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THE EMOTIONAL INVALIDATION FROM PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS IN ORGANIZATIONS

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The emotional invalidation from performance management and measurement tools in organizations

Abstract

Purpose – Investigate the topic of emotional invalidation when dealing with different managerial tools used in organizations and to analyze the role invalidation plays in public organizations from the dysfunctional outcomes of using performance measurement and management (PMM) tools.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The research follows an embedded case of an organization in which individuals (researchers) are interviewed in a semi-structured way for data gathering purposes. Furthermore, past representations of invalidation occurrences are analyzed.

Findings – Different tools and environments in organizations lead to emotional invalidation. Specifically, the use of PMM tools in companies has proved to neglect emotional aspects of workers, leading to lower and worse performance by the employees as well as organizational output. We also provide recommendations as to how this can be improved.

Research limitations/implications – Research could be extended to other professional contexts and sectors to better compare PMM systems and invalidation.

Originality/value – The paper highlights the lack of importance placed on emotional invalidation in the workplace and suggests implementation of different tools to prevent this could significantly improve aspects of public organizations and their employees.

Paper type – Case study

Keywords: Invalidation, performance measurement, management, psychotherapy

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, more and more attention has been given to performance management and how it ultimately affects different components of an organization, including its stakeholders, financial performance, and shareholders. As technology and research have advanced, priority has increasingly been given to performance measurement and management (PMM) tools to deliver critical information in support of management decision-making within organizations. In doing so, managers have repeatedly attempted to use PMM tools to advance their organizational performance by measuring productivity and efficiency. For example, Bain & Company's most recent list of Top 10 Management Tools in 2017 included benchmarking, advanced analytics, and customer satisfaction, all components of a PMM system design. These systems have become one of the essential functions of managers, and they are now, more often than not, a staple in organizational life. However, while an organization's potential can be ascertained with the utilization of PMM systems, there have also been numerous cases of such tools being used defectively because of a poor understanding with the result that they give rise to long-lasting, undesirable, detrimental outcomes. According to Inc., U.S. firms are currently losing \$450-\$500 billion each year because of disengaged employees, one of the unintended consequences of using these managerial instruments (Franco-Santos and Otley, 2018).

Emotional validation, as seen in current literature, can be defined as acknowledging someone's feelings and giving understanding to these feelings, ideas, and individuality (Linehan, 1997). On the other hand, invalidation would involve actions such as rejecting and ignoring these ideas that ultimately negatively affect others. These emotional validations (or lack of in often cases) can be seen in today's workplace and have been at times scrutinized in recent years with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, yet have not been discussed properly and thoroughly as such in the management literature. For example, Aguinis and Burji-Tian (2021) developed several different steps to maximize positive outcomes during a crisis as a result of the pandemic and fleshed out the meaning of performance appraisals in comparison to performance measurements. Nonetheless, current literature and scholars have not been able to appropriately show the link between emotional invalidation and PMM systems in companies. By developing a clearer meaning in the linkage between the two concepts, a possibility presents itself to better investigate and explore the environment of invalidation, which has been shown to relate to emotion dysregulation in the past.

With this in mind, this paper entails a case study to effectively analyze the role that emotional invalidation can play in different organizations, resulting from the dysfunctional outcomes associated with the defective use of performance measurement and management tools. This project specifically attempts to explain and categorize events of invalidation by PMM in a work environment; to gather facts on specific individual responses to these events by evaluating the effectiveness; and, finally, to gather data on organizational reactions to invalidation from PMM and assess the viability of these. The research approach used for this project will involve a case study and data gathering through semi-structured, focus-based interviews along with other sources of evidence that use a behavioral perspective. A specific

public organization has also been carefully selected for the methodology and interview process in the form of a considerably large research institution in the Catalunya region. Several structured interviews were performed with different scholars in the scientific department of this organization. Each interview was carefully prepared to amass the best results for data gathering purposes. Furthermore, several important factors were considered for this procedure, namely convenience, the likeliness of representativeness, and a level of commonality. These interviews will also be accurately transcribed and analyzed with different programs to fully understand the topic of emotional invalidation when dealing with different managerial tools used in organizations. The research methods were approached from a qualitative perspective as opposed to a quantitative one for the sake of being able to focus on the experiences and perceptions of a specific sample. Throughout this research, it was observed that the potential awareness of invalidation in the use of PMM systems in organizations could have within organizations, whether it be financial or in other, less observable ways.

As of May 2022, the United Nations has developed seventeen different sustainable development goals as a critical call for action worldwide (whether in developed or developing countries) in a cooperative way (UN). Some such goals include ending poverty altogether, providing clean water and sanitation, and achieving zero hunger. Throughout this case study, we will attempt to simultaneously address the third and eighth sustainable development goals (SDGs), which can be described as the health and well-being of humanity, along with sustainable growth and economic growth (respectively). According to the official United Nations website, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs classifies the third of these goals as being one that ensures healthy lives and promotes welfare for all ages. A hope, therefore, with this project is to be able and potentially link this with the organization's stakeholders' health (both physical and mental). A 2016 research paper by Sophie Hennekam studied how invalidation can oftentimes lead to negative health effects like stress (with validation having an opposite, positive affect) and pointed out the criticality of external environments in organizations. In a 2020 article, Jesús Méndez González also showcased the existence of similar negative mental health effects in public organizations. To do this, the author showed that over 40% of 2,000 doctoral students surveyed (in 26 countries) presented moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression, which is a probability over six times higher than that of the general population (Jesús Méndez González, 2020). Regarding the eighth goal, the United Nations explains this is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (United Nations, 2022). By placing a more specific spotlight on the full and productive employment aspect of this definition given by the UN, we can attempt and link this with the use of PMM systems in public organizations, as well as the lack of attention given to invalidation in employees in the design of such systems.

Overall, this case study attempts to address the following research question throughout the entirety of this paper:

- **RQ1:** How can organizations specifically address emotional invalidation from performance measurement and management (PMM) systems?

2. PRESENTATION OF THE CONTEXT

Before diving into our specific methodology of choice, a point was made to find a better understanding of previous findings and readings on the different topics that serve as a prelude to this case study. One priority was to strengthen our understanding of what performance management and performance measurement systems authentically constitute, as well as the different theories presented in the past. Performance management studies have been conducted from a multitude of perspectives employing a variety of approaches and methodologies. For example, some have defined it as a

“continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and workgroups and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organization” (Aguinis, 2019b, p. 8)

and

“the use of performance measurement information to effect positive change in organizational culture, systems and processes, by helping to set agreed performance goals, allocating and prioritizing resources, informing managers to either confirm or change current policy or programme directions to meet those goals, and the sharing of results of performance in pursuing those goals” (PEA, 1998).

Meanwhile, Amaratunga and Baldry (2002) stress that it “provides organizations the opportunity to refine and improve their development activities”. Based on these insights, we can conclude that performance management is an essential factor in the success or failure of an organization, as it can improve performance levels among other factors. At the same time, authors such as Nathan (2009) have made pivotal distinctions in stressing the need to differentiate between, and not confuse, performance management with performance measurement. Indeed, this author claims performance measurements should be used as a prerequisite for effective and efficient management. Furthermore, performance measurement and management (PMM) systems have been identified as critical to better organizations through different means of effectiveness, efficiency, and capability (Neely, Gregory, Platts, et al., 1995; Bourne et al., 2018). Ferreira and Otley (2009) furthered the definition of management control systems (MCS) by introducing a framework wherein management control practices create a system of different, interrelated controls.

While attention has been given to the concept of validation in the psychology field, this has unfortunately not been the case in terms of linking it to the role it can play in organizations stemming from the dysfunctional outcomes PMM systems may have caused. Past readings, studies, and cases (e.g., Uribechebarria et al., 2020; Groen, 2012; Ukko, 2008) have brought awareness to research on the links between PMM tools in the work environment and how impactful they can be on stakeholders. It is through this and more we will attempt to observe how organizations may be able to better design their evaluation practices through awareness of emotional validation and ultimately advance management theory on the topic. A reasonable assumption to be made is that the use of PMM tools in both public and private organizations

has predominantly proved to neglect the emotional aspects of workers, eventually leading to lower and worse performance by the employees, in addition to organizational output. Through our methodology and presentation, as well as findings from the data analysis and gathering, we will attempt to thoroughly research these concepts, as well as provide recommendations and see how this could be better improved.

