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Money, Measures and Motivation

-A Study of Performance Measurement and Wellbeing

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between performance measurement systems (PMS) and individual work-related wellbeing, with a special focus on the low-level employees in a cleaning organization. Respectively we examine how PMSs affect autonomy, relatedness and competence, drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Further considerations to be examined are the effects of reward systems and other supplemental practices on individual work-related wellbeing.

Design/methodology/approach – By conducting a single in-depth case-study of a cleaning company, we draw upon a number of interviews, combined with supplemental internal and external documents, in order to explore how the PMS impact the cleaners' wellbeing.

Findings – The study identified a rather weak connection between PMS and wellbeing. The main reason seemed to stem from the inefficiencies in the PMS and reward systems in place. Furthermore, most cleaners find themselves in vulnerable socioeconomic positions and thus the fact that they have stable employment diminishes the perceived effects of such systems.

Originality/value – This is one of the first studies within the accounting research arena which aims to explore PMSs effect on wellbeing, additionally it expands the extant literature on the consequences of PMSs on the individual level. Furthermore, this paper expands the current literature on emotions within the accounting domain.

Keywords: Performance measurement systems, Reward systems, Wellbeing, Motivation, Self-Determination Theory

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1. Introduction

> "Fifty percent of U.S. employees are thriving in their overall lives, according to Gallup's latest updated workplace wellbeing. This marks a new record low since Gallup began measuring employee wellbeing in 2009. The rate of employees who were thriving peaked at 61% in both 2016 and 2017 but began declining in 2020. A brief rebound occurred in January 2021 as COVID-19 vaccinations became available and hopes of loosened restrictions grew. However, the downward trend continued."

The steady decline in workplace wellbeing is worrying, and as can be observed from the quote above, commenting on a large study of workspaces in the USA, the current levels are at an all-time low (Inc, 2024).

For most people, work constitutes a significant portion of their life, and the greatest resource for many companies are its employees. However, increased competition has forced companies to push their employees more than ever, often at cost of their employees' wellbeing. As companies play a paramount role in fostering wellbeing, neglecting it can bring about many disastrous consequences, both for financial growth, but more importantly for the physical and mental health of their workers.

In order to enhance efficiency, performance and motivation, most organizations measure and evaluate employee performance. Contingency theory indicates that there can be no single universal way of doing so as it is dependent on the specific context (Otley, 2016). The way firms measure performance vastly varies as different industries, companies and people all require different things. What works in one industry and in one company might not work in the next. Complicating the matter further, performance measurement may have a different impact on one employee compared to their colleges. The question of how to construct performance measurement systems (PMS) in a way which fosters wellbeing amongst an organisation's employees is very complicated and largely unexplored and the answer to this question is most important for the development of organisations and employees alike.

Prior research on performance measurement systems and their effects have predominantly focused on the organisational level and on performance (Endrikat et al., 2020). But scant attention has been paid to the individual level and the consequences for motivation and wellbeing. This fact seems to be at odds with the rise of corporate social responsibility (CSR), since it highlights the fact that organisations shall consider the consequences it causes to *all* stakeholders, including its employees. Furthermore, even in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which shook the world and brought significantly more attention to individual health

and wellbeing at work (Jack, 2022), there is still a lack of studies focused on the consequences on the individual level and their wellbeing, which is concerning.

Our paper builds on a case-study of a large Swedish cleaning company employing some 1000 people. Their organisation consists of people on all levels and from all over the world, and most of the organisation's employees are cleaners. Most of these cleaners are not from Sweden originally but moved here recently. Their options are limited, and their financial position is poor.

With this case in mind, this paper will aim to bridge the gap between the use of performance measurement systems and their effects on individual work-related wellbeing. Our research question is formulated as follows:

> *How do performance measurement systems impact individual work-related wellbeing for employees?*

To help us answer and understand this question, we will use self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT allows us to define work-related individual wellbeing, and at the same time helps us explore and identify key constituents that enable and promote said wellbeing. Using SDT, we define wellbeing as an individual psychological state being achieved once three innate psychological needs are satisfied, namely, autonomy, relatedness and competence. SDT has been used in the past in order to assess the effects of PMS on motivation (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Kunz & Linder, 2012), but to our knowledge, no attempts have been made to extend the use of SDT to assess individual wellbeing in this area.

Further considerations that will be explored and considered is the existence and potential effects that monetary rewards have on this relationship. The effects of PMS when they are connected to monetary rewards have been explored to some extent, but the consequences of such ties are still heterogenous in the literature (Endrikat et al., 2020; Franco-Santos et al., 2012). Apart from the main focus of the paper, considerations will be given to other aspects which might have effects on both the PMS and wellbeing, such as personal feedback and competence initiatives.

Contrary to the previous literature (Bénet et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000) were PMS and rewards is described to greatly impact employee behaviour, our case seems to highlight an instance the systems play a more limited role. The remainder of this paper will be structured as follows: in the next section we will develop our literature review, containing our domain theory around PMSs and their effects on the organisational and individual level, and our method theory

surrounding SDT. In section 3 we explain the methods used in the undertaking of this paper. Section 4 contains our findings which are structured into (1) outlining the PMSs and reward systems, (2) describing the connection between the two systems and (3) tying these to employee wellbeing. Lastly, we will provide a discussion of our results and then a conclusion.

2. Domain and method theory

2.1 Literature review

Defining wellbeing is a complicated endeavour since it encompasses a large number of factors which are all essential to the happiness of individuals. A broad definition of wellbeing generally looks as follows: "Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life, as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on wellbeing supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability" (Health Promotion Glossary of Terms 2021, 2021). Our study will only touch upon work-related wellbeing, and the context in which we use the term will be geared towards the psychological aspect of wellbeing related to work conditions and tasks. Deriving from our method theory, (see 2.1.3) fulfilling the human needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness will lead to an increased state of wellbeing, connected to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In understanding wellbeing at work, systems will be evaluated based on how they support the fulfilment of these psychological needs. In the text we use the terms "wellbeing", "individual wellbeing" and "individual work-related wellbeing" interchangeably based on this definition.

Regarding performance measurement, we will use Franco-Santos et al.´s (2012) definition of "contemporary performance measurement" -systems as our definition for performance measurement system (PMS). They argue "that a [PMS] exists if financial and non-financial performance measures are used to operationalize strategic objectives. […] the definition assumes that the role of [PMS] is to evaluate performance for either informational or motivational purposes (regardless of the organizational level at which performance is evaluated)." (p. 80). We will also examine other relevant initiatives or systems that we find which are tied to performance and have a meaningful impact on the individual wellbeing.

2.1.1 Domain theory

In the realm of implementing psychological aspects in management accounting, Hall (2016) provides an overview for how psychology theory has been used in former accounting research. He argues that much of the attention within the extant literature has focused on a narrow set of management accounting practices which hinders a more holistic view of the effects that these systems may bring about. Furthermore, Hall notes that "the limited use of field studies where researchers can more readily focus on understanding individual responses to a broad and complex set of stimuli" (2016, p. 70) further exacerbates the effects of such a focus. The importance of a more holistic view is markedly important in an environment where different management practices, systems and information sources, all have the potential to interact and affect an individual's phycological responses (Hall, 2016).

The importance of emotions within the accounting literature is furthermore discussed, Hall notes that "management accounting practices […] can create emotional responses because they often play a role in adjudicating on the performance of employees" (2016, p. 72). Strong feelings, both positive and negative, are to be expected when evaluating an employee's performance relative to its peers, and material artifacts can also reinforce such feelings (Hall, 2016).

Franco-Santos et al. (2012) note that the use and design of PMS is complex. To be effective and generate the desired outcomes, several aspects must be considered. These aspects include the design, development and use of PMS.

