

EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF DISMISSAL FOR UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE ON EMPLOYEE MORALE AND WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY

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Abstract: *In this study will examine the impact of dismissal for unsatisfactory performance on employee morale and workplace productivity. The problem with this study is the impact on employees after a company dismisses unsatisfactory performers. The purpose of this study is to give companies an idea of the importance of maintaining employee morale and workplace productivity after a dismissal period. The researcher explored this study through data search and analysis of past cases. The results of the study show that performance dismissal has both positive and negative impacts on employee morale and workplace productivity, and that the negative impacts will be an obstacle to the growth of the business in the future. Businesses must communicate openly, give employees recognition and build new teams to avoid a sustained decline in morale and workplace productivity.*

Keywords: *Dismissal procedure, employee morale, workplace productivity*

Introduction

Dismissal is a sensitive and difficult process for both employers and employees, and dismissal for poor performance is a common but often controversial procedure. In Malaysia, the issue of dismissal is covered and governed by the Industrial Relations Act 1967 and the Employment Act 1955 (Melinda Marie D'Angelus, 2021). Hence, employers need to be aware of and comply with the correct dismissal laws and procedures to ensure that they can fairly protect the rights of both employees and employers and avoid any unnecessary legal disputes. The requirement of the fair dismissal procedure includes that the employers need to have substantial justification to lawfully dismiss an employee (Guru Dhillon). As long as the employers is able to adopt the dismissal procedures based on correct method and comply with the regulations, the employers will be able to fairly and legitimately terminate the employment relationship with the employees. In Malaysia, dismissal due to unsatisfactory performance of an employee is a valid reason, and it is recorded in section 20 of the Industrial Relations Act 1967 under constructive dismissal. But there are several conditions that need to be fulfilled to dismiss for this reason. These conditions include where there is sufficient evidence of underperformance, the employer has given a warning for the underperformer, the employer has provided sufficient opportunity and time for the employee to improve their performance, and the performance of employees has not made any improvement after these actions have been taken (Carissang, 2024).

Not only Malaysia, the rest of the countries also need to address the issue of dismissal of employees due to performance issues according to their respective national policies. According to the information, the United States has a system of employment at will (Smithey, 2024). This system illustrates that in the United States, employees are free to quit their jobs on their own, and employers are able to fire employees at any time for any reason or for no reason at all. This dismissal system provides employers with a great deal of flexibility in managing and dismissing employees, so that employers can easily dismiss employees for poor performance (Kient, 2024). Nonetheless, there are implications for the dismissed employee regardless of the dismissal procedure. However, many organizations tend to neglect the fact that dismissing an employee can also have an impact on employee morale and workplace productivity.

According to the statistics from the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia, the graph in Figure 1 shows the number of employees who were dismissed by their employers in Malaysia from 2014 to 2017. There were 25,197 employees dismissed in 2014, 44,343 in 2015, 37,699 in 2016, and 35,097 in 2017, for a total of 142,336 employees dismissed in those four years. While the graph according to Figure 2 shows the reasons for the dismissal of the case registered in Section 20, Industrial Relations Act 1967, one of the reasons for dismissal was dissatisfaction of performance. Figure 2 demonstrates that the number of employees dismissed due to performance dissatisfaction started to emerge in 2014 and continued through 2018, and that the number of employees dismissed for this reason has remained at a relatively stable level. Not only that, dismissal for performance reasons is also not an uncommon cause in other countries. For example, according to Turner Little's research in 2018, it showed that 1,446 British employees were dismissed for this reason in that year alone. This also shows that dissatisfaction with performance is one of the most common reasons for dismissal.

The information is illustrated by the fact that there are a lot of workers who will be dismissed due to performance issues across the country. This is because chronic underperformance by employees may be wasteful of the organization's resources and time, which ultimately affects the employer's business (Martin & Southey, 2025). As a result, in order to avoid even more serious negative consequences, employers often take the measure of dismissal in order to

improve their business. However, many employers fail to realize that the implementation of this measure may cause problems and negative impacts on the remaining employees. After employer fire an employee, they often overlook the psychological impact of remaining employees, and these psychological impacts would include employees feeling uncomfortable with the performance dismissal measure, resulting in a lack of motivation on the job (Dos Santos, 2022). This psychological impact is likely to have negative consequences on employee morale and workplace productivity.