As alluded to earlier, one of the crucial distinctions in this paper we attempt to make is introducing the concept of emotional invalidation into the performance management and measurement system protocols. Here, we will investigate and delve deeper into the topic of emotional invalidation in institutions and how it can lead to different dysfunctional and maladjusted outcomes from the use of specific managerial approaches at points in time. For example, a 2018 study published in the journal *Nature Biotechnology* surveyed over 2,000 doctoral students and found that among the common factors that could explain emotional invalidation were a lack of support from managers, as well as difficulty in balancing work and personal life (something that could be attributed to manager style). Additionally, we will attempt to analyze and find the existence of contrasting barriers to performance caused by this phenomenon, and how it affects future work. The crucial paper by Marsha Linehan in 1997 explores and expands on the concept of emotional validation and psychotherapy, where she developed and evaluated an approach in which validation has six different levels. According to Linehan (1997), validation is the “acknowledgment of that which is valid” and takes place when you communicate an actual understanding of their behavior to the individual. These six levels, as mentioned before, partly serve as the basis of this study to be linked to the performance management side of things. The first level essentially constitutes simply showing interest to the other individuals, which is given concerning listening (Linehan, 1997). The second and third levels, respectively, are composed of accurate reflection and putting yourself in others’ positions. These levels encompass activities such as reading emotions and thoughts, checking for accuracy, and deeper reflection. The next two levels, Linehan (1997) said, are about validating both based on history and current circumstances. The sixth and final level involves radical genuineness. She explains that at this level, the task is “to recognize the person as he or she is, seeing and responding to the strengths and capacities of the individual while keeping a firm empathic understanding of the client’s actual difficulties and incapacities” (Linehan, 1997). Below is a table illustrating each level in further detail and what each part may entail.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Description of level	Showing interest and being awake	Reflect what they are saying	Putting yourself in their position	Validating based on history	Validating based on current circumstances	Radical genuineness
Example of level being shown	"I'm listening"	"Did I get that right"	"I would do that as well in your spot"	"This has to be frustrating considering you've been through 3 managers"	"It makes sense you're frustrate as your manager was inconsiderate"	"You are feeling this way because it is this way"
How to practice it	Look at them interestedly	Sender and receiver exercises	Checking for accuracy	Check previous history	Identify current environment	Communicate as if they were an equal

Table 1. Explaining Linehan's Six Levels of Validation

Source: Own elaboration

The theory of emotional validation also plays an essential role in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT, in the past, has been expressed as an approach that consolidates critical mindfulness skills to change a desired or undesired behavior (Chapman, 2020). Standard DBT, in turn, includes several treatment options, including weekly individual therapy, weekly group skills training, and even the possibility of phone coaching (if needed) to address skill and motivational problems common in people diagnosed with BPD (Linehan, 1993b and Valentine, Bankoff, Poulin R, et al., 2014). In her paper, Linehan thoroughly explains this emotional validation as the overarching strategy that helps make Dialectical Behavior Therapy such a successful, yet different type of procedure (Linehan, 1997). Overall, DBT sees the therapists devise an environment of validating the individual rather than blaming them, thus attempting to eliminate negative behaviors and bring out good behaviors that can be reinforced in the future (Linehan, 1993b). However, as much as the theory of validation has been applied in the psychological and psychotherapy world, current studies and theorists have not been able to sufficiently apply this to the management world, and particularly tie it into performance management.

Knowing in further detail what validation can comprise of, we further pivot into studying what PMM systems are and how they can be capable of this validation via its different

characteristics (as this is a topic that has not been appropriately studied previously). Understanding the theory of the performance measurement tools themselves is key as it allows for a better comprehension of how PMM systems are therefore capable of emotion invalidation in the workplace. Rummler (2004) demonstrates that performance measurement is ultimately at the heart of managing and improving performance, yet according to research (Clark & Estes, 2000; Guerra-López & Leigh, 2013) it is often overlooked. This can be attributed to the fact that performance measurement is reported as hugely resource-consuming and with considerable costs in terms of data collection, data analysis, and maintenance results (Rodríguez-Labajo *et al.*, 2018). In the literature reviewed by Cavalluzo and Itner (2004), it was found that the benefits of performance measurement were unconvincing when the measures were assigned rather than voluntarily implemented, while Taylor (2009) reported that in many cases the tools were for external reporting requirements rather than for contributing to internal decision-making. Additionally, an important distinction should also be made between performance measurement and performance appraisal, where the latter is defined as “the measurement and description of an employee’s strengths and weaknesses (Aguinis, 2019a).

An additional distinction to make is to differentiate and not confuse performance measurement with performance appraisal. Performance appraisal can be established as “the measurement and description of an employee’s strengths and weaknesses (Aguinis, 2019a). As the author describes, performance appraisal is just one element of the overarching performance management concept (Aguinis, 2019a). Some of these include but are not limited to, performance management being a growing and uninterrupted process that focuses on both past performance (where the actual performance appraisal definition comes from) and future performance. It is clearer to see, then, how many organizations conclusively implement only this performance appraisal instead of the intended performance management. Both performance measurement and appraisals seemed to have a role in the validation (or lack) of employees during their designs. A compelling point of view to these approaches was observed when Buchner (2007) constructed an approach to performance management that consolidated different motivational theories associated with goal setting, social cognition, and control to influence applicable processes and performance outcomes. It was through this that Guerra-López & Hutchinson (2013) studied those psychological theories of behavior and motivation to help configure employee behavior within the performance management system. In their paper, they introduced the concept of human performance technology (HPT) as “an analogous area of research and practice that also takes a systems approach to strategic assessment and alignment, evaluation, and management of human and organizational performance, and its external impact on clients and society” (Guerra-López & Hutchinson, 2013). As emotional invalidation can constitute an employee’s experience of being rejected, it can be seen that Guerra-López & Hutchinson’s studies help push forward an interesting perspective on how performance management systems can potentially increase or decrease invalidation through the HPT concept in the workplace. In a similar viewpoint, hypercompetition was described in a variety of papers reviewed for this case study. In the management world, hypercompetition can be described as a competitive work environment encouraging constant attacks and actions to gain temporary advantages, and it was first coined in business strategy by Richard D’Aveni. D’Aveni, in his 1996 seminal book, specifically defines hypercompetition as “an environment

characterized by intense and rapid competitive moves, in which competitors must move quickly to build advantage and erode the advantage of their rivals”. This theory has seen a lot of detractors in the past, such as Michael Porter, who stated that “in many industries, however, what some call hypercompetition is a self-inflicted wound, not the inevitable outcome of a changing paradigm of competition’ (Porter, 1996). Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that PMM systems have given a rise to this in the workplace (whether involuntarily or not)

In reviewing the literature for this case study, a focus was additionally placed on how the engagement and involvement of employees correlated with the design of PMM systems in organizations, and whether there was an impact or not. It can be often seen in different firms that managers tend to ignore employees when building these designs, often helping lead to undesirable outcomes. For example, multiple studies found that the more involved employees were in the PMM design, the greater the positive impact there was on the quality of the working life (Rantanen et al., 2008). These authors described the quality of working life (QWL) as a concept that involved work motivation, job satisfaction, a realization of team-level targets, and a reward system among others (Rantanen et al., 2008). As Linehan (1997) explains, validation can be regulated by others attempting to understand a specific person and listening to them. From this point of view, engaging and involving employees in the design of PMM systems could potentially serve as a lever to increase validation and better a workplace.

Moreover, other authors found an association between PM participation and how it can potentially help increase the capability to take initiative (Groen et al., 2012). In their study, the authors found that the subjects involved in the development process of the PMM system were seen to act when performance in measures went down, while the participation of managers was also observed to have an overwhelmingly positive effect (Groen et al., 2012). This paper and its respective results gave a potential look into the existence of how invalidation comes into play when designing PMM systems in an organization. For example, a question that arises from these studies could concern if there is a similar outcome in the validation of employees as there is from the level of involvement and acknowledgment from managers in these.

