

Performance Appraisal as a Motivational Tool in the Portuguese Public Administration.

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ABSTRACT

Considering that the Integrated System of Performance Management and Appraisal in the Public Sector (SIADAP) is a performance management tool – of the Portuguese public administration – that is yet barely explored by literature regarding its motivational effects, it is critical to obtain a better understanding of those effects.

So as to improve such knowledge, we have carried out an empirical study on SIADAP. The study focused on the civil servants assigned to three institutions, subject to performance appraisal through SIADAP; and it was based on a questionnaire that generated 334 valid responses, which were subjected to a statistical analysis of a descriptive and inferential nature.

The study concluded that SIADAP may be an important motivational tool, provided that the appraisees perceive it as an accurate and fair system, and are satisfied with it. However, the study also concluded that the keynote is that respondents consider this system as inaccurate, unfair and are unsatisfied with it. Therefore, the study suggests that SIADAP has a small role in motivating the Portuguese civil servants to improve their performance.

KEYWORDS: performance appraisal; motivation; professional performance; Portuguese public administration; SIADAP.

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1 – INTRODUCTION

The adequate human resources management that is available to an organisation translates into a growth of good organisational results. Thus, it has since long occupied the thinking of scholars and practitioners. However, the adequate management of the workforce is a difficult endeavour. In fact, it faces many obstacles: we may even compare it to a long road, winding and riddled with holes that must be avoided, so that the final destination is attained.

The following is an example of this difficulty: how can one explain the fact that two employees performing the same function, with a similar curriculum and receiving a similar wage, have an entirely different *professional performance*? There may be several explanations for this hypothetical scenario, but the one that is to be highlighted in the context of this research is as follows: such divergent performance may be attributed to the (distinct) *motivation* of those employees. Incidentally, this topic – motivation in the workplace – should be seen as a crucial component of employees' performance and one of the main points to consider when the understanding and explanation of individuals' behaviour in the organisational context is at stake (see Daniel and Metcalf, 2005).

Among the myriad of factors that may influence, either positively or negatively, employees' motivation – and, hence, their performance – this research study has focused on *performance appraisal*.

However, performance appraisal can only enhance employees' motivation provided that it meets some assumptions. Among these, and in line with diverse literature on the subject (see, for example, Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012), we think that the performance appraisal system will only be an effective motivational tool if the appraised individuals perceive their appraisals as accurate and fair, and are satisfied with them.

Considering that the *Integrated System of Performance Management and Appraisal in the Public Sector* (SIADAP) is a performance management tool – of the Portuguese public administration – that is yet barely explored by literature regarding its motivational effects, it is critical to obtain a better understanding of those effects.

With the purpose of improving such knowledge, we sought answers to the following questions related to the implementation of SIADAP:

- Is there any relationship between (1) the perception, on the part of civil servants, of the accuracy and justice in their performance appraisal and (2) the motivation they demonstrate to improve that performance?
- Is there any relationship between (1) the satisfaction of public servants with their performance appraisal and (2) the motivation they demonstrate to improve that performance?
- Do civil servants perceive their performance appraisal as accurate and fair?
- Are civil servants satisfied with this performance appraisal system?

So as to obtain these answers, we have prepared a questionnaire addressed to civil servants assigned to three Portuguese public higher education institutions; 334 valid responses were obtained, which were subjected to a statistical analysis of a descriptive and inferential nature.

The responses obtained contributed to the final objective of this research, embodied in the answer to the initial research question: *does SIADAP motivate civil servants to improve their performance?*

By answering the initial research question, we were more apt to assert whether what is referred to in subparagraph d) of article 6 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28 – which established the latest version of SIADAP – is actually attained in practical terms; that is, whether this performance appraisal system can meet its goal of “*promoting the motivation and the development of managers and employees’ skills and qualifications*”.

Our paper is divided into four sections: the first section is dedicated to the theoretical underpinnings and the working hypotheses; the second section puts forward the methodology used; the third section focuses on the analysis and discussion of the results attained; the fourth section presents the conclusions drawn from the research study.

2 – THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

2.1 – Introductory Aspects

Specialised literature abundantly proves the existence of a positive correlation between motivation and job performance (see, for example, Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012; Park and Word, 2012; Springer, 2011; Grant, 2008; DeNisi and Pritchard, 2006; Latham and Pinder, 2005; Knippenberg, 2000), nonetheless, performance depends also on other factors, given that it is considered as a function that combines ability and motivation (see, for example, the work by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, specifically: Latham, 2007; Latham and Locke, 2006; Locke and Latham, 2002).

The mentioned literature also demonstrates that motivated employees are – by increased performance at work – a source of competitive advantage for organisations (see, for example, Park and Word, 2012; Steers, Mowday and Shapiro, 2004), that is, “motivated employees play a key role in organization success” (Drake, Wong and Salter, 2007: 71). The ultimate goal of motivating employees is, therefore, to increase the performance of organisations globally considered.

That said, “what specific factors will motivate employees to perform most productively?” (DeKay, 2013: 249). If we start, for example, from the statement of Pinder (2012) on motivation in the workplace, we may foresee serious difficulties in obtaining a complete answer to the question raised.