Not only that, after the company dismisses an employee, the business will be left in a situation where it lacks employees. If replacements cannot be found or hired soon enough, the remaining employees will have to take on more workload, and this also leads to decreased productivity and simultaneously causes the problem of employee fatigue (Vornicova, 2023). The mental illness of these highly stressed employees who are unable to handle the heavy workload will also make the remaining employees think of leaving their jobs. Ultimately, the company will be unproductive due to lack of labor and will decline and lose its competitiveness in the market. There is also a chance that the company will be in legal risk as the dismissed employees may unfairly challenge the company's dismissal decision and eventually sue and take legal action against the company (Dos Santos, 2022). It can be imagined how many employees have been affected by the large number of dismissals that have been implemented across the country. These impacts have caused significant obstacles to the future growth of businesses, making it difficult for them to stand out and succeed in a competitive marketplace.

Discussion

The concept of dismissal in business represents the termination or cancellation of an employment relationship or service contract between an employer and an employee. Companies generally will not dismiss an employee without any cause, so they need to provide and explain a valid reason when dismissing an employee. There are many reasons that can cause employers to dismiss an employee, but in this article the focus will be on unsatisfactory performance. Not only that, the discussion will also focus on how employee morale and workplace productivity are affected when dismissal actions are implemented due to unsatisfactory performance.

First of all, unsatisfactory performance is defined as an employee's behavior or performance that does not meet the expectations or requirements set out in the work plan. Unsatisfactory performance can also be interpreted as an employee's inability to perform the duties that they are performing at the moment, or the output is below the standard required for a given period of time (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). This action can also be described as ineffective performance or underperformance. According to Job Information, there are three types of underperformances, including unsatisfactory work content, which means the quantity and quality of work; the second type is violation of work practices and rules, which includes excessive absenteeism and violation of occupational safety requirements; and the third type is the employee's personal problems, which will be determined according to the performance standards set by the employer. Companies often place a high emphasis on employees' performance, this is because the business operations and team effectiveness can be impacted negatively if there are underperforming employees present in the working environment (Adam Wyatt, 2023). Therefore, realizing the problem and solving it is a crucial and urgent challenge for the company, and this is to avoid the situation from becoming more serious.

In order to make sure the sustainability of companies, the company has adopted the strategy of dismissing underperforming employees, but this strategy has resulted in a considerable impact

on employee morale (Dos Santos, 2022). Employee morale means the employee's perspective, attitude, satisfaction and enthusiasm towards their work while holding a position in or when dealing with the organization. Employee or team morale contributes significantly to the growth of a company, this is because morale represents the overall attitude of the team, how they feel about their work every day and their overall outlook. Morale can also be considered as a measure of an employee's commitment, loyalty, motivation and dedication to the organization. High employee morale makes a significant difference in employee and team engagement and overall efficiency, and improves commercial competitiveness and overall profitability of organizations. As a result, it is important for companies to create a proactive corporate culture and work environment, and measure employee's morale at all times to ensure morale is remaining high (Vreede, 2024).

Then, while the employer decides to dismiss an underperforming employee to minimize the impact of the employee's inefficiency. However, the implementation of the strategy has lowered employee morale and reduced workplace productivity. Productivity is recognized as an indicator of economic performance, allowing companies to know and compare the amount of goods or services produced in the companies with the number of inputs used to produce those goods or services (Energage, 2024). While workplace productivity means how efficiently each employee and team accomplishes their tasks and creates value for the organization to achieve its goals and successes (Friday, 2022). Efficient workplace productivity reduces employee stress because an organized and correct workflow allows employees to complete tasks on time and be more productive, thus increasing employee job satisfaction (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024). This also leads to a significant increase in the profits of the business as efficient productivity reduces the additional costs that the business has to pay. However, workplace productivity can be easily affected by various factors in the work environment, and dismissal measures are one of the major reasons that can affect workplace productivity.