It was also seen that organizations tended to be more successful when they treated PMM system designs seriously. Abernethy and Bouwens (2005) described performance measurements as having a positive effect on different institutions if they ultimately led to better performance measures. In turn, good measurement properties of performance measures can also create a reduction in management control issue costs (Moers, 2006). Other readings found common behaviors specifically tied to the organizations in which the chance of a successful PMM system implementation was increased. For example, Guerra-López & Hutchinson (2013) saw intriguing emerging trends from recent HR work on performance management that included strategically and tactically focused goals combined with robust organizational communication and senior management involvement as conditions that seem to better performance management efforts, as well as manager-employee relationships being a critical facilitator of effective and efficient performance management.

Another point of interest has been a variety of researchers observing a rise in debates over stewardship and agency theory in management theory. On one hand, stewardship theory brings a more pro-organizational and socialist perspective of intrinsically motivated individuals (Donaldson et al., 1997). Stewards, in this theory, behave in a way in which their priorities are perfectly aligned with the shareholders' interests because of a belief that they will conclusively be rewarded for their effort and commitment toward profit maximization (Campopiano et al., 2020). In organizations where this type of view reigns supreme, trustful and altruistic relationships are seen as plentiful where high involvement and collectivism at all organizational levels is the norm. Agency theory, however, applies more directly to the economic model of man, in which an assumption is made that an agent opportunistically maximizes his wealth (Fama, 1980). These two theories come into play when studying and reading about performance management and how managers and/or employees view it within an organization. For example, a strong movement over the last few decades has been implied to exist that involves the workforce in quality and productivity improvement programs on the basis that shared "ownership" is more likely to lead to better results (McKee, 2003).

When comparing these two theories against different performance management measures, Schillemans (2008) and Hernandez (2012) found some specific critical contrasts. In organizations that value a stewardship-type of view, both managers and employees have shared, overlapping goals in which dialogue is encouraged and transformative, distributive public management is encouraged. However, organizations attempting to follow the older, agency-type of theory will see principals (managers) and agents (employees) bear conflicting and diverging interests, with more transactional and top-down management (Hernandez, 2012). We can link this with the earlier mentioned studies by McKee (2003), in which a trend has existed that sees organizations attempt to follow a stewardship theory in their public management. Torfing and Bentzen also introduced a few eminent concepts surrounding the stewardship model in their recent research (2020). In it, they tie stewardship theory with public sector organizations in a positive correlation as it sees employees, users, and organizations have a beneficial impact (Torfing & Bentzen, 2020). However, the authors still note that certain agency model elements are still needed to amass the overall success of this (Torfing & Bentzen, 2020). The agency vs. stewardship theory debates brings forward an interesting conversation into how validation could potentially both impact and be impacted by each, and how employees and managers respond to it (whether it be in public or private organizations).

In recent times, too, we have observed alternatives to strict PMM systems in organizations, whether public or private. One such substitute is 360° feedback, which can be represented as an assessment tool wherein management teams gather different types of information from workplace sources on employee behavior and performance in addition to employee self-assessment (Hussain *et al.*, 2022). According to Sarantakos (2012), the evaluation process may automatically generate different data that can be transformed and presented in a way that enables the organizations' management teams to create a development strategy and employees to observe potential growth and advancement opportunities. Individual workers may even have chances to hold discussions with peers who would not present themselves if anonymous talks were not available (Shafer, 2005). Some clear contrasts can be

seen in this type of feedback system when compared to the standard PMM tools. For example, in the 360° feedback systems workers are given full anonymity in participation while the traditional reviews in PMM systems are performed on a one-on-one basis, typically between a manager and employee. This anonymity can serve as a critical benefit by encouraging more open feedback from colleagues that would usually feel hesitant otherwise to be fully transparent (Brett and Atwater, 2001). However, typical HR experts will be inclined to prefer PMM systems when dealing with monetary benefits such as a raise or bonuses. In this sense, 360° feedback systems may create issues by fostering a negative workplace environment. Finally, the scope of 360° feedback can be seen as one assessing “human”, soft skills like teamwork, communication, leadership abilities, and more that can be seen daily. By assessing these different alternatives to the traditional PMM systems, managers and employees can better understand how the PMM systems in place can be retooled and adjusted to mirror the human aspects of these alternative tools where emotional validation may be lessened and more prioritized.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Before deciding on the specific case study and type of interview we were going to perform, an emphasis was made on understanding different methodologies. There are several ways of defining research methodology, with one such way being as a strategy, tool, or resource used by a researcher to gather and analyze data while utilizing different statistical instruments (Yin, 2018). This method, intuitively, is divided into two differing types: qualitative and quantitative. The first type of method will see authors and researchers shift toward an approach that attempts to obtain data from a quality standpoint, including structured literature reviews and non-standardized, in-depth interviews in terms of data collection. On the other hand, a quantitative approach will rely harder on the distribution of a variety of questionnaires and surveys among samples as the goal is to ultimately procure data in the form of numbers while searching for causal explanations (Voss, 2002). In this project, we will more specifically attempt to follow a qualitative approach in which a spotlight is placed on the perception and perspectives of individuals. We also select to utilize a case study approach as the research method since the ultimate aim was to delve deeper into the topic of emotional invalidation when dealing with different managerial tools used in organizations. By following the methods of Yin (2018), we see that using an open-ended, problem-focused interview nature (as opposed to something such as a one-way interview) in our research allows for key respondents to be asked about specific facts and opinions on certain events. Keeping this in mind, we structured interviews to follow as such, while also including different orientative questions at the end of interviews.

Along with knowing which research methodology was going to be performed, a choice had to be made between targeting a public or private institution. There have been several studies centered on performance measurement and management in private institutions and industries, including the banking sector (Hussain, 2021) and private NPOs that operate in the public domain (Suykens et al., 2021). For this specific case study, however, we have opted to focus on analyzing, interviewing, and studying researchers that are part of a public institution, more specifically, a public university located in the Catalunya region. Several factors were considered in deciding whether to investigate a public or private organization. First, private sector organizations are often characterized by constant external changes in conditions, including mergers and acquisitions (M&As), market competition, and purpose (almost always being profit-making motives), as well as by internal changes, related essentially to changes in ownership. Public sector institutions, on the other hand, are subject to less dramatic changes, ensuring less overall turmoil (both within the organization and outside of it), more opportunities for change, and even the possibility of a more rigorous selection of KPIs as the spotlight shifts into macro performance. Moreover, several researchers report that there is an increased chance of a strategic plan being used in organizations in the public sector to help clarify their strategy and a more concerted effort to communicate with employees about the need to change specific behaviors toward the realization of specific desired outcomes (Steiner, 1997; Coda, 1998; Poister and Streib, 1999; Bryson, 2004; Moynihan and Landuyt, 2009). It is important to note, as well, that while public sector organizations (such as university

institutions) do not experience ownership volatility in the same way as private sector firms do, they are often faced with dealing with what some may refer to as ‘machine bureaucracies’ (a list that includes municipalities, county governments, state agencies, and other governmental bodies) (Angiola et al., 2017). This is furthered by the actuality of government tiers seeing elections occur every other year, bringing upon a multitude of political agendas and objectives that will most likely be attempted to be inserted into these universities (Johnston, 2008). In Catalonia (Spain) specifically, regional elections are overseen and take place every four years, with the last one occurring in 2021 with all 135 seats in Parliament being up for election.

With this in mind, a connection between PMM systems and emotional invalidation in a public organization becomes more intriguing, as managers in these types of situations are more often put in a position where they must consider multiple perspectives and undergo pressure from several bodies in both governmental and non-governmental bureaucracies. A working assumption made in this case study is that managers in different Catalonian public universities are aware of these pressures and consider them when implementing PMM tools, thus making them exceptionally proficient at listening and understanding the different influences in existence. Notwithstanding, employees and workers in these public organizations are not fully inversed in the decision-making processes and design of the PMM systems in the workplace. This can therefore bring about many long-term deficiencies and bring down employee morale (Rodríguez-Labajos *et al.*, 2018).