As can be observed from the meta-analysis study conducted by Endrikat et al. (2020), most of the studies surrounding PMS are focused on "performance", more specifically on organisational performance and the financial performance of the organisation. Their analysis finds that PMS can have positive effects on employee behaviour, more specifically on *job satisfaction*[1] and *individual creativity*[2], but they point out that there has been minimal attention given to such effects, i.e. the effects of PMS on individuals. Furthermore, they found positive but heterogenous associations between PMS and *psychological empowerment*[3]. The presence of positive effects on psychological empowerment is similarly documented by Hall (2008).

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[1] Affective reaction toward one's job (Endrikat et al., 2020, p. 114)

[2] Individuals' perceptions that they can develop new ideas and devise solutions for problems in their jobs (Endrikat et al., 2020, p. 114)

[3] Individuals' beliefs about the expectations and behaviors associated with their work role (Endrikat et al., 2020, p. 114)

Franco-Santos et al. posits that the use of PMS can positively influence people's behaviour in an organisation, but "can also bring about judgement biases and perceptions of unfairness or subjectivity when they are used for performance evaluation and compensation purposes." (2012, p. 99). Endrikat et al. made a similar discovery, as they point out that "the arguments in the literature are ambiguous, with some in favour of the positive effects of such linkages […] and some emphasizing potential detrimental effects" (2020, p. 121), though their study found a more positive connection between PMS and individual performance in absence of reward systems.

Further building upon the narrative, Bénet et al. also claims that little research surrounding PMS practices and their impact on lower-level employees has been conducted. In their study of the hotel industry, they "show that using non-financial performance measures linked to service quality and customer satisfaction is a component of the causal chain leading to achieving high financial performance, and it can be considered an important performance driver" (2022, p. 325). However, as can be concluded from the quote above, the focus on their study was more on how PMS affects financial performance, and not on individual wellbeing.

Deepening the academic discussion, Kunz & and Linder (2012) connect performance to reward systems and to motivation by exploring how intrinsic motivation is affected by monetary and affiliate rewards. The study found that monetary rewards, though motivating and fulfilling an external demand for the individual, had a negative effect on intrinsic motivation, more specifically norm-based motivation i.e. motivation fostered by acting in line with one's personal beliefs. Affiliate rewards, signals of appreciation and recognition by peers or superiors linked to a strengthening of social ties, were seen to have a positive effect on enjoyment-based motivation and the willingness to extort work effort, leading to the conclusion that "both research and practice stand to gain from taking the 'low-cost' non-monetary, affiliative rewards more into account when studying and designing organizational control systems" (2012, p. 3).

Chen et al. (2020) explore how intrinsic motivation is affected by different control systems including *diagnostic control systems*, i.e. systems for monitoring and communicating the critical success factors of an organization or in other words, performance. Through a quantitative study, they were able to find positive effects resulting from some of the systems.

Particularly, *belief control systems*[4] and *interactive control systems*[5] had a positive impact on employees' intrinsic motivation. Interestingly, *diagnostic control systems* on their own have a detrimental effect to intrinsic motivation, but if the organisation combines it with interactive control systems, they produce positive consequences. These findings further support previous literature indicating that both the type of PMS and the different "combinations" of PMS in use affect individuals (e.g., Franco-Santos et al., 2012). Chen et al. (2020) findings, although indicating that PMS can affect intrinsic motivation, do not mention anything about the wellbeing of those employees. Their focus is instead on how intrinsic motivation in turn affects performance, effort and employee turnover.

Except for Bénet et al. (2022), no research, to our knowledge, has been conducted regarding the use of PMS on low-level service employees. It is evident from the literature that the industry and environment factors into the effects of such systems (Endrikat et al., 2020; Franco-Santos et al., 2012). Endrikat et al. posits that PMSs effectiveness is great in the manufacturing industry, and their proposed reasoning for this could easily be extended and applied to other industries. They argue that PMSs *"*are more effective in because these organizations have higher levels of task interdependence*"* (2020, p. 124). However, this assumption might be possible to extended to the cleaning industry where the work of multiple people is intimately tied together.

2.1.2 Research gap

There is no simple answer to how performance measurement relates to wellbeing and the question is still quite unexplored in accounting research. Studies on performance measurement systems and individual wellbeing are scant, basically non-existent when focusing on the lower levels of an organisation where the tasks at hand do not intrinsically motivate the employees. Even broader research regarding the interplay between PMS and individuals is rare, with most research on PMS focusing on organisational performance.

Such observations are further supported by the calls for future research in the articles from our literature review. Hall (2016) suggest further exploration regarding how management

[4] "Beliefs control systems convey an organization's overall strategy, vision, and mission through mission statements and statements of purpose" (Chen et al., 2020, p. 72)

[5] "interactive control systems provide formal information systems that help facilitate intense and frequent communication among organizational members around emerging opportunities and strategic uncertainties in an organization" (Chen et al., 2020, p. 72)

accounting practices relates to emotions. Franco-Santos et al (2012) calls for further research in regard to the connection between PMS when tied to monetary rewards, something which Endrikat et al. also mentioned. They also give calls for future research regarding the potential effects PMS can have on "negative employee attitudes or dysfunctional behaviours" (2020, p. 100).

We aim to explore the research gaps regarding how PMS affect individuals and their wellbeing and study how the connection to monetary rewards affects this relationship among lower-level employees.

2.1.3 Method theory

In trying to understand how PMSs and wellbeing are connected; we make use of Self-Determination theory (SDT). SDT posits that wellbeing is intimately tied to feelings of autonomy, relatedness and competence. By employing SDT, we can come to understand how wellbeing and PMSs are connected and affect each other.

The SDT continuum stretches from "*amotivation*"[6] to "*intrinsic motivation*"[7] and in-between these two "extremes" are different forms of "*extrinsic motivation*". "The term extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71), and according to the theory, there are four different states of extrinsic motivation, namely, "*external regulation*", "*introjected regulation*", "*identified regulation*" and "*integrated regulation*". In broad terms, extrinsically motivated behaviours that are referred to as externally regulated, are closest to amotivation. Such behaviour is characterized by being performed to satisfy external demands or to achieve some sort of reward or avoid punishment. As we move across the spectrum towards intrinsic motivation, the different types of extrinsic motivation become more autonomous, less externally regulated and/or more internally regulated. The state closest to intrinsic motivation is integrated regulation. "Integration occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self, which means they have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs. Actions characterized by integrated motivation share many qualities with intrinsic motivation, although they are still considered extrinsic because they are done to attain separable outcomes rather than for their inherent enjoyment." (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 73). Using this

[6] Not acting or acting without intent. Which is a result of not valuing the results, feeling incompetent and/or not confident that the desired outcome will be obtained (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

[7] "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions." (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72)

spectrum of motivational states, we are also able to expand our understanding of wellbeing. As previously stated, wellbeing occurs when intrinsic motivation is present. However, we can now also conclude that wellbeing is a continuum, sensed to a greater extant the further along the spectrum towards intrinsic motivation one moves. In other words, increasing autonomy, relatedness and competence will lead to a greater sense of wellbeing. Additionally, internalization, which is, increased autonomous regulation for extrinsically motivated behaviours will push people from amotivation towards intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This implies that incentives leading to increased attachment to the tasks will cause more enjoyment from performing them and in turn foster wellbeing according to our definition of the term.

3. Method

3.1 Research design

Our study aims to explore the interplay of PMSs and employee wellbeing. To achieve this, we chose to approach the relationship from a qualitative research perspective. Qualitative research is appropriate when exploring phenomena which is not well understood (Edmonson & McManus, 2007). The approach allows for reviewing the complex landscape of PMS and reasons for why they were implemented, but more importantly exploring the perspectives of those subjected to them, thus contributing knowledge to multiple aspects of the research question.

We conducted an in-depth case study of a single company in the cleaning sector (herein after called “CleanCo”), primarily based on seven interviews. We further examined internal and external documents, which gives us a fuller understanding of CleanCo’s PMSs and its practices in general. This is a common and effective method combination in accounting research when collecting qualitative data.