In this study, it is possible to understand the impact on employee morale and workplace performance in terms of employee dismissal due to poor performance in the workplace (Martin & Southey, 2025). The relationship between an employer and an employee begins with a contract of service, and the legal concept known as the employment relationship arises between the parties. Employees are required to work under and comply with specific terms and conditions established by the employer and to complete tasks based on the employer's requirements and set performance standards. Once a contract is signed, it means that the employee has agreed to all the terms of the contract, but not all employees will be able to fully fulfill the terms and achieve the required performance standards. Thus, dismissals for unsatisfactory performance occurs when an employee's contract is terminated because the employee continues to fail to achieve the required performance after receiving adequate support and training from the company. Once the service contract is terminated, the employment relationship between the employer and the employee will end, and the parties are no longer required to fulfill the rights and obligations between them.

Factors Cause Unsatisfactory Performance

The company should also be proactive in understanding what factors employees to perform poorly, and only by realizing the factor can the problem of poor performance be reduced and eliminated. The first factor contributing to poor performance is the lack of proper feedback, and it is the positive provision of feedback that gives employees some understanding of their abilities (Adanlawo et al., 2023). Most of the time, employees usually misunderstand their performance, and this is because they do not get feedback from their superiors after completing

their tasks. As a result, they have the illusion that they are performing well and successfully completing the tasks assigned to them, without realizing that their actual performance is not as good as expected, and there may even be instances of underperformance. In addition, lack of feedback over a long period of time results in employees not having a clear understanding of the performance expectations placed on them by the company, and employees struggle to understand the relevance of their own performance to the organization's goals. Lack of feedback makes it difficult for employees to identify their own shortcomings in their work; thus, they lack a clear perception of the direction and fields in which they need to develop, which ultimately hinders their continuous development and advancement in the workplace (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022). Companies should give some constructive feedback at the right time, not just providing negative comments, but suggesting feasible improvements. Appropriate constructive comments can make employees feel valued by the company and actively help and motivate them to solve any problems (business order).

Then, the second reason for unsatisfactory employee performance is lack of knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills are necessary for employees to be able to succeed in the workplace and are the foundation that can help them accomplish tasks, meet challenges and solve problems. Even if an employee is motivated and performs well, the employee will still not be able to successfully complete their assigned task if the employee does not have the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their duties and work (Adanlawo et al., 2023). Lack of knowledge and skills results in employees have to spend more time and effort to bridge this gap, but the time and effort employees put in is often not enough to achieve the desired goals. This shows how knowledge and skill gaps can cause employees to perform poorly, and this reason indirectly becomes an obstacle for organizations to be more productive, reach their goals and be successful. Therefore, when employers identify gaps in knowledge and skills among their employees, they should provide some appropriate training and support when assigning new jobs in order to help them perform their tasks successfully. The company is forced to adopt dismissal measures in order to prevent the losses of the company from becoming more serious (Collins, 2022).

The third reason for poor employee performance is communication problems within the organization. In a work environment, unclear communication between employees and their superiors and team members leads to employees struggling to receive proper instructions and express their ideas (Ghani et al., 2022). Employees are confused about their roles, responsibilities and goals, which can lead to employees spending too much effort on tasks that are not in their scope of responsibility or that are low priority, therefore affecting their own and the overall team's productivity. In addition, the lack of communication between teams also hinders collaborative relationships between employees. Employees have no way to discuss problems with the team in order to solve problems, which leads to low workplace productivity and serious delays in team projects. Misunderstandings and conflicts also arise between employees due to communication problems. This makes the working environment stressful and eventually employees are not able to commit to their tasks due to emotional problems and stress. Thus, affecting their motivation and work attitude, which has a negative impact on workplace productivity (Trinet Team, 2023).

Impact of Dismissing Unsatisfactory Performance Employee

Following this, the study will focus on the impact of the implementation of dismissal measures on the dismissed employees and the employees who remain. The measure of dismissing an employee based on performance issues aims to avoid a company's productivity or operational

efficiency being hampered by inefficient employees (Fadureni (2025)). So, there is no denying that this measure is a positive strategy for a company, helping it to drive team performance and improve the company's overall competitiveness in the marketplace. However, for the terminated employees, this strategy will only have a significant negative impact on them, while for the remaining employees it may have a positive or negative impact. There will be some degree of psychological impact on the dismissed employees (Velasco, 2024). These psychological effects include depression, anxiety and stress and so on, since unemployment has undermined their self-confidence, which makes them feel depressed. They begin to feel doubtful about their ability to perform their jobs, causing them to lose courage and morale in their new jobs and hindering their advancement in the workplace. The employee also loses their source of income after losing their job, which is a considerable pressure on employees who are supporting their families and repaying their loans, thus creating anxiety.