When justifying the selection of categorically studying our large research institution in the Catalunya region, some specific reasons were in place. These included, but were not limited to:

- It served as a representative case of a common organization, in both the public sector and university institutions.
- It served as a common case as opposed to an outlier and/or rare case. In turn, this allowed for comparison between representatives and an improvement in the reliability of analysis and results. Furthermore, this made the sampling easier to compare and contrast with other organizations and cases (no matter the industry). Another advantage was seen by this granting a possibility of replicating previous cases and extending current theories.
- It served as a convenient selection basis as it was expedient for data collection purposes taking into consideration the location and facilities involved in this study. Additionally, the accessibility of certain documents and metrics allowed for an easier load into the purpose of this research.
- It correlated with one of the main goals of this study, with this being finding a performance assessment system for public organizations that ultimately help validate employees’ emotions and help foster long-term positive effects.

Furthermore, in the table below several universities in Spain are compared. Having seen these similarities in place, it was decided that the data supported our earlier justifications and

could work as a case study for this topic. One major observation from this table is the enormous amount involved in the budget of several Spanish universities (both private and public) coupled with their student population. This only help highlight the severity and importance of the impact a PMM system design can have on an institution.

	Governing Body	Public or Private?	Student Population (2021)	Accredited by?	Budget
Universitat de Barcelona	Dean's Office Faculty Board Committees Coordination committees (Master's degrees) Academic committees (Doctoral studies)	Public	90,644	AQU	€381.1m
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	University Senate, Board of Trustees, Board of Governors	Public	17,600	AQU	€150.5m
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	University Assembly, The Board of Governors, and The Social Board	Public	30,465	ANECA	€334.4m
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	Academic Board, Faculty Board, Senate, etc.	Public	43,175	AQU	€321.5m

Table 2. Comparison of Universities in Spain

Source: Universitat de Barcelona, UPF, UAM, and UAB's official records

For some background and context into the industry and institutions chosen for this case study, a few notable statistics are compiled. Currently holding more than 106 departments and over 5,000 researchers (full-time), most research groups are recognized and supported by the Government of Catalonia. A significant amount of research grants is given to several departments each year (with this funding being at times slightly tied to metrics such as PMM systems). In 2021 alone, a significant amount of grants (over 60 million euros)

was given. This helps highlight the placement of the university in terms of public universities nationally and as an academic institution worldwide. It is also important to note the impact and effect performance evaluation systems can have in the current Spanish university system. With its current setup, these evaluations have massive ramifications and consequences on remuneration and factors related to promotions (such as the current Docentia Program). It can be seen, then, how the PMM system set in place has an overall purpose of either rewarding or penalizing different employees in the organizations. To help illustrate this point, it can be helpful to review ANECA's website and how they describe the different phases and evaluation bodies of the Docentia Program. Specifically, as part of Phase IV it mentions:

“Once the design has been fully implemented and the monitoring phase has been successfully completed, the universities will be able to apply for certification of their evaluation procedures” (ANECA)

and

“...This commission will have among its functions that of periodically reviewing the model and the framework procedure established to apply the necessary improvements derived from the implementation of the model, and respond to the demands of the agents involved” (ANECA).

As the researchers and workers in this type of organization witness and are part of a specific type of industry where certain effects (both mental and physical) may arise, it gave better leeway as to why certain methodologies tackle the topic from a more personal perspective may be more effective.

Once our case study organization was chosen and studied, the interviews followed and took place. Multiple interviews were performed with different researchers in the departments at the public university chosen during the Spring of 2022 (more specifically the months of May and June). This study also makes use of qualitative data from an ongoing past study. All interviews were fully performed in Spanish, before being translated into English post-interview using different devices. Each participant initially agreed to any reports that were used to evaluate them (such as student evaluations, publications, and more). The validity and usefulness of these for this study was determined by whether or not the Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU) and La Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA) accepted them. Furthermore, the chosen organization for this case study currently operates as a public university (as mentioned previously) in the Catalonian public sector, therefore fitting into the type of selection needed for this case study and giving us a convenient sample to ensure access. Each employee is currently evaluated by a specific performance measurement system that has been in place for several years. As one of our goals was to focus on the perception and experiences of this specific sample (which can be characterized as the employees of a local Spanish academic organization), we decided to tackle this case study from a qualitative perspective rather than a quantitative one. Each employee participant in this study was tenured anywhere from one to ten years and served in different departments (both as teachers and researchers). Concerning PMM systems, each participant was, in most cases, familiar with the tools and design throughout their time in the organization.

Systems were set in place to pseudonymize interviewees and ensure full anonymity and disclosure of privacy.

As mentioned previously, the data gathering process was manually performed through semi-structured, focus-based interviews as well as other sources of evidence using a behavioral perspective. We decided to choose two different interviewees that currently serve as scholars in the scientific and marketing departments at the public organization of this case study. Scholars, in this case, are defined as any workers involved in the department including (but not limited to) researchers, academics, lab technicians, and more. During the interview process with each researcher, we were careful to ensure we never stated we were discussing emotional invalidation in particular but did not interfere if it did come up. Going along with this, a carefully designed consent form was previously sent out to each potential interviewee with the necessary information and precautions needed to partake in this process. However, we were careful not to include any mentions of the word “invalidation” throughout the form to not make the potential participants aware of the ultimate aim of this research until after the process was finished. In this consent form, essential information such as the background of the project, why we were interested in studying it, what the research process would look like, and the volunteers’ rights was included. A preset number of questions were additionally prepared for each interview to try and get a few specific topics to be discussed, but no definite question would be forcefully asked if the interview environment did not call for it. Furthermore, the interview process was designed to be one allowing for the researchers to calmly participate in conversations with the interviewers to learn more about the topic of invalidation in performance management.

Interviews were conducted by both Dr. Ryan Armstrong (supervisor) and Sean Cook (author of this TFM), either individually or in tandem. Questions in this interview process ranged from basic ones (such as asking the participants about the main information of what their jobs entail and some information on their background) to more advanced questions as the interview progressed (i.e., attempting to see the level of their involvement in the design of PMM systems in the organization or existence of emotional neglect in the PMM design timeline). Each interview lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour, depending on how the interviewer felt the procedure was going along and if any mid-interview adjustments had to be made. The questioning process was also completed in a way that prioritized an open-ended interview nature (as opposed to a one-way interview) as it allowed for key respondents to be asked about specific facts and opinions on certain events (Yin, 2018). After the completion of each interview, we transcribed the data from these using technology such as HappyScribe and Atlas.ti to complete further analysis and study what had been learned throughout this process. Each interviewee was given full disclosure before taking part in the process of what would be happening with this data, as well as what their rights were.

The process of this case study incorporated both primary and secondary data. In terms of the primary data gathered in this research, we include the interviews conducted and transcribed. Meanwhile, the secondary data included documents given to us by interviewees to have a full and better understanding of the PMM systems in place and how employees are

currently evaluated. Utilizing both types of data allowed for time and cost-effectiveness, while also granting for a breadth and depth of data that otherwise would not exist.

In the weeks leading up to the interviews, however, it was found that perhaps not enough participants were either available or willing to participate in this case study. Although the interviews in place still served as greatly useful and important, it was decided that the methodology used in this case study had to be slightly adjusted to achieve better results. Therefore, the completed interviews were going to ultimately serve only as part of the overall case study and methodology. To supplement these interviews, advanced literature reviews for news articles involving the overall themes of this research (emotional invalidation and performance measurement systems) and available data were also going to be heavily examined. In terms of the articles, several specifications were made in place to ensure the correct and most useful information was being analyzed. This included only reviewing articles coming out in the past five years, specifying reports that included definitive keywords (such as “invalidation”, “mental health”, and “performance management”), and more. An initial compilation of articles was found before undergoing targeted needs to shorten the number of readings analyzed. Once these different articles were chosen, a complex analysis on “Atlas.ti” followed. This encompassed different coding to ensure the right information was being extracted, as well as a comparison with what the previous interviews were giving us in terms of common findings. Such codes included invalidation levels of specific events, common flaws in the design of PMM systems in organizations, and more. It was decided that by choosing to follow this methodology instead of simply relying on a few, although very valuable, interviews that better results would follow. As such, this gave us multiple cases to analyze instead of just a singular case.

