A Review of the Influence Factors of the Leniency Bias of Performance Evaluation

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Abstract. The leniency bias is one of the most common biases in performance evaluation. It has an adverse effect on the organization's performance evaluation. Based on the definition of performance appraisal bias, this paper discusses the common performance appraisal biases, summarizes the previous research on the influencing factors of leniency effect, and based on the performance appraisal system proposed by Landy and Farr Category summary, formed a systematic framework. Finally, the paper puts forward the insufficiency and suggestion of the research on the influence factors of the leniency bias.

1. Introduction

In today's economic and social competition is the talent competition, with the economic times, people become the important factor to the enterprise long-term sustainable development and realizing the strategic objectives of the organization. Managing and motivating employees, stimulating the vitality of talent has become an important task facing the complex economic and social. Human resources management has become the urgent need of modern social and economic life. Performance evaluation is an important part of human resource management. Proper performance evaluation helps to achieve employee management decisions, and improper performance appraisal results in internal contradictions, which is not conducive to the realization of organizational goals. The leniency bias of performance evaluation is a very important bias in the performance evaluation biases. Therefore, it is essential to understand the factors that affect the leniency bias of performance evaluation.

2. Performance Evaluation Bias

Performance Evaluation. Performance evaluation refers to by reference to performance standards, the use of scientific performance appraisal method to assess and assess the completion of the work objectives of staff, staff performance of the job responsibilities, personal development of staff, the personal development of the staff, feedback the evaluation results to the staff, and put forward the corresponding performance improvement proposals. It is a link or means in the process of performance management.

Western scholars have studied the performance evaluation for more than 80 years, and the evolution of overseas performance evaluation has gone through three stages. These three stages are the transformation of performance evaluation perspective. Before the 1980s to the main psychological measurement perspective, the main concern for the development of evaluation scale and evaluation of the training, in 1980s began to study focus on assessing the cognitive process, after 1990s, researchers began to pay attention to the influence of social environment on performance evaluation. Different from the rational cognitive process of the assessors in 80s, the evaluation of the raters in 90s began to study the emotions and motives of the raters. Levy et al. found two kinds of research related to the motivation of raters. One is about the influence of personal differences and the purpose of evaluation on the leniency evaluation, and the other is the influence of assessor accountability on evaluation. Levy et al. thinks that in the third stage, most
researchers hold a common idea that performance evaluation takes place in the social environment, and social environment plays an important role in the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the reaction of participants to the evaluation process. To truly understand and develop an effective performance evaluation system, it is necessary to identify, measure and define the organizational environment of the assessment. The three research perspectives are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are complementary[1].

**The Bias of Performance Evaluation.** The bias of performance evaluation refers to the difference between the results of performance evaluation and the true value of employee performance. The rater bias of performance evaluation can be divided into deliberate bias and unintentional bias. The types of intentional error include the leniency effect, the severe effect and the chemotaxis effect. Non intentional errors include contrast effect, halo effect, recency effect, the first effect and spillover effect, etc. The factors affecting the performance evaluation error: situational pressure, the evaluation process, measurement tools, assessed disposition, evaluation intentional adjustment, the assessment goals and intentions [2].

**Factors Influencing the Error of Leniency Bias.** Performance evaluation involves the problem of accuracy of the results. When the result is higher than the actual situation, it is known as the leniency bias, there are two cases: deliberate error and unintentional error.

The performance evaluation tool is affected by some inaccuracies or errors, subjective evaluation due to the lack of clearly defined standards and more likely to have large effect error, the evaluation index of low structured, will lead to ready to accept either course evaluation the evaluation index of the understanding deviation, evaluation of internal evaluation criteria of fuzzy will increase the possibility and effect of large, highly structured evaluation index can improve the assessment for the attention of key events, thereby reducing the possibility of the occurrence of leniency effect[3]. In order to make a subjective evaluation, the manager must make use of the prior information of the employees' ability to aggregate the noise signals of the performance evaluation. If a manager feels worse about unfavorable error than favorable error, even if he wants to evaluate accurately, his assessment will be better than that based on the signal given by employees and the transcendental belief of managers. As a result, more than half of the employees get a higher assessment than their actual ability. In addition, the leniency effect error will increase with the asymmetry of performance evaluation signal noise and manager's fairness preference. Therefore, the leniency effect error is based on the noise in the performance signal provided by the employee. Moreover, Colman and Bhatia think that the leniency effect error of performance evaluation will increase with the increase of signal noise, employee heterogeneity and preference asymmetry[3].