For the remaining employees, dismissing employees with unsatisfactory performance will have either a positive or negative impact on them. First, on the positive side, employee team morale will improve. When an employer fires an underperforming employee, only the good employees will remain, and the remaining good employees will be able to distribute each other's workloads more evenly without having to carry a larger workload to help the poor performing employee (Dos Santos, 2022). Collaboration among employees is also more efficient because good employees have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and goals. They are motivated and self-directed in completing the tasks assigned to them (Adanlawo et al., 2023), so there are no unexpected situations in which they cannot complete their tasks on time and within the required dates. As a result, dismissing poorly performing employees not only reduces the negative impact on the overall performance of the team, but also significantly improves the morale and motivation of the remaining employees.

When employee motivation and morale increase, workplace productivity also shows a significant increase (Adanlawo et al., 2023). This is because when the work environment does not have employees with unsatisfactory performance, positive employee morale creates a mutually supportive work atmosphere and work environment. The remaining employees are easily able to express their thoughts in this environment and are able to actively discuss solutions and take action when problems arise to ensure that the team performance will not be more seriously affected. Positive morale also creates close relationships between employees, reduces stress at work, increases employee satisfaction with their jobs, and indirectly improves the quality of their work. Finally, high employee morale and high-quality productivity result in a significantly improved workplace productivity for employees, and the overall performance of the team is more effective in helping the organization to achieve its goals and make contributions (Ezeabaogu et al., 2019).

Next, dismissal measures can also have a negative impact on the psychological state of the remaining employees. After seeing or knowing that an employee they have worked with or who has had a voice in the team has been dismissed, the remaining employees become psychologically uncomfortable. This is because the dismissal measure makes them aware of the instability of their current job and they fear that they will also be dismissed from their jobs. Even though the remaining employees know that the reason for dismissal is due to the issue of poor performance, they also worry that they will be dismissed because their performance is not up to the company's expectations as well. As a result, these feelings of worry and anxiety put the remaining employees in a negative psychological state, and the employees will have difficulty engaging in accomplishing their tasks, so engagement will be greatly reduced. These

psychological reactions make the morale of the individual employee, and the team become low (Cornejo, 2023).

The cohesion of the team in a business can also be destroyed after a change in dismissal of employees, leaving the team members disconnected from each other. The low morale of the employees lacks motivation during the working hours, leading them to be unwilling to communicate and discuss with their team members or express any opinions and views after a problem occurs (Ezeabaogu et al., 2019). Therefore, when issues arise during the working period that will affect employee productivity and efficiency, overall workplace productivity will suffer because no employee will be willing to take the initiative to solve the problem. In addition, low morale employees may be absent from work due to lack of motivation and mental health issues. Frequent absenteeism also disrupts an organization's efficient workflow and forces the remaining employees to carry the workload of the dismissed employee while additionally sharing the workload of the absent employee (Fadureni, 2025). Lack of employee numbers and low employee morale have a serious impact on an organization's overall workplace productivity.

Challenge of Dismissing Unsatisfactory Performance Employee

Dismissal measures have certain risks of negatively affecting the morale and workplace productivity of the employees left behind, and companies need to be aware of these challenges in order to avoid more serious developments. The first challenge that organizations should address is the negative psychological impact that dismissals can have on employees after they are implemented. The anxiety and stress that employees can feel about a company firing an employee for employee performance issues arises from a lack of trust in the organization, and they do not believe that the organization will fairly evaluate each employee's performance. It is highly likely that employees will lack trust towards their employer because the employer has not fulfilled the past promises made with the employee (Martinuzzi, 2023). Employers may have made promises with capable employees in the past in order to keep them, but the employer fails to fulfill those promises for a long period of time, leaving the employee feeling cheated and with a negative impression of the employer.

The lack of transparency in the business also makes employees feel excluded from the business, and the lack of transparency in the performance appraisal process conducted by the business also intensifies this perception among employees (Martin & Southey, 2025). Employees may doubt the performance appraisal methods and standards, and lack trust in the fairness and reasonableness of the appraisal. These feelings of insecurity also lead to decreasing employee loyalty and identification with the organization. The lack of trusting relationships in the work environment also leads to a reduced work ethic where employees are motivated to contribute to the organization (Dos Santos, 2022). This work mindset is the reason why it is difficult to improve the morale of the employees and indirectly the productivity of the organization is not improved.

