. Finally, individual differences must be considered in designing feedback systems. Johnson *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that personality traits, such as narcissism, shape responses to frequent feedback. High-narcissism employees persist under frequent evaluations, while low-narcissism employees reduce effort. This highlights the importance of tailoring feedback communication to subordinate characteristics. In accounting practice, such differences must be reflected in adaptive performance-based compensation systems to prevent perceptions of inequity.

## CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that the frequency of supervisory feedback plays a pivotal role in shaping employee motivation. Clear and proportional feedback enhances the effectiveness of profit-oriented performance goals, particularly when linked to compensation in the form of salaries, bonuses, and incentives. Conversely, repeated negative feedback may reduce expectancy of success, weaken morale, and negatively affect both productivity and profit attainment. Simple interventions, such as goal achievement reminders, have been shown to sustain motivation and mitigate demotivating effects. Allowing flexibility in determining feedback frequency and adopting approaches that account for individual differences further improve the effectiveness of evaluation systems. In the context of remote work, the use of technology becomes an essential mechanism for maintaining expectancy of goal attainment. Overall, the findings emphasize that supervisory feedback serves not only as a performance evaluation mechanism but also as a strategic instrument for sustaining employee motivation and supporting the organization's financial success.

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