A single, in-depth case study allows for a fuller understanding of the subject and specific conditions at place (Dyer Jr. & Wilkins, 1991). Furthermore, calls for more case-studies in relation to examining emotions and emotional states (such as wellbeing) was made evident by Hall (2016). The objective of a qualitative case study is not achieving statistical generalization but to gain in-depth understanding of the problem or question at hand through analysing the specific case (Scapens, 1990). The goal of our study is for our findings to enable analytic

generalization. Explanations for specific phenomena may be tested and applied in another context thus contributing to the academic discussion.

We decided to explore this specific organization because of the tough working conditions that mark the industry. During initial contact with the CleanCo, through a pilot interview with the CEO, two subjects that came up specifically caught our attention: reward systems and employee motivation. Exploring the interplay between the two became the starting point for our study. However, through systematic combining, "a process where theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork, and case analysis evolve simultaneously" (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 554) the path of our research has changed during the road of the process, finally landing on PMS and wellbeing.

3.2 Data collection

The primary data collected for the analysis consisted of seven semi-structured interviews conducted with people of various positions in the company. The first interview was held with the HR manager who designed much of the current PMS at the company and was loosely set up to provide us with an overview of the company setting. We then conducted two interviews with regional- and area-managers, one with a customer feedback officer, and two with current or former cleaners.

Our use of SDT constituted to a large extent which focus areas to approach during the interviews. Due to our definition of wellbeing being based on SDT, it was fundamental to use said theory when constructing our interview questions. Our interview guide was also somewhat altered in between the interviews because one, there was a need to adapt the questions depending on who we were going to interview depending on their position and personality, and two, since we gained new knowledge from each interview and subsequent interviews could be used to expand upon areas of interest.

By delving into qualitative interview techniques, we decided upon conducting focused interviews (Flick et al., 2004), i.e. using a set of pre-determined conversational themes yet being flexible to associative reactions to the subjects. Building a sense of comfort and enabling the interviewee to open up is extremely important (Flick et al., 2004). In our case specifically we discovered this to be essential since exploring such a deeply personal subject as wellbeing without establishing trust would be impossible.

Choices regarding our interview technique were hence made to build upon a sense of psychological safety, especially regarding the interviews with the lower-level employees, all for whom being interviewed was a new experience and the subjects discussed were sensitive.

All, expect the first interview, were conducted in person at the company's regional office, a familiar place for all the interviewees. The interviews generally started off with some questions regarding personal background and work-tasks and then moved on towards feelings towards the current MCS and reward systems and regarding what they believe brings fulfilment and wellbeing to the cleaners. (For more information regarding the interviews, see Table 1)

Number	Role	Duration (min)	Date
1	HR manager	51	21-02-2025
2	Area manager	56	05-03-2025
3	QS officer	33	05-03-2025
4	Team leader/former cleaner	49	03-03-2025
5	Cleaner	30	03-03-2025
6	Regional manager	38	03-06-2025
7	HR manager	37	04-04-2025

Table 1 – Interview overview

The interviews were held in Swedish which is the official language for communication at the company. That being said, there was somewhat of a language barrier from the low-level employees that complicated the interview process. This language barrier stems from the fact that most of the employees at CleanCo being from another country, and thus their Swedish is not always without flaws. Rephrasing, simplifying, using body language and changing subjects were common tools used during those interviews to navigate any difficulties in understanding.

However, we recognize this being a pitfall of our data collection as somewhat of a limiting factor for the cleaners to freely tell their stories.

We used “snowball sampling” to reach out to the interviewees, meaning our initial contact referred us to willing participants who in turn recommended others to speak to. As noted by Atkinson and Flint (2001) snowball sampling can enable hard to reach access and create an initial level of trust from the respondents. However, because elements are not randomly drawn, but are dependent on the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed, most snowball samples contain bias. It is likely that in our case the people we interviewed have a more positive view of the company than a completely random sample as they were asked to participate from higher-ups in the firm.

In addition to the interviews, data was also derived from internal documents such as the customer feedback questionnaire, the company website and the latest employee survey in combination with information from the company website such as mission statements and annual reports. For confidentiality reasons we refrain from disclosing these documents in the references.

3.3 Data analysis

The interviews spanned from 30 minutes to roughly one hour. Data analyses were conducted continuously throughout the research. Processing of secondary data began before the interview process. Initial processing of the interviews was done sequentially in-between interviews to identify areas to explore further in upcoming interviews. All except one interview was tape-recorded and transcribed, and field notes were taken at during the interviews. As we used an abductive research approach, going back and forth in analysing the data during the course of our writing played a key part throughout the entire process.

Translating of the quotes was done parallel to writing the empirical findings section. The afore mentioned difficulty of the Swedish language for some of the interviewees directly affected both the recorded interviews and its generated transcripts. In analysing and extracting quotes from the interviews, a lot of attention had to be given towards the audio recording as the transcriptions were not a great reflection of what was said during the interviews.

4. Empirical Findings

4.1 Background and context to the work environment

CleanCo employs close to a thousand people all around Sweden. But what does it mean to work at the company? Due to the logistical and geographical size of the company, operations are divided into local regions each having a central office and manager who responds to directions from a small leadership group. The regions are in turn divided into smaller areas and ultimately into teams of cleaners. For example, the Stockholm region, the subject for our interviews, is divided into three areas and each area has two-three teams each consisting of up to 30 cleaners. There are also other supplemental positions following these rolls such as customer support staff and educators. Overall, the structure of CleanCo can be seen below in Figure 1.

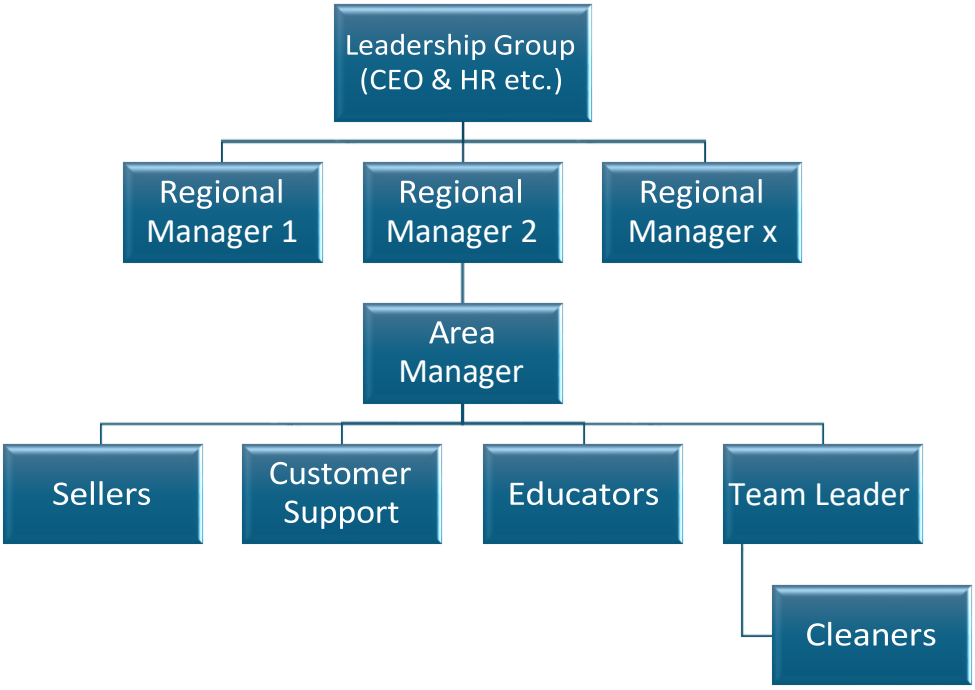

Figure 1 – CleanCo's Organisational chart

CleanCo offer different services related to cleaning such as office cleaning, window cleaning and cleaning for open houses. Most of the operations, however, reside in house or apartment cleaning, at the home of repeat customers that use the services on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The cleaners operate up to 40 hours a week, though many are part time workers. The cleaners work alone with some exceptions for larger jobs. Due to one-time customers and fluctuating demand, schedules change, and the cleaners do not always have much foresight regarding when or where to work. When speaking about operational practices, the HR Manager noted that:

“Effective scheduling is what sets apart successful and unsuccessful actors in this industry”. Minimizing transportation and downtime is key for CleanCo. Their core strategy relies on trying to match cleaners to repeat customers in the same area, thus making them more comfortable and effective at the specific home/office and enabling them to form a relation to the customer. On average a full-time worker has four to five of these customers a week, the service usually taking four hours.