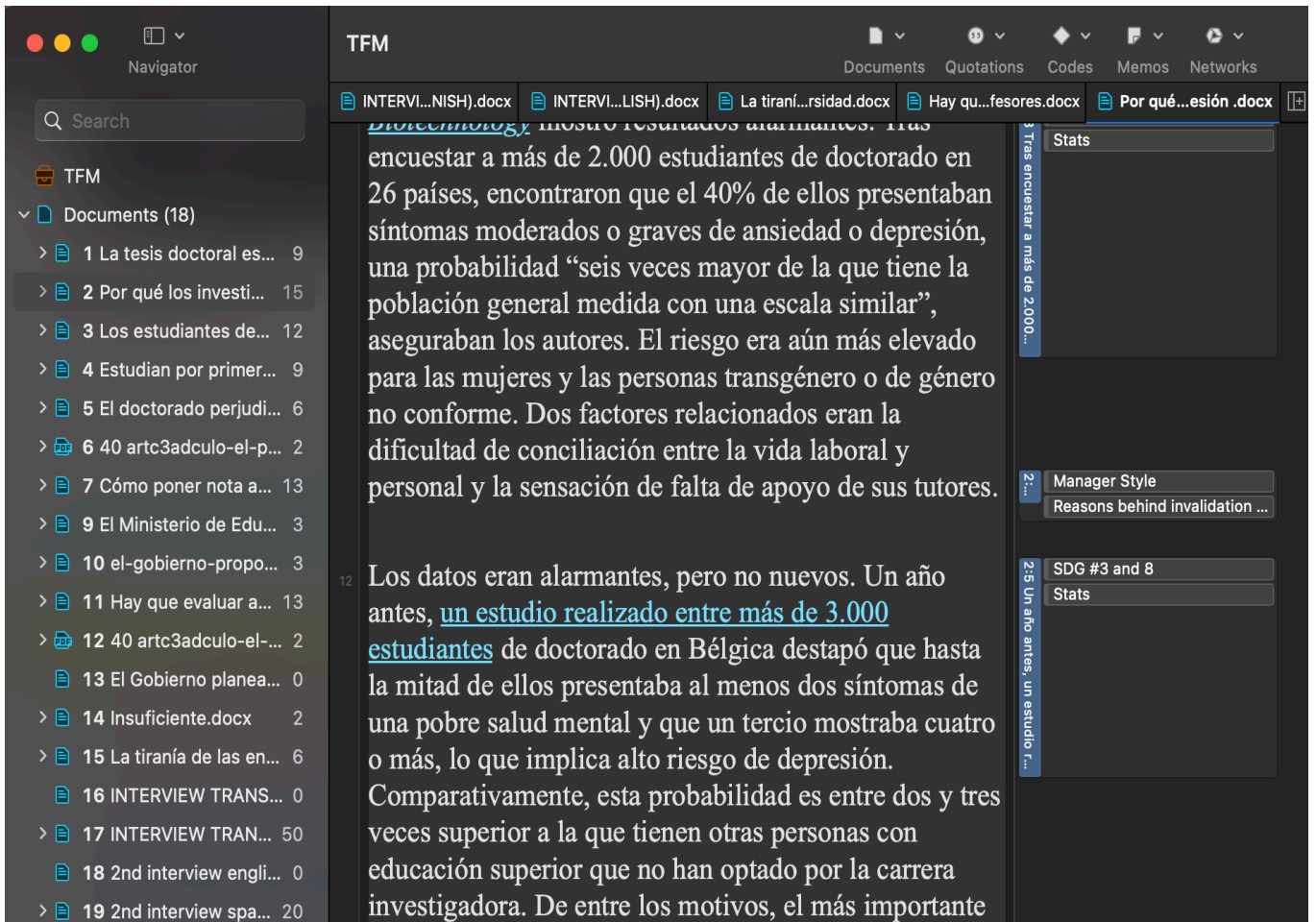


Figure 1. Example of Atlas.ti being utilized for the methodology
Source: Own elaboration

As we placed a focus on public organizations for the research in this case study, we also wanted to study previous research on how PMM system designs may differ between different public and private organizations. Boland and Fowler (2000) found in their research that performance measurement systems in higher education could be more condensed as inputs and outputs. The inputs are described as the hours spent by academics and students transformed into an output related to the different fundamental missions of universities, which are then further transformed into outcomes (Boland and Fowler, 2000). This perspective was considered during this case study, as it was noteworthy to see if this applied to a Spanish public organization in the Catalanian sector.

Furthermore, one of the main focuses of this case study was also to attempt and find any linkage between these findings towards the two United Nations Sustainable Development Goals mentioned before (mental health and decent work). In the figure provided below, each of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals is shown. As mentioned in the introduction, we have specifically chosen the third and eighth goals as a point of focus to ultimately link with this project and interviews. Starting with the third goal, the United Nations describes it as “Good Health” effectively meaning the promotion of healthy lifestyles worldwide, in addition

to putting forward preventive measures and accessible modern healthcare for everyone. With mental health being an increasing priority point for modern workers in public organizations, it can be thought that being able to positively and effectively validate employees' feelings (especially through the design of PMM systems) can be a step in the right direction in terms of this third goal. The United Nations, meanwhile, helps explain the eighth Sustainable Development Goal as one promoting financial progress as the creation of efficient jobs that don't hurt the environment (UN). Furthermore, an emphasis is put on the protection of labor rights and a working environment wherein every worker can get the benefits of innovation and entrepreneurship. Again, by studying the perspective of invalidation in the work environment, we can see how potentially promoting the existence of emotional validation in the workplace can help make strides in this eighth goal by bettering the work environment and helping the long-term strength of labor rights. Although no specific questions about each SDG goal were asked during our interviews, we still attempted to find any linkages between their answers to invalidation questions and these goals.

4. RESULTS/FINDINGS

Throughout our analysis of different news reports and our interviews, we uncovered and observed several results of note. Although several of these findings can be touched on from different perspectives, we decided to separate them into three different categories:

1. Ways current PMM systems invalidate
2. Alternative and coping strategies
3. Outcomes of invalidation

The graph below shows each category along with some of its main findings, with the subpoints expanding on each of the three subcategories

Characteristics of Results

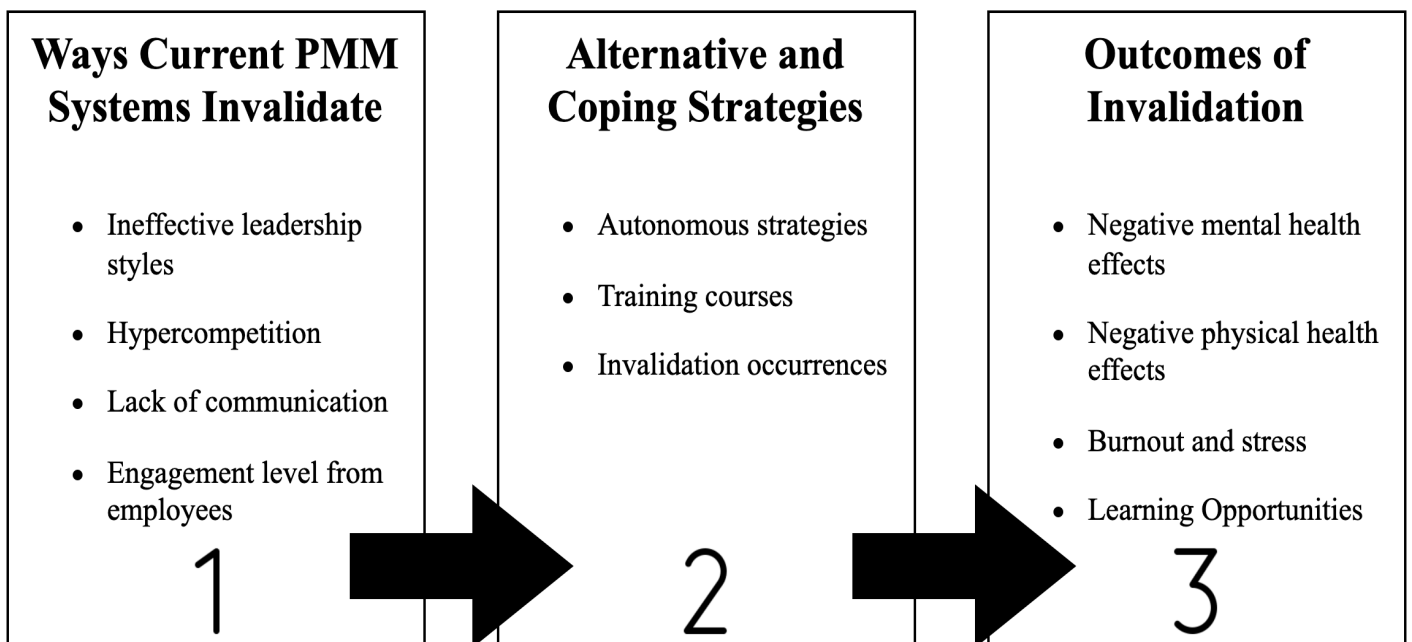


Figure 2. List of common characteristics from methodology
Source: Own elaboration