The error of the leniency effect is related to the evaluation purpose of the rater. When the manager's evaluation is used to determine the staff wages will have a leniency effect error, Kwong thinks leniency bias comes from the assessment to achieve certain goals, such as team harmony, and assessed to maintain a good relationship, and the error increases with leniency effect to enhance the relationship between the supervisor and employee[4]. The evaluation subject, the individual character of the rater, will also affect the accuracy of performance evaluation. Hamner, Kim, Baird and Bigoness found that gender will affect the accuracy of assessment. When evaluating performance in simulated work environment, the score of women is higher than that of men, especially for high performance. Borman found that the accuracy and leniency effect of performance evaluation strongly correlated with the degree of attention of the rater's intelligence and details. Jawahar and Williams believed that the error will increase as the manager's degree of altruism to the employee is deepened. Colman and Bhatia also argued that the high degree of altruism managers greater leniency effect prone to error, and this will lead to lower performance incentives, job performance and the overall decline in lower wages[3]. When the assessor cares more about the performance of the organization, it will reduce the employee's performance reward, which will bring almost no leniency bias, the reduction of employee performance and the reduction of the overall salary. Bernard in study shows that the most generous assessment is a suitable human nature, and not arbitrary, the lack of a sense of responsibility and ability of performance evaluation,
a highest effect of high and low humanity should evaluate the sense of responsibility that leads to the low agreeableness, high sense of responsibility that leads to the lowest leniency effect evaluation[5]. The influence of rater's emotion will affect the leniency effect of performance evaluation. Wayne and Liden found that subordinate's impression management can affect the subordinate's emotion in the subordinate's performance appraisal, resulting in the leniency effect in performance evaluation. Longenecker and other survey studies indicate that the emotional state of the raters is also an important factor affecting the assessment. Knez’s research on emotion and performance evaluation shows that when the rater is in a positive emotional state, it will make a high evaluation of the middle performance workers. Sinclair points out that it is difficult to make a clear judgement on the performance of the assessor when the rater is in a state of strong emotion. At the same time, the Sinclair study also found that the raters in the depressive state were more accurate in performance judgment. Daus found that the emotional state of the rater alone can not cause the leniency effect, but it influences the leniency effect through interaction with the emotional expression of the rater.

The characteristics of the subject of performance evaluation also affect the error of the leniency effect. The more valuable employees' work is, the more rewarding their performance will be, the larger the effect error will be, the better their performance will be, and the overall salary will also be higher[3].

The environmental factors of performance evaluation also affect its accuracy. This paper divides the environmental factors into social and organizational factors. Bernardin et al.[5] found that when the assessor evaluation data was not officially evaluated by the management, the leniency effect reached the maximum. The empirical research of Antonioni shows that when subordinates rated their superiors, the evaluation results of the subordinates who were asked to sign were significantly higher than those of anonymous subordinates[6]. In addition, the organizational financial budget and the morale of the organization will also affect the error of the leniency effect. Bernardin and Beatty point out that the leniency effect is more of the assessor's attitude in a specific organizational environment, not the judge's ability to judge.

In self-evaluation, there is also leniency bias. Farh and Dobbins believe that the self assessment of broad effect error is positively related to self-esteem. Via study shows that: (1) compared with objective evaluation, subjective evaluation is more likely to cause leniency effect, if the subjective assessment is to motivate the target, is more likely to cause leniency effect; (2) single qualitative objective than qualitative objectives much more susceptible to leniency effect; (3) proportion of qualitative and quantitative indicators and the error is proportional to the leniency effect; (4) the final evaluation period than assessment are more likely to have leniency bias. (5) the category of Incentive: The minimum score required for a final performance assessment approach to obtaining a reward is more likely to produce a leniency bias [7].

3. Summary
This paper uses Landy and Farr's model to divide leniency effect factors into three categories: role factors, including the rater and ratee; environmental factors, including the social and organizational environment factors; tools. On the basis of the above classification, this paper makes a systematic summary of the factors affecting the leniency bias of performance evaluation, as shown in Table 1.
Table 1. Factors affecting the leniency bias.

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<th>Role</th>
<th>Rater</th>
<th>Ratee</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gender, personality, intelligence, education level, ability, emotion, emotion, fairness preference, life experience, rater's motivation (avoid conflict, impression management, political skill, etc.), information collection completeness, information collection cost, etc.</td>
<td>employees’ work value, psychological attitude, understanding of assessment, living conditions, employee heterogeneity, etc.</td>
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<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>collectsives / individualism</td>
<td>the purpose of evaluation (management purpose, development purpose), assessment method, assessment time, organization culture, organization norm, internal politics, management restriction, organization budget condition, morale status in organization, performance evaluation and incentive mechanism are all evaluated</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Tools</strong></td>
<td>reliability and validity, index structure, index integrity, weight ratio of qualitative and quantitative tool index, definition of index</td>
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Research on performance evaluation of leniency bias in the past, mostly from the field of researchers or personal interests, is lack of systematic integration and difficult to further reveal the causes of errors in performance evaluation. From the perspective of systematic integration, future research can develop a complete framework system for organizations and scholars to better understand the cause of leniency bias.

References