Being a cleaner means hard work and can be very physically demanding. Discussing the work was done with a tone of respect, even from higher ups at the company.

*“*It is tough work, and we have some tough girls*”* – Team Leader.

One of the cleaners we talked to mentioned just coming back from having surgery due to a stress related shoulder injury, something common in the industry. In a Danish study of 1166 female cleaners, 63% reported shoulder problems. In addition, 63% had neck discomfort, and 46% reported some type of wrist problem (Kumar & Kumar, 2008). Additionally, many cleaners find themselves in vulnerable situations in their private life, for example being single mothers and newly immigrated to the country. Consequently, we arrive at the conclusion that the work-tasks for professional cleaners rather are performed to earn a living than for their inherent enjoyability, meaning that the work is more extrinsically- than intrinsically-motivating (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This assumption was supported by our interviewees, many of them speaking about a sizable portion of the cleaners perceiving their occupation as “just a job”.

4.2 PMS and reward systems at CleanCo

4.2.1 Performance Measurement at CleanCo

CleanCo has a few methods to measure the performance of the cleaners. To ensure that the service is preformed according to schedule they have a digital system where the cleaners check in and out when arriving and leaving the workplace. Furthermore, they make use of customer feedback to measure the quality of the cleaners’ performance. Lastly, they have field visits were experienced cleaners conduct in person reviews the work method.

4.2.1.1 Quick Search and Customer Feedback

One foundational part of the performance measurement system at CleanCo is their Quick Search (QS) system. QS enables the customers to give feedback to CleanCo on their latest cleaning service, which is then used to give feedback to their cleaner. The QS system is quite

basic, it essentially has one question relating to how satisfied they are with the cleaning job performed, and they can rank their satisfaction on a scale from one to six. One is equivalent to "Not satisfied at all" and six is equivalent to "Very satisfied". In the latest QS report that we were able to access, CleanCo's average QS score was 5.28.

4.2.1.2 Recent Changes to Quick Search

During the months leading up to our study, CleanCo made some changes to their QS system. In the past, there used be two areas involved in the QS system. (1) How satisfied the customers are with the job the cleaners have performed and (2) how satisfied the customers are with CleanCo's office personnel, e.g. with customer support personal. But as one of CleanCo's QS Officers told us:

> "I think it is good to have relevant information, I do not think it matters […] what the customer thinks about the quality from the office […] that is irrelevant, it has nothing to do with the service. […] I think it was a good decision, they noticed that the customers did not expand on questions on office quality, only on the cleaning quality."

Their regional manager also commented on this new change, saying that with the old system, a poor rating on the office side, due to, for example, sub-par communication, could completely ruin the cleaners rating which was not very fair. The change contributed to a more transparent rating of what the customer thinks of the quality of the cleaning service provided.

4.2.1.3 The Future of QS

The recent changes in the QS prompted us to investigate further issues with the system and find out whether CleanCo had any plans to work on those. One such issue that was brought up was the low response rate from customers. The system relies on that the customers take the time of their day to fill out the survey, and this is quite uncommon. A year ago, only 36% of customers have ever answered the QS at some point, and most likely only a fraction of those answers it every time they get the Email. This implies that the QS score is not a completely accurate representation of how all the customers view the service. Realizing this issue, CleanCo has increased their attention towards making more people answer the QS. During the past year they started reaching out by phone to customers who did not fill out the QS and seeking further feedback for any negative reviews. These incentives are planned to go on and have increased the number of customers who have answered the QS to 52%, a significant increase over last year's response rate of 36%.

Scepticism towards the system was also raised regarding the customers' ability to correctly judge the quality of the service.

> "It depends on what standard you have for your home […] we can have an assistant who we know is top-notch, it cannot go wrong unless they have a terrible day. But then maybe the personal chemistry can make the customer say it's a three when it should be a six." - Regional Manager.

This is again an indication that more than the quality of the job gets reflected in the QS score. Deepening these issues is the fact that customers are more likely to answer the QS when they are dissatisfied with the service in comparison to when it is good, or even excellent, as the customers expect a standard to be met, but do not necessarily care if someone goes way beyond this standard enough to report it.

Acknowledging the issues, the firm restrains from evaluation singlehandedly based on customer feedback and performs additional performance measurement as described in the following section.

4.2.1.4 The Role of the Team Leader

In each team at CleanCo, there is a team leader who plays an integral role in performance measurement and valuation. Most team leaders are former cleaners who have had good ratings and showed leadership qualities, proving that they have what it takes to take on more responsibilities. Team leaders work on managing schedules, handing out keys and evaluating performance:

> "[Team leaders] do spontaneous quality controls, and they notice who needs to improve, which areas, someone might need to attend an ironing course, or someone might need to redo a training because they use the wrong [method]" – Regional Manager

During the past years, there has been immense focus towards improving the performance measurement and feedback systems backed up by large investments towards educating and changing the function of the team leader, incentives building group belonging, and a push for cleaning being a craft rather than a chore.

> "We have had a history of doing quality checks that involve finding errors and saying, here you haven't been good enough, fix it, and that was also how we measured the quality checks until just over a year ago, that is, you got a deviation report, not a positive one." -HR Manager

A vast increase in workplace visits and overall communication with the team leaders have been a leading factor in changing the narrative. Proudly speaking about the results of the changes, the HR Manager smilingly stated:

> “When a team leader went out for quality controls five years ago, it was just “Ugh, I haven't done anything wrong, what do you want and so on”. Now it's joy, how nice that you're coming. There's more of this team feeling, we're just going to make sure that our customers are doing well and that you're doing well.”

One team leader highlighted that an important aspect of their job is to support those members of their team who struggle a bit more than others. They tried to focus on the positive aspects of the cleaners’ work and communicate areas of improvement in the nicest way possible. The team leader, who was formerly a cleaner, also commented on the fact that having a nice team leader made the job better, especially at times when work was hard.

4.2.1.5 The Customer Relation

Independently of feedback that gets reported to the QS, the clients will at the end of the day be the one reaping the benefits of a quality service or suffering the results of a poor job. During a lot of the jobs, the customers are on site, and the experience can be quite interactive. As mentioned above, most customers are regulars and forming a bond between the cleaner and the customer is common. During our interviews we heard of multiple instances where cleaners have been with the same customers for over 15 years, seeing their kids grow up and forming tight and strong relationships.

Seeing the quality of the cleaning, the customer will form an opinion of the service and of the cleaner which in turn will affect their attitude, and ultimately the relationship between the two. In that way the customer acts as an informal performance measurement system, disconnected from management at CleanCo, but still playing a role in monitoring and evaluating work.

4.2.1.6 How the Cleaners Receive Feedback

There are a few feedback channels in place at CleanCo. As already noted, the customers often give feedback in person to the cleaners, either directly through praise or indirectly through actions. Additionally, the customer fills out the QS. The cleaners, however, do not have direct access to the QS results, but are informed of how they are performing by their team leaders and area managers. Instead, there are team leader workplace visits for each employee, where performance is discussed. Instead, there are team leader workplace visits once a month for each employee, where performance is discussed. The area managers hold development meetings with all employees annually. As each area manager is responsible for some 60 cleaners, the meetings are kept very short, only some 15-20 minutes. Here feelings and opinions towards performance and work in general is discussed from both sides and any issues get addressed. Aside from these formal feedback functions, discourse around work and feedback gets thrown

around in a more informal manner in everyday contact with the cleaners and at company events. In the communication between cleaners, team leaders and area managers, most of the focus is towards positive feedback.