Characteristics and ways current PMM systems invalidate

The first category we placed a priority in was analyzing and presenting the different common characteristics of PMM systems in organizations, as well as how these systems commonly invalidate workers in their design. An observation of note was the topic of leadership when evaluating PMM systems and searching for invalidation instances. For example, leadership styles (or lack of in some instances) were seen to have a notable impact on the success (or failure) of some systems. As explained in a 2018 paper on the impact of performance measurement systems on the quality of working life (QWL), performance measurement systems must be viewed from a leadership perspective to ensure a better chance for success (Rantanen *et al.*, 2008). This was mirrored in several of our findings as well. Helping illustrate this, in the 2020 article “Por qué los investigadores muestran síntomas de ansiedad o depresión” (“Why researchers show symptoms of anxiety or depression”), a researcher is quoted as explaining poor PMM systems and a focus on the wrong set of values leads to poor leadership behaviors over time. More specifically, the researcher (Fernando Maestre) explains:

“[It] gives rise to hyper-competitive environments, even within the same group. I see bosses who think of doctoral students more as a workforce than as people in training” (Jesús Méndez González, 2020).

and

“It is a conflict of intersecting interests with a lot of outward-facing hypocrisy, even acknowledging that the system tends to force that situation” (Jesús Méndez González, 2020).

Hypercompetitiveness in the workplace and fierce competition between employees seemed to be a common factor throughout our review, as well as a lack of leadership styles that adequately allow managers to evaluate and validate the workers. This was something also seen in the earlier readings (D’Aveni, 1996; Porter, 1996). In the interview with one of the researchers, similar views were also described. A researcher spent considerable time emphasizing how the leadership style of their current manager helped ease her current position and considerably lessen adverse effects (such as burnout and stress). Some of the specific leadership qualities traits described by the interviewee were confidence and being able to delegate certain jobs and projects. An interviewee also brought upon an interesting concept of what they described as “horizontal” leadership. In this type of leadership, the manager is described as prioritizing collaborative factors (i.e., asking employees how strategies can be best developed to show certain reports) and more. Something that made this concept intriguing was that a comparison would be made later on where the researcher admitted they performed better under this type of leader than with someone that served more as an authoritative, non-communicative type of figure. In another interview performed, we noticed the researcher conclude that the specific leadership style of their department manager (in their case, a positive one) was heavily linked with the lack of stress seen in recent months from these processes. In a slightly related anecdote, one of the interviewees also spent considerable time showing differences between the academic, public industry (such as our chosen case study example), and private institutions.

One key difference, the interviewee explained, was the contribution they felt they genuinely make in the academic industry (ultimately giving credence to several validation events in the workplace). Furthermore, the researcher described how they can view the reward system from evaluations, saying certain organizational policies tend to put certain issues at a micro level to make the results matter less. This mirrored many similar views from other interviews and articles in which both political and informal issues consistently help hinder the effectiveness of PMM systems.

In our review and analysis of our discoveries, we were also able to find several common flaws within the PMM and evaluation systems put in place. The aforementioned existence of hypercompetitiveness in organizations was seen as a common negative part of different PMM system designs, ultimately creating toxic work environments and helping contribute to the invalidation of workers. Lack of communication was also a common denominator in literature reviews and current articles. As argued by Ukko in their 2008 paper, the role of proper and constant communication in organizations must be emphasized to gain any positive aspects of PMM systems (Rantanen et al., 2008). However, a lack of communication was also a present factor in many organizations, continuously leading to employees feeling as if they were not able to be understood or heard (a clear sign of invalidation in the workplace) and bringing upon unhealthy long-term effects. Another common pitfall observed in PMM system designs within these public institutes was surrounding the topic of how exactly quality was measured. More specifically, doubts were given regarding how one could objectively measure the quality of teaching staff in a way that is unanimously agreed upon by teachers. J.A. Unión, in his 2022 article, explains that if this does not occur the evaluation systems simply become another bureaucracy annoyance in a sea of paperwork to add on to existing stress. In this same article, a University of Barcelona professor argues that individual evaluations with specific incentives naturally do not help improve the current system, while also advocating for a specific type of evaluation system. Specifically, the professor says

"Nowhere in the world has a teacher evaluation based on meritocracy and oriented to some kind of salary increase worked well, because this, after a while, is assimilated as part of his salary and does not constitute any incentive to improve" (J.A. Unión, 2022).

Moreover, the professor defends that an evaluation designed for administrators (a common denominator in these complaints) committing themselves to the institution center might bring about better results, especially if it is through financial aid which can be utilized for research and innovation. An additional flaw explained in this article was how PMM systems in public universities and their institutions are planned to effectively undermine collective bargaining as a way to agree on wages. Another article published on El País surveying the effectiveness of evaluating teachers also brought light to additional flaws in PMM systems. One such flaw dealt with motivation and how current PMM systems in place value whole groups in the same way, even if specific colleagues perform with great professionalism and dedication. As these people are not able to see their work recognized by society, it serves as a demotivation (instead of a motivating factor), conclusively hurting the organizations in the long run.

Additionally, a topic that came up with common occurrence in the reviewing of these articles and literature review surrounded the importance of the involvement and engagement level of employees and workers in the PMM system design. In several of the articles reviewed, in addition to information gathered from the performed interviews, it was seen there was a positive correlation between the level of involvement by employees and the ultimate success in the PMM systems within organizations. Furthermore, occurrences of emotional invalidation by management to workers tended to be lessened with the more chances they got to have their voices heard in this design process. Additionally, there was the voluntary aspect of participation in these kinds of evaluations. In the 2022 article by “Cómo poner nota a los profesores” (“How to Grade Teachers”) by J. A. Aunión, for example, a point is raised wherein the author explained one popular proposal for evaluating teachers was a voluntary evaluation system in general, with the only mandatory facets involving access to certain positions (i.e., director). Specifically,

“within the 24 proposals that it presented to start debating the reform of the teaching career, had a little of everything, with a voluntary evaluation system in general and only mandatory to access to certain positions (for a director, for example, which also carries a salary supplement and has been generalized for decades).” (J.A. Unión, 2022).

and

“The most immediate precedent, the evaluation program of the teaching function of the Government of Asturias, is more like a bureaucratic process that must be overcome every year to obtain an extra salary than a model that promotes the continuous effort of teachers, according to the CC OO teaching federation in the region. It consists of the directors of public centers assessing each course, through a form, the teachers who volunteer to do so” (J.A. Unión, 2022).

Therefore, it can be assumed that with a voluntary, anonymous type of evaluation methods and PMM systems, employees in such public organizations will be more willing to feel validated and not suffer from negative consequences such as burnout and stress.

An interesting point raised in one of the interviews was the importance of human interaction in the subject of evaluations, specifically in terms of asynchronous communication. This was also mirrored in Aguinis and Burji-Tian’s paper (2021) which highlighted the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had in today’s workplace in terms of emotional validation and human interactions. The researcher specifically pointed out examples of how in-person meetings critically improved the workplace (by “humanizing them”) and even were able to develop support networks. This, again, was a point of concern in several of the articles reviewed that studied how the pandemic in recent years had almost dehumanized employees and made them develop a variety of unfavorable health effects.