The second challenge for businesses is to ensure that fair dismissal procedures apply. Businesses are likely to take the legal risk of unfair dismissal when dismissing an employee for performance issues (Collins, 2022). If a business is involved in a legal dispute for this reason, the result will be that the employee will be fearful of the business, therefore increasing the employee's negative perception of the business. This can lead to many remaining employees leaving for a better and more stable working environment, and the business will be left with a shortage of staff and an inability to operate as usual (VOrnicova, 2023). In addition to this, a

legal dispute can also seriously damage a company's reputation in the labor market, giving job seekers a negative impression of the company's association with unfair dismissal. As a result, the negative perception of the company will make it difficult for the company to retain top talent in the company and recruit potential employees.

Conclusion & Recommendation

In conclusion, as an intelligent employer, dismissing an employee who is unable to achieve the required performance is the employer's right as a business leader to protect the efficiency of the team and preserve the core of the business. This measure not only helps employers to improve the overall quality of work of their employees, but also helps employers to succeed in a competitive market. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of performance dismissals on employee morale and workplace productivity. This study provides a clear insight into the impact of performance dismissals from the perspective of the employees. The impact can be not only positive, but also negative, and these negative impacts are often a key issue that organizations have overlooked. These negative impacts that are ignored by businesses have a close relationship with their future operations. These problems are likely to become one of the factors that hinder the growth and development of businesses in the future, so paying attention to and solving these problems in a timely manner is a challenge that businesses must face.

When dismissing an employee becomes an unavoidable measure, the next action a company should take is to maintain employee morale and avoid a drop in productivity in the workplace. Therefore, companies should communicate honestly and openly with their employees, and only when the transparency of the work environment is improved, they can gain the trust of the employees who are remaining behind. Transparently explain to employees the reasons for dismissal and the company's future plans, so that those who remain can understand that the dismissal is a reasonable decision for the subsequent growth and success of the company. Only by communicating honestly to employees can avoid suspicion among them and let them understand the company's position, mission and vision, thus motivating them to accomplish their work with a positive attitude (Resources, 2024). However, open communication does not mean that the business needs to reveal confidential corporate information, and it is important for the company to properly measure the information that can be shared. This approach not only enhances the trust of the employees in the company, but also indirectly enhances cohesion and morale among the employees, and finally allows for a significant increase in productivity in the workplace as well.

Additionally, another strategy that companies can implement to maintain employee morale is to give employees recognition at the right time. When an employee achieves certain accomplishments, do not be stingy in giving appreciation, but recognize the employee's accomplishments and contributions. This is because well-timed appreciation makes employees feel like their efforts and performance are recognized. These praises can be an encouragement to the employees in their work and also emphasize that the employees have played a role and contributed to the success of the company. The generous recognition of an employee's achievements by the company not only gives the employee a greater feeling of security during the risk of dismissal. It also helps to eliminate their fears of being dismissed and reduces their psychological anxiety. When psychological stress and anxiety are removed, employees are able to regain their confidence and become more motivated to contribute to the company. In the end, the employees who remained maintained high morale, and the positive work environment also impacted employee efficiency and enhanced workplace productivity.

The third measure that a company can implement is the creation of new teams. Companies can allow employees who are remaining to create new teams in an attempt to rebuild cohesion within the team. Companies can try to organize team activities at the end of the dismissal period and through these activities, employees can develop a sense of belonging to each other and emphasize teamwork. In addition, after establishing a new team, it is possible for the team to conduct discussions and encourage all team members to participate in setting team goals, therefore providing all employees with the feeling that they are part of the team. Team discussions also provide a safe space for employees to share their thoughts and concerns, allowing members to work together to solve problems and share their experiences in solving the problem, therefore strengthening the connection between employees. When the remaining employees gain a sense of belonging and stability in the team, employees can work wholeheartedly for the sake of the team. Moreover, with the encouragement and assistance of other team members, the working atmosphere during working hours becomes harmonious, morale gradually becomes stable and gradually increases, and finally, the workplace productivity of each member is greatly increased.

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