> "We believe in positivity and praise. We think it does more than simply commenting poor performance." – Regional Manager

For example, nice comments from the QS get printed and put up on a board at the office. However, was the cleaner to get a specifically negative review or damage something at work, the QS Officer would follow up regarding the issue immediately. Commenting on the importance of eliminating mistakes quickly, he noted:

> "We try not to let it go on for two or three cleanings. Then you've almost lost a customer."

4.2.2 The Reward System at CleanCo

CleanCo is a part of the national collective agreement for home service companies which sets up a standard for working conditions and wages. Sweden has had a history of strong unions and today almost 90% of employees nationwide are protected by collective agreements (Ljunglöf et al.). In the cleaning industry however, because of very low entry barriers, there are a very significant number of small actors with few employees that are not covered by such agreements and thus have low occupational security. Being a large actor, CleanCo offers safety, and the conditions for their workers include 5 weeks paid vacation, paid overtime and sick leave, and a minimum monthly wage of 24 517 SEK or 145.9 SEK an hour (Kommunal & Almega Tjänsteförbunden, 2023).

> "In our work to honour heroes, we select a star of the month once a month and a star of the year once a year" - CleanCo website

Aside from their standard wage model, the reward systems at CleanCo are sparse, but important. There are two programs in place, the "Monthly Star" (MS) and the "Yearly Star" (YS). In this paper most of our attention will be focused on the MS since it received a lot more attention in our interviews and influences the employee's behaviour to a greater extent due to its frequency.

4.2.2.1 The Monthly Star

The MS reward system is formulated by CleanCo's management and implemented by the regional managers in each district. Once a month, the area manager rewards one (or at times

two) cleaner(s) with the title "the Monthly Star". The reward system is based on five key criteria's: (1) minimum Quick Search rating of five, (2) no customer complaints, or 100% satisfied customers, (3) Positive attitude/positive influence: a role model among colleagues, spreads joy, inspires others, shares their knowledge. Is reliable, committed, driven, inclusive. (4) Comes up with ideas for business improvements and (5) Contributes to additional sales among existing customers.

To be eligible for the MS, a cleaner must have fulfilled a minimum of three out of these five criteria according to the company guidelines. However, judging from the interviews with both those responsible for selecting the monthly star and employees affected by the system, the last two out of the five, received little to no attention. Creating ideas for business improvements and increasing sales did not seem to fit within the expectations of work from the viewpoint of both cleaners and management. Thus, these criteria seemed to play a very limited role in determining the winner of the MS.

The rewards for receiving the MS are two-fold, (1) a monetary bonus of 1000 SEK and (2) affiliate rewards such as praise and prestige from bosses and colleges. Employees seemed to think that both types of rewards were important, with the QS officer expressing:

> "I think that most are after the financial bonus, of course, it's the icing on the cake, everybody wants money. Most might not be in a good financial situation […] but I think that a lot of people are also after the prestige, lots and lots of people. I seek that, always, it is nice to get a pat on the back and to hear the boss say, "good job", and to get a diploma on top of that, that is even better" - QS Officer

However, the lower-level employees seemed to gravitate more towards the monetary aspect of the reward.

> "Cash is of course king" - Team Leader

The quotes encapsule a lot of existing thoughts and feelings surrounding the MS at CleanCo. The heterogenous employee body of CleanCo results in diverse interests, some are after the money, others the prestige, but most appreciate both. Even though the monetary reward might not seem that grand: only 1000 SEK for a bonus only one of some 60 cleaners receive, lots of the cleaners at CleanCo do not have a stable financial situation, and thus, even a small bonus can go a long way. Still, the importance of the prestige element was evident throughout all levels of the organization.

Apart from the "standard" rewards associated with the MS, i.e. the monetary reward and the praise from coworkers and bosses, there can also be some *extra* rewards. The Area Manager

explained how they sometimes surprise their MSs at a customer and give them some tangible rewards such as flowers and a box of chocolates. Furthermore, such visits also "inform" the customers of the fact that their cleaner got the MS reward, and prompts them to praise their cleaner, acting as an additional affiliate reward.

Aside from the obvious joy that the person(s) who receive the MS reward feels, there are others who also feel the positive consequences of this. A Team Leader commented and said that she feels prideful when one of her cleaners receives this reward.

4.2.2.1.1 The Unexpected and Voluntary Nature of the MS

A cleaner told us that every month, before the salary arrives, they get a mail, telling them if they have won the MS reward. She described winning the reward feeling like a joyful surprize. This indicates that, at least to some degree, receiving the MS reward is not expected by the cleaners. Even for this particular cleaner, who has received the award three times, getting it again seems unexpected. Such a finding can also be considered somewhat logical since only one cleaner in each area receives the reward each month, and since many offices contain more than 60 cleaners, the odds of receiving it can be low.

The routine document for the MS reward system also indicates the voluntary nature of the MS. By default, all cleaners participate, which would indicate a non-voluntary nature, but since there is no downside to performing poorly in the MS rankings, it could also be considered voluntary, and it was clear that not all cleaners actively tried to win the award.

4.2.2.2 The Yearly Star

The YS system differs a bit from the MS. Apart from the obvious difference that it only is handed out once a year before Christmas, it purely based on a common vote. Each year, ballot boxes are put out in all of the offices, and each employee, both office personnel and cleaners, can vote for who they think deserve the YS title. Each office selects one YS who is announced at CleanCo's Christmas party. The Yearly Stars receive a trophy, a bouquet, a monetary bonus and of course, praise.

4.3 The Connection Between PMS and Rewards

4.3.1 QS as a Central Part of MS

In their most basic forms, the connection between CleanCo's PMS and their reward system is quite basic; if the cleaners do a good job, customers give them positive feedback, which is reflected in their QS system, and then the results are used to a great extent in determining the MS, as reflected in Figure 2.

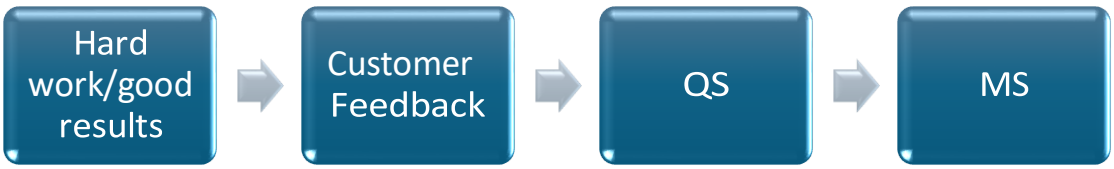

Figure 2 – QS and MS relationship at a glance

However, when examining the factors influencing this chain, we discovered it to be more complex. In determining the MS, it is not only the average QS rating that gets considered, but also the volume of positive feedback received. The Regional manager explained that customers are not always eager to answer the QS questionnaire every time. Some of the cleaners try to "stay on top" of this problem and by actively encouraging customers to send in feedback and to write positive reviews, so that they can increase their chances of winning dramatically. The manager did not seem pleased with this development commenting on that it might come off as unserious from the point of the customer and yield unfair results. Since customer feedback is of such importance for the MS achievement, some of their cleaners have managed to receive it several months in a row, likely largely due to such persistence.

It can also be observed that the importance of QS in the MS system is not only related to the first two points of the MS checkmarks, but it also related to the third one. If a cleaner has a more positive attitude, and is committed and driven, then through encouraging the customers, the cleaner can get more positive feedback in the QS system, and hence a greater chance at getting the MS reward. So, the relationship in Figure 2 might not be so simple as can be initially thought but actually involves many other inputs and considerations which affect the outcome, such as customer willingness to give feedback and the cleaners social skills and own attempts at trying to affect the customer.

Since customer feedback lays as a foundation for the MS, the clients themselves contribute to subjectivity, they steer the outcomes for the cleaners, both knowingly and unknowingly.

Clients may give honest reviews of the services which they have received, but as outlined in 4.2.1.3, reviews are not always fair. Additionally, customers may, intentionally or unintentionally not give a review, which affects the number of reviews a cleaner receives and thus alters their chance of winning.