We were also able to identify a few key reasons behind invalidations in the workplace of these organizations. As a prime example, a constant in the negative consequences of PMM systems was the invalidation of organizations’ employees through many problems such as constant pressure, loss of self-confidence, and insomnia due to worry. These traits all tended

to trace back to the design of the PMM systems that ignored and invalidated employees' feelings (in all six levels according to Linehan). Uncertainty, insecurity, and feelings of being undervalued (sometimes a level 5 invalidation) were also frequent in the doctorates' feelings of why PMM systems could be observed as failures. Feelings that the jobs and PMM tools were designed in a way members of the organizations were at times very solitary and individual also seemed to contribute to unhappiness in the workplace.

Alternative and coping strategies

We also uncovered suggestions for some alternatives to PMM systems in our interviews and different article reviews. One such proposition was a convoluted PMM method that included a variety of different factors (some of which were previously mentioned), such as a voluntary evaluation system overall and making it mandatory only to access certain positions (i.e., jobs with salary supplements that have been generalized for decades). Another suggestion, according to a public institute teacher in J.A. Aunión's article, is to have an evaluation system based on many sources such as the opinion of students, non-biased classroom observations, and more instead of just one manager/director (Aunión, 2022). This confirms several other assumptions seen throughout this case study, wherein validation is improved when you involve more duties to others instead of letting one individual manager handle the entirety of the evaluation responsibilities. A 2018 article by Ignatius Zafra studying the Spanish Ministry of Education's plans to overhaul changes in the teaching systems also highlights a few different alternatives. One such possibility is an evaluation system that promotes quality instead of specific measurements (Zafra, 2018). For example, these types of systems would include self-assessment reports, the participation of different governing bodies, and more with the ultimate goal being one that rewards the improvement of its workers and considers the involvement of teachers. Having such a system would allow administrators and organizations to better know where to focus efforts of permanent training, among other things.

Another alternative suggested was that instead of even having a PMM system that largely ignores the involvement of its targets, organizations should simply offer free training courses that better the development and long-term targets of both the individuals and the organizations. In addition, some suggested that although the current PMM systems may be adequate, it is also imperative to evaluate the efforts of those who are doing the evaluations (such as the schools and educational systems) to have the same rules and demands apply to everyone. However, a recent article in *El Diario* by Ricardo Chiva Gomez and Jacob Guinot helped analyze some of the pitfalls and negative consequences that particular PMM system alternatives have. For example, one such distinction had to do with the topic of who should be doing the evaluation. While many proponents of a change in the system argue perhaps someone like the students, instead of a manager, evaluates teachers then it should bring better results and less pressure on the teachers. However, this has some dangerous consequences. The authors explain

"In short, the universities that are encouraging and relying on student assessment are penalizing good teachers and supporting those who simply make it easy or fun for them" (Poropat, 2014).

and

"all the so-called educational innovation comes into this fun, full of new technologies that do nothing more than entertain and distract the student body; who only wants to be happy and content, but probably less critical and more ignorant" (Chiva Gomez and Guinot, 2022).

The article goes on to infer that it is reasonable to assume students with higher grades because of easier teaching (and therefore arguably "worse" teaching) may be more inclined to give out a better evaluation versus a teacher that does a better performance, albeit with worse grading.

On a similar note, one of the researchers we interviewed also touched on setting their performance indicators, meaning it was not associated with any specific instrument or institutional mechanism (they would, later on, compare it to an "underground" sort of indicator). The interviewee acknowledged that being able to set their performance indexes more often than not makes them more disciplined, committed, and even passionate (which traditional PMM systems often neglect in the form of invalidations). These evaluations could even be performed through something like informal small chats, the interviewee mentioned.

Something of note during our interviews was also occasions of validation in the workplace, something that was not fully expected. One researcher explained the exercise made her feel well (something Marsha Linehan points out as an example of validation), as she had to design and follow her quality indicators. As explained earlier, the leadership type of managers also resulted in researchers feeling validated occasionally when working on PMM system designs, specifically when they were able to voice their own opinion and handle a considerable responsibility in the design of indicators and the system design. Additional validation instances were observed when the employees and researchers felt their work was significant and impactful, as opposed to routine and without a cause. Again, this was something that could be noticed in previous readings mentioned (Rantanen et al., 2008; Groen, Wouters, and Wilderom, 2012). A specific example mentioned by a researcher showcasing this was students showcasing sincere interests in the researchers' work and studies. Furthermore, to help illustrate this we made it a point to highlight certain buzz words that are typically associated with validation (or invalidation) events in the workplace and which level they could potentially represent in Linehan's six levels of validation (i.e., "showing interest", "it made me feel good", "I wasn't being heard", etc.). This was advantageous in studying whether and how our interviews contrasted with the reading and studies analysis. Throughout the analysis of our interviews, we utilized annotation and coding in Atlas.ti (pictured in the figure below) to attempt and identify the different levels of validation in interviews, both in the interviewees' past work history and in the actual interview itself. It was found that levels one through three of Linehan's validation theories tended to exist more in contrast to levels four through six. This may have occurred due to the first three validation levels being easier to arise (i.e., researchers simply acknowledging

they are being listened to) as opposed to the more complicated latter levels (i.e., showing radical genuineness).

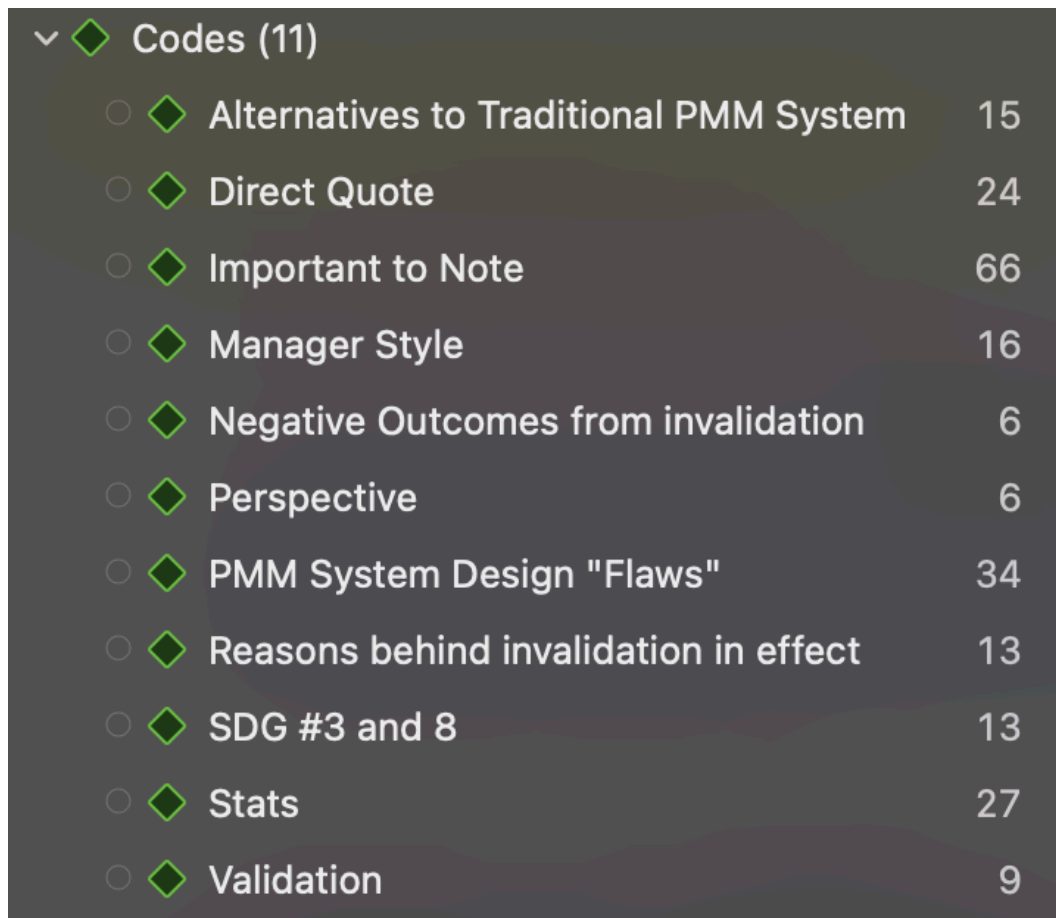


Figure 3. Example of some of the coding utilized in Atlas.ti to analyze the interviews and articles
Source: Own elaboration