In fact, Pinder (2012) refers the *motivation* construct as the set of internal and external forces that trigger a behaviour related to work and that determine the shape, direction, intensity and duration of that behaviour. Therefore, the difficulty in answering the above question comes from the multitude of factors that may affect motivation: (1) the characteristics of each employee; (2) the characteristics of the organisation’s environment, whether internal or external; (3) the specific characteristics of each job and its execution, highlighting, from among these, the *appraisal of individual performance*, the clarity of objectives to be attained or the level of challenge required by the job (Perry and Porter, 1982; Porter and Miles, 1974).

Within the scope of this research study, we will stick to one of these factors: the *performance appraisal system*, understood according to the definition put forward by Kondrasuk (2012). This author understands the performance appraisal system as a system

that combines the following elements: the definition of the employee's professional objectives and expectations; the actual performance of the employee; the appraisal of that performance; the feedback of the performance appraisal, including the indication of how it may be improved in the future; and, finally, the definition of professional objectives and expectations for a new appraisal period.

The specialised literature argues that the performance appraisal process may improve employees' motivation (see, for example, Prasad, 2015; Singh and Rana, 2014; Pichler, 2012; Latham and Locke, 1991); and, even, that a major goal of that process is, precisely, to motivate employees to improve their performance or change their behaviour (see, for example, Roberson and Stewart, 2006).

The *Integrated System of Performance Management and Appraisal in the Public Sector* (SIADAP) itself, the subject of this research, establishes this perspective by having, as one of its objectives, the promotion of managers and employees' motivation (see subparagraph d) of article 6 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28).

2.2 – Integrated System of Performance Management and Appraisal in the Public Sector

Let us begin, then, by characterising SIADAP. First and foremost, it has introduced the performance appraisal in the Portuguese public administration for all levels (services, managers, employees without leadership positions). For that purpose, it encompasses the following three subsystems:

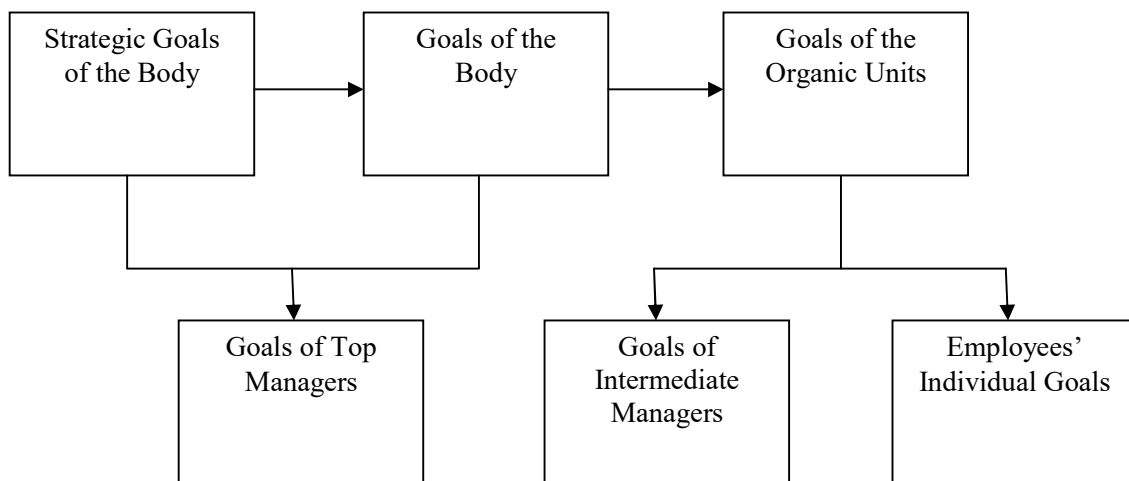
- Subsystem of Performance Appraisal of Public Administration Services, abbreviated to SIADAP 1;
- Subsystem of Performance Appraisal of Public Administration Managers, abbreviated to SIADAP 2;
- Subsystem of Performance Appraisal of Administration Employees, abbreviated to SIADAP 3.

These subsystems work together and consistently (1) with the objectives set out by the planning system of each ministry, (2) with the objectives inherent in the service management cycle, (3) with the objectives set out in the mission statement of senior

managers, (4) with the objectives set out for the remaining managers and employees (see art. 9 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28).

So as to attain such integration and coherence, in the last quarter of each calendar year preceding the new appraisal cycle there is an alignment of the goals of the three appraisal subsystems, through the planning stage of the appraisal process.

Figure 1 – SIADAP: integrated appraisal



Source: Adapted from Rato (2009: 7)

By observing what is established in Articles 61 to 75 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28, which deal with the appraisal process, there is a clear convergence of SIADAP and the logic of *Management by Objectives* (MbO).

Following the MbO's perspective, the objectives are set out, both for public services and for employees (including the managers), in a top-down perspective, from which the appraisal can be carried out.

With regard to employees (SIADAP 3), at the start of the biennial appraisal cycle, a meeting is carried out between manager-appraiser and employee-appraiser, in which the parameters of the subsequent individual performance appraisal are negotiated and contracted: the *results* to be attained in pursuit of the individual *goals* (of efficacy, quality, efficiency, improvement and development); the *competences* (knowledge, technical and

behavioural skills) to demonstrate (see Arts. 45 and 46 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28).

It should be stressed that the objectives to attain and