A further source of subjectivity stems from the cleaners themselves, especially when clients take issue with their personality or approach. A cleaner may focus on providing the best possible *cleaning* service but may not pay sufficient attention to interactions with the customer, something that the client may either appreciate or dislike. The personality or attitude of a cleaner brings us to a third source of subjectivity: the managers. The managers are in the end responsible for handing out the MS rewards, and apart from the objective statistics of the QS system, the third key criterion of the MS: "having a positive attitude", is a matter of pure subjectivity. This criterion is most likely highly dependent on the relationship between the manager and cleaner, and the current system makes it impossible to avert this problem. Cleaners who have worked at CleanCo for an extended period of time, and frequently attend company events, will likely have an advantage when competing with other co-workers.

This analysis of the MS and QS systems reveals a truer picture of this relationship, and which factors are at play. As can be observed below in Figure 3, the relationship between the QS and MS systems is much more nuanced and complex then initially imagined.

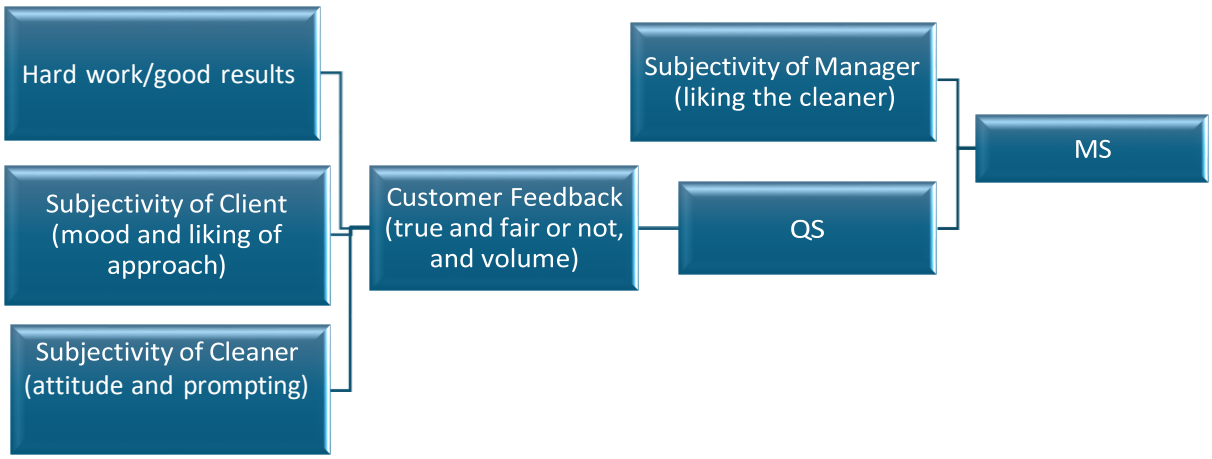

Figure 3 – The QS and MS relationship in more detail

Figure 3 shows that it is not just the quality of the cleaning service which impacts the customer feedback. In reality the subjectivity of the client and cleaner also play a major role in this relationship. Whether the cleaner has a good attitude and prompts the client to give feedback, and thus also whether the client likes this approach, gives a review and whether this feedback is true and fair. The "path" to a good QS score, and in turn the MS is not so straightforward. Furthermore, it is not just the QS which affects the MS outcome, but it is also dependent on the relationship between the manager and the cleaner, as they ultimately decide on the victor.

4.3.2 Praise and Gifts from Customers

As already mentioned, the relationships with customers can be extremely strong and meaningful to the cleaners. As the relationship builds upon providing quality service, high performance and good attitude will lead to happier customers. Getting positive affirmation from customers seemed to be deeply pleasing. Nodding and smiling one cleaner expressed:

> "When I'm on vacation, my clients don't want anyone else to come clean. They want only me to come, otherwise they cancel."

The clients sometimes also provide more tangible rewards to the cleaners for doing a good job such as offering them coffee or gifting Christmas presents such as chocolates and fragrance.

4.4 Wellbeing at CleanCo

4.4.1 Fostering Autonomy at CleanCo

Fostering autonomy or a sense of volition in the cleaning industry, and especially at the lowest levels can be difficult. Most of the work is rather standardised. The cleaners are allotted a time and place for when and where to clean and when they must clock in and out. Once there, they have to perform a set number of specified cleaning tasks according to a checklist. As a result, the general level of autonomy the cleaners have over their work is rather low.

The HR Manager commented on this being challenging to work with due to being tied to the customers' demands:

> "Our customers have very high expectations because of how we set prices and that is the way it is in the industry, but also because we step into the customer's home, the customer has a very strong expectation that we will be there for a certain amount of time"

The employees do have some extent of control over their work. And as cleaning is quite an exposed profession, seeing as the cleaners often operate in the homes of their customers, the

importance of feeling safe is paramount and taken seriously by management. A cleaner´s wish of not wanting to work for a specific customer has always received attention.

> "We tell our assistants that if something doesn't feel right, leave. Call a team leader. It shouldn't be anything; it shouldn't be unpleasant to go to work." - Regional Manager

There have been instances where CleanCo altogether terminates a contract with a client due to such calls from their cleaners.

4.4.1.1 Shifting the Perception of Cleaning

It seems like CleanCo is undergoing an interesting journey in reshaping the perception of the cleaning profession, empathizing that cleaning is a craft rather than a chore.

> "Since it is a craft, it is not enough to simply follow the checklist, but the very best have an additional skill. They find small things that make the difference that make a difference for the customer" HR Manager

Some observable key steps CleanCo have taken towards changing this static, black and white view of cleaning is in switching their PMS from just reporting deviations to being more comprehensive and coining the term "service assistant" as a replacement for cleaner. Overall, these changes, carried out by the PMS, can contribute to a more liberal attitude towards the strict requirements at work, which gives the cleaners a greater opportunity to make their own decisions and helps internalize the works towards being more intrinsically motivating.

4.4.2 Fostering competence at CleanCo

During our case-study of CleanCo, we gained insight into actions which foster competence both at work and outside of work. Actions which foster competence outside of work can be offering funds for their driver's license and providing language courses. Furthermore, CleanCo forward competence through multiple different acts, those acts which increase competence at work will below be divided into two different types, namely, "*actual development of competence*" and "*creating a sense of competence*".

4.4.2.1 Actual Development of Competence

By offering courses and different kinds of learning sessions and chances, CleanCo contributes to the development of competence among their cleaners. Cleaners can both voluntarily seek out to learn more and have access to competence enhancing material. Alternatively, a team leader can "prompt" a cleaner to do a course for example. In CleanCo's organization, there are also "Educators" and "Master Educators", who can be assigned to (most often) newer cleaners

to help them develop their competence, but also to some who might be more experienced but still need some additional training with new cleaning techniques.

There are also instances where competence is enhanced informally. One cleaner explained that on major cleaning jobs, where they sometimes need three to four cleaners, more experienced cleaners give tips and explain how to clean something in a better way to a less experienced member. And if need be, the experienced cleaners can check the work done by the less experienced cleaners. The cleaner we interviewed also gave an example where they were not so experienced or adapt at cleaning an oven, but as they cleaned with someone more experienced, they learned, which of course made them better at their work, and also brought them joy. Furthermore, it was clear that the team leaders had a large part in these informal learning instances:

> "She was the one that thought me […] what you should do when you get to the customer, how you should leave the place […]. They are nice, you can learn from their experience" - Cleaner

Even those in slightly higher positions are offered and participate in educational programs. The Team leader told us that they participate in a team leader educational program twice a year, and that it helps them in their work, and that they always look forward to these sessions.

4.4.2.2 Creating a Sense of Competence

As previously mentioned about the affiliate rewards at CleanCo, positive feedback is an important part of their culture. Creating a "sense" of competence, by highlighting the positive aspects of the cleaner's work, maybe even to a higher degree than the negative aspects, can most definitely create a sense of competence among the cleaners. Although these aspects create a sense of competence for the cleaners, it is still just a sense, and not "real" competence. These instances of, for example, receiving positive feedback, do not contribute to competence in the same way as training sessions do, but are made to increase the confidence of the cleaners.