Outcomes of invalidation

As expected, a variety of outcomes (more often negative than positive) of invalidation were seen throughout this case study. During the reviews, multiple occurrences were found of current doctorates and workers in Spanish public universities suffering from a deterred mental well-being from work environment circumstances (in instances including the existence of invalidation). For example, in an article titled “La tesis doctoral es perjudicial para la salud mental” (“The Doctoral Thesis is Harmful to Mental Health”) by Pablo Barrecheguren (2018) the author referred to a study performed by the University of Ghent (Belgium) that found importance in emphasizing the value of improving mental well-being for doctorate students. Similarly, in a feature by Jesús Méndez González (2020), the author examined that deteriorating mental health care was in place, specifically for those on the younger side. This, along with other similar findings in other reports, tied in with the third United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of needing to promote healthy well-being (both physical and

mental) to have a proper positive working environment. We also attempted to link results from our interviews with researchers to one of the two goals. Mirroring what was discovered in the articles, we found researchers alluded to also portraying unhealthy effects (both emotional and physical) at times when dealing with this topic, emphasizing that a lot of their work ends up resulting in these. One researcher went on to try and link it with performance, wondering if it had to do with employees and researchers locating themselves mentally and physically at a certain point of time and space (especially when having to deal with different obligations and goals). Another interviewee also highlighted the amount of stress seen at times when dealing with PMM designs.

One common finding from reviewing past articles and from the interviews was also the existence of “burnout” as a direct result of poor performance management measurement systems and invalidation of employees’ perspectives in its design. Burnout, as defined by Christina Maslach in a 2001 study, is a “prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (Maslach et al., 2001). In a featured article on El País asking whether teachers should be evaluated or not, Susana Terrazas is quoted as explaining that because public university teachers are requested to do so much, yet have to undergo evaluations that aren’t transparent and realistic, they ultimately lead to burnout. She emphasizes

“It is not an exaggeration when we mention that teachers are undervalued in society and are potential victims of burnout due to the work they do” (El País, 2019).

and

“...not only an evaluation of the teacher is necessary, let's evaluate the efforts of the schools, let's evaluate the same educational system that surprises us every year with novelties that seem the same but with other names” (El País, 2019).

This shows a need to allow workers to exercise their creativity and not overwhelm them with bureaucratic-like documents as otherwise, the chances of employees in the workplace being severely limited by negative health effects are heightened. Similarly, high workload and working hours, as well as not having an employment contract, seemed to lead workers in this industry to ultimately burn out at work. The findings from these articles helped show evidence that this problem not only is a point of concern but also specifically exists in the Spanish nation. This, again, mirrored some of the initial readings and studies mentioned before (Li, 2015; Franco-Santos and Otley, 2018) where scholars stressed that increases in managers’ perceived pressure from PMM and evaluation use have constantly led to negative effects on its employees.

Another prevailing discovery in the reviewing of PMM systems and invalidation of public university workers was the existence of the negative effect on mental health in employees at times (but not always). As mentioned earlier, current PMM systems designs seemed to invalidate workers' feelings at times, with one such example being the study performed by the University of Ghent. Of the 3,659 doctorate workers, 41% admitted they were under constant pressure, 30% were depressed, and 16% felt useless (Barecheguren 2018). This

seemed to be a constant theme in the reviewing of the articles and interviews, wherein workers and employees ultimately succumbed to pressure and did not feel as if their voices had been heard. A toxic work environment also was seen as a constant problem in these cases.

In addition to the personal outcomes seen, linkages could be inferred and furthered from these into bigger organizational outcomes. The effect of employees under stress, burnout, and constant pressure has been seen in the past to lead to a worse organizational output as the workplace environment causes them to perform to the best of their abilities. An invalidating workplace, more so, will extend these consequences and lead to long-term deficiencies. By having a PMM design in place that has an adequate amount of validation and involvement from employees, firms will tend to see greater and more positive permanent results. Furthermore, it was seen at times that invalidation incidents led to certain learning opportunities for both managers and employees. For example, in several of the articles reviewed workers in different organizations would gradually learn how to deal with and even overcome negative effects as a result of invalidation. This serves as an important consideration, which was that invalidation sometimes may pose learning challenges to workers.

5. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this case study, several observations and common findings were recognized. One such discovery was the existence of different tools and environments in organizations that lead to emotional invalidation. More specifically, the use of PMM tools in companies has proved to neglect the emotional aspects of workers, eventually leading to lower and worse performance by the employees in addition to organizational output. Not only does this include individual negative consequences such as burnout, stress, and depression, but also overall long-term defects. A number of these impacts can be traced back to the invalidation of workers (based on Marsha Linehan's six levels) and further uncovered how a lack of importance is commonly placed on the emotional invalidation in the workplace during the PMM system designs carries a variety of negative long-term consequences. A literature review was performed to study previous findings and collect common views on the impact of PMM tools in performance management, as well as the analysis of emotional invalidation in the workplace. We posed an overarching research question ("how can organizations specifically address emotional invalidation from performance measurement and management (PMM) systems?") in the methodology section that we attempted to answer throughout this case study. Regarding this question, we were able to observe several results that helped give us some clearer answers. We saw that both managers and employees have critical roles to play and can do a variety of things to avoid pessimistic outcomes persisting from the flawed design of PMM systems. Furthermore, many preset topics and tools (including leadership style and autonomy) exist that help positively address invalidation during the design of PMM systems.

In addressing RQ1, we chose to perform structured interviews with different researchers in a public Catalanian university, in addition to analyzing several news articles and papers from the past five years that addressed various points of interest related to invalidation. Based on the data gathering analysis process, several recommendations to help tackle this issue are provided. These include, but are not limited to, having systems in place that help validate workers' emotions in the workplace, adjusting (or even overriding) the PMM system in public organizations to help fit better the modern world, and more. If certain recommendations are implemented efficiently and positively, aspects of public organizations and their employees could be potentially improved. We also described a few managerial leadership types and characteristics as some that tend to validate workers more often and lead to a better workplace. Some such characteristics include managers giving employees a certain level of autonomy, involving workers in the process of PMM system designs, and erasing workplace environment enhancements that consistently lead to unhealthy health effects (physically and mentally). Developing from this, we also see how this can compare with 2 of the United Nation's SDG goals (#3 and #8 respectively), making it critical to keep this in mind when implementing different systems in the workplace.

Another potential implication derived from the interviews and findings is the connections between invalidation and the agency/stewardship theory debates. While the agency theory is based more on actual management and economic principles, stewardship

theory bases itself on psychology and sociology. From this, we can connect how the results from an invalidation approach differ depending on which type of theory is used in an organization and the outcomes they come to predict. For example, a stewardship-inspired system can lead to validating events if the rights tools are in place. Authors in the past have described this view by comparing the two

“In contrast to agency theory, stewardship theory draws from sociology and psychology to offer an alternate view in which organizational actors see greater long-term utility in other- focused prosocial behavior than in self-serving, short-term opportunistic behavior. Within this paradigm, relationship-centered collaboration within the organization fosters pro-organizational and trustworthy behavior in managers” (Davis *et al.*, 1997; Haskins, *et al.*, 1998).

At times, as seen in our interviews and article findings, this transfers over to managers having the power of validating workers and preventing outcomes, especially during the use and design of PMM systems. Agency-based theory, meanwhile, can also invalidate because of incentives the agents (managers) have in the workplace and more. Overall, these systems and theories designed on one another can be validating or invalidating, which shows it can be complementary or even revisionary to the agency and stewardship view.

There are, however, some limitations in this paper that can be bettered in the future by researchers. Analysis and research could be extended to other professional contexts and sectors (such as private organizations) to better compare PMM systems and invalidation in the workplace. Furthermore, organizations outside of Catalonia and Spain should be studied to observe whether findings are similar or if they differ. As we were not able to capture a considerable number of interviews for the methodology aspect of this case study, there is potential to additionally include different departments and employee levels when performing these. Correspondingly, different filters could be applied in the type of articles reviewed for future studies.

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