4.4.2.3 Fostering Competence Which Extends Outside of Work

Additional instances of competence enhancing acts which CleanCo offers to some of its employees, are language courses and help in obtaining their driver's license. Although it is worth noting that these benefits are not available to everyone nor available all the time. It seems like help in obtaining a driver's license is only offered in select cases for those cleaners who have been with the company for an extended amount of time and where a driver's licence would accommodate their work activities to a certain degree. Language course arrangements appear

to fluctuate at CleanCo. They are not always offered but the general sentiment among the higher-lever employees seems to be that the goal is to offer them to all.

4.4.3 Fostering relatedness at CleanCo

4.4.3.1 Incentives by the firm

> "One of our goals is to become the best workplace in the industry, and we will do so with the help of the motto "Better together!" This means that we know that we work better when we do it together." – CleanCo's website

In general, cleaning is quite a lonesome occupation. 90% of the time, you work without any colleges at a place that is neither your home nor your office. However, CleanCo works hard towards their vision in trying to develop a sense of group affiliation and belonging amongst the cleaners. They do so by having company events, such as weekly breakfasts for all employees every Monday, and a large company party once a year. Additionally, as part of the PMS, CleanCo has dramatically tried to increase interactions with team leaders and area managers in order to foster team spirit, an effort that as already discussed has changed the attitude towards team leaders and increased openness to feedback. An area manager explained:

> "I follow up on their families, their illnesses, events in their lives, etc. It's not like I'm showing that I'm your friend, but that your important, to me, to CleanCo"

4.4.3.2 Building Upon the Customer Relation

When discussing the reason for why many of the cleaners seemed to enjoy their work despite its toughness and repetitiveness, the Area Manager stated:

"Cleaning may not be a dream job for many. What you really need to enjoy is providing a service to other people."

This really encapsulates the meaningfulness and relatedness in the service industry stemming from helping others. At CleanCo specifically, the frequent contact with the same customer over time also allows a close relationship to form. This relation can be a strong motivational force making cleaners go the extra mile for their customers and internalizing their everyday tasks towards meaningfulness.

4.4.4 The Employee Survey

Each year CleanCo conducts an employee survey related to work wellbeing. The reasons they state for conducting this survey include: "To get an idea of what employees think about their work and about [CleanCo] as an employer", "To be able to give leaders and employees a tool

to use in improvement work" and "Being able to focus on the right things, finding strengths and development potential, and help in making the right decisions".

General work wellbeing, seemed to be quite high in the firm, encapsulated by 76% of respondents agreeing with the simple statement: "I am happy with my job"

Below we have extracted some information relating to wellbeing structured in the areas of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

4.4.4.1 Reported Autonomy

One part of the survey related to the work climate, which intends to explore the employees' satisfaction relating to factors such as job satisfaction, work-life balance and respect at the workplace. Relating to autonomy, the question regarding work-life balance is especially important. The question about work-life balance is as follows: "I feel that I have a good balance between my work and private life". There were 754 employee who responded to this question, and 76% of CleanCo's employees feel like this statement is true.

Another part of the survey focused on leadership. And the respondents got the opportunity to choose several alternatives which, in their mind, would increase their trust in their closest boss. One of the alternatives which was indicated the most was that the boss should be able to "better prioritise and disregard [between more and less important tasks]".

4.4.4.2 Reported Competence

Again, under the work climate section, another question was related to appreciation: "In my team, we show each other appreciation when someone does something good". 85% of the 758 employees who responded felt like this statement applied to them. In the leadership section of the survey, the respondents were asked if their boss: "Recognizes good performance (e.g. increased responsibility, increased trust, new opportunities for development, etc)". And here 81% of the respondents felt like this statement was applicable to them. However, a large portion of the respondents also felt like their trust in their closest boss could be increased if they received more feedback relating to their performance.

4.4.4.3 Reported Relatedness

The leadership section of the survey also investigated whether the employees feel like their boss has confidence in them, and if they support and encourage them as coworkers. From the responses, a large majority of the respondents feel like this is true. However, it can also be observed that one of the most common responses for what can increase their trust in their boss, is even more encouragement and support.

4.5 A Critical View on Wellbeing at CleanCo

Section 4.4 mostly highlights instances where wellbeing is encountered at CleanCo. However, it should be emphasized that the job overall does not foster wellbeing. The nature of the work is lonely and characterised by performing extremely repetitive and physically draining tasks. One cannot significantly impact what they do at work, and the opportunities to improve and grow as a person are very limited. These factors overall contribute to low levels of autonomy, relatedness and competence causing low well-being according to SDT and our definition of the term.

The analysis above stands in stark contrast to the findings from the employee survey, in which employees instead signal feelings of happiness, or at least content, in most cases. From the extracted parts shown above, we observe feelings of both autonomy, relatedness and competence. However, as noted by the Team leader, the survey is quite new to CleanCo and to the cleaners, many of them may struggle with understanding and answering the questions, thus translation is provided in some cases. CleanCo encourages those who struggle with understanding the questions to reach out to someone who can help, but the Team leader notes that few take the time to do so, and the translations provided are at times incorrect. Even though this casts a shadow of doubt over the results of the survey, the results prompt a further investigation of why employees seem so content with the conditions.

One factor expected to play a huge roll towards work-wellbeing is the reward system at CleanCo as it significantly changes elements of the work and sets goals for the employees. Since cleaning is not inherently intrinsically motivating to most, extrinsic rewards such as bonuses play the main role towards motivation according to SDT. However, the effectiveness of CleanCo's reward system and PMS are questionable.

Whereas most employees seemed to desire the rewards and praise that come with them, actively working towards them proved difficult. The YS is simply selected from a yearly vote and has little connection to what you do in your everyday work, but more so with who you know and engage with within the company. The MS is designed to reward high performance and good attitude. However, the subjectivity in the selection process makes the connection vague. Performance is mainly evaluated from customer feedback, and the clients do not always leave fair reviews, a fact that gets even more concerning considering that one needs to receive a 100% customer satisfaction score to even be eligible for the reward. In evaluating performance, the number and quality of customer reviews the main factors considered. This has led to some cleaners "begging" their clients to fill in the QS and compliment their work,

interactions that may negatively affect the customer relationship which is a major contributor to intrinsic motivation at work. In addition to this, it is ultimately the Area Manager's vote that decides who gets the MS, based on their strange list of criteria. The personal relationship with the area manager is therefore likely to play a big role in determining whether one gets the MS. Finally, since there is only one winner in a group of some 60 cleaners, the odds of winning for any given month are slim. Doing a better job will hence not necessarily increase one's chances to receive MS, a fact that contradicts the purpose. When asked if the MS was the reason for trying to improve at work, a Cleaner answered:

> "No, I just do what I usually do"

Surprisingly, it seems like the bonus system does not heavily impact the way employees work or feel. However, this still does not answer the question of why most employees seem so happy with their jobs. An explanation may instead lie in the low expectations of the employees. As explained, many of the employees live in vulnerable conditions, and the job may provide much needed security for the cleaners.

> "It is very often a job you get when you cannot get anything else, especially when starting out" - HR manager

Having a stable occupation and acceptable working conditions is quintessential for the quality of life for the cleaners. This seems build up on a sense of thankfulness towards CleanCo and positive attitude towards their work.

5. Discussion

Using Franco-Santos' et al. (2012) definition of PMS, we have identified the QS system and team leader check-ups as the central parts of PMS at CleanCo and described their role in the main reward system in place, the MS. Additionally, we have looked into other occupational occurrences tied to performance measurement such as customer interactions, the feedback system and company events. Furthermore, we have outlined how wellbeing is being fostered at CleanCo, in relation to these performance measurement systems, deriving from Ryan and Deci's (2000) notion of SDT. In the following section, we will analyse and problematize these findings in light of the previous literature in the domain.

5.1 How PMS and Reward Systems Impact Individuals and Wellbeing

The extant literature has to a great extent focused on the effects of PMSs on the organisational level, while the individual level has received a lot less attention (e.g. Endrikat et al., 2020; Franco-Santos et al., 2012). In exploring this gap, the general conclusion drawn from our case study is that the PMS, only to a limited degree impacted the feelings and work ethic among employees, a finding contrary to those made by Bénet et al. (2022). Whereas they concluded that PMSs increased individual performance among front-line hotel employees, our study at CleanCo reveals that the relationship between individual effects and PMSs is a bit more ambiguous. Additionally, the reward seemed to play a limited role in motivating the cleaners, which is surprising since cleaning is not inherently motivating and SDT theorizes extrinsic motivators, such as bonuses, to be effective in situations close to amotivation to SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000). We believe that the main reasons behind these findings are that many cleaners due to their poor socioeconomic background are quite satisfied with the bottom-line conditions at CleanCo, and that the PMS and reward systems are inefficient for motivating employees. CleanCo's PMS and reward system are inexplicably linked together (see Figure 3), all cleaners by default participate and compete for the reward. The problem lies within the apparent unfairness and subjectivity of the MS system. Only one or two out of 60 cleaners receive the MS rewards, which includes both a monetary bonus and affiliate rewards like praise, giving each cleaner a minimal chance of receiving the rewards. As has been discussed earlier, there is a lot of subjectivity in these systems, and this has led to, although not spoken aloud by cleaners, feelings of subjectivity and unfairness, a finding which Franco-Santos et al. (2012) also discussed. No cleaner explicitly mentioned these feelings, but it became apparent from the actions some have taken, like prodding the clients for feedback, that such feelings exist. Prodding the clients in order to receive the MS rewards is something which the management has had negative feelings towards. Doing so in order to receive rewards also serves as to potentially damaging the relatedness of the cleaners, as it might damage the relationship between cleaners and clients, a relationship which serves as a big motivator for most. This finding also answers the call for research about how PMSs can lead to dysfunctional employee behaviours (Endrikat et al., 2020), as prodding can be seen as a dysfunctional behaviour from the cleaners.

Using monetary rewards as incentives for performance can thus damage the intrinsic motivation for cleaners, a finding which has been documented before (Kunz & Linder, 2012). Furthermore, such prodding may also affect motivation and wellbeing to a greater extent if one

considers the negative comments made by management about the development. Receiving affiliate rewards serves as a large motivational source for the cleaners, supporting feelings of competence, a finding in line which what Kunz and Linder (2012) documented about affiliative rewards. Such rewards, however, may diminish or lose their intrinsic value if the prodding leads to non-authentic performance being rewarded. Apart from the affiliate rewards cleaners receive from management, praise by peers was also important, but if the peers know that a cleaner received a reward mostly due to prodding, those praises might stop.

Although the inefficiency of the mentioned systems is apparent, receiving both monetary rewards and affiliate rewards are nonetheless appreciated by the cleaners if obtained. Thus, we argue that job satisfaction is indeed positively impacted, supporting the findings of Endrikat et al. (2020). Endrikat et al. (2020) also found that individual creativity was positively influenced by PMSs. One example we could observe of this was adapting the cleaning to fit the client's individual needs in order to reach higher customer satisfaction. One could even argue that encouraging the clients to give feedback is an instance where a creative solution can be observed as a consequence of the PMS, or rather its unfairness. We argue that this development has increased the psychological empowerment of the cleaners, as they seem to better understand the expectations placed on them and the behaviours needed to achieve said expectations. This finding resonates with the findings of both Endrikat et al. (2020) and Hall (2008).

The changes made recently to CleanCo's PMS in the QS system, has made steps to make the evaluation of cleaners fairer. As noted, the system is far from perfect, but it is at least more efficient than before, and the attitude towards the system seems increasingly positive. Thus, it can be concluded that the design, development and use of PMSs is important for its efficiency, something which Franco-Santos et al. (2012) highlighted.

As the PMS and the reward systems are interlinked, we cannot comment on the findings made by Chen et al. (2020) about the use of PMSs in isolation, however, their study also found that PMSs in combination with sharing information, will yield positive results on intrinsic motivation. We could observe that CleanCo has tried to make attempts at fostering more frequent communication between management and the cleaners, such as individual meetings and more Team Leader workplace visits. In line with Chen et al. (2020), we found these efforts to yield a positive impact on relatedness and competence and thus wellbeing. However, since the results of the QS system lies within the hands of management and not shared to a great extent with the cleaners, communication is somewhat hindered. Another possible hindrance to the information sharing is the wide emphasis on giving positive feedback to the cleaners over

negative feedback. This is a double-edged sword, it can be viewed as fostering feelings of competence, but as stated, also hinder effective communication and development of actual competence. Altogether, these findings are in line with Hall's (2016) notion, that the use of PMSs for evaluation can bring out positive and negative feelings. We can see this in the case at CleanCo, where the PMS and MS have both positive and negative implications on motivation and wellbeing.

In addition to the performance measurement that management formally implemented for strategic decision-making, which falls under the definition of PMS provided by Franco-Santos et al., (2012), our case revealed informal practices of the job that had strong ties to performance measurement and wellbeing. Company events such as weekly breakfasts acted as a place to provide short feedback, and spread affiliative rewards, thus fostering competence and relatedness among cleaners. In our case, the customer had a performance measurement function independent of the organization, naturally evaluating performance and providing feedback directly to their cleaners. Differently from for example the hotel industry, as explored by Bénet et al. (2022), most of the customers are regulars which we found to amplify the weight of their feedback and attitude towards the cleaners. The relationship with the customer was found to have a profound effect on wellbeing by fostering relatedness and playing part in internalizing the non intrinsically motivating words by giving it a higher purpose, providing a service for another person.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The high levels of work-related stress, anxiety and depression in the world and the calling for integrating emotions and well-being into the accounting field (Hall, 2016) led us to explore the relationship between performance measurement systems and employee wellbeing, an area which previously had received little attention in the accounting literature. The outset of this paper was hence to deepen the understanding of how performance measurement relates to individual wellbeing. In doing so, we conducted a case study of a Swedish cleaning company focusing on the lower-level employees with poor working conditions and low socio-economic status. Through seven in-depth interviews, a review of company documents, and a definition of wellbeing derived from SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), our study showcases several instances in which the formal PMS at CleanCo impacts employee wellbeing, namely through how the

QS, MS and feedback systems relate to autonomy, competence and relatedness, building upon the findings of Endrikat et al. (2020) and Bénet et al. (2022). Though our case is an instance where PMS seem to play a limited role towards motivation and wellbeing for the employees, our findings still suggest that designing fair and interactive PMS will foster wellbeing amongst employees, illustrating the importance of well-designed PMS. Thus, our study contributes to further understanding around the connection between PMSs and wellbeing. Additionally, our study highlights how practices not directly tied to the PMS such as interactions with the customers and company events can have an impact on both performance measurement and wellbeing. These findings contribute to expanding and understanding what performance measurement can include and how impactful such practices can be towards fostering wellbeing.

6.2 Limitations

The results of our findings and conclusions should be viewed in light of the limitations of our study. Our findings particularly explain how certain PMS and practices at CleanCo impacts wellbeing amongst their lower-level employees. We want to empathize that our findings may not apply to companies that operate in other industries or have vastly different means of measuring performance, or employees with occupations different to cleaning as they likely will have other needs and desires. Lastly, a general limitation when studying wellbeing is the inherent subjectivity and difficulty in defining it and the term. Our findings are hence somewhat limited to our perspective and definition.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Overall, we urge for future research to further integrate wellbeing into the academic discussion, especially on the individual level. Our study aimed to contribute to fill the gap in the accounting domain, regarding understanding the relationship between performance measurement and wellbeing. Whereas our case study was able to highlight some important connections between the two, the relationship remains largely unexplored, which calls for further research. Additionally, we believe that our findings regarding the motivational effects of the customer relationship constitute an intriguing area for further investigation. It would for example be interesting to observe how important the customers are to employees among different occupational groups in the service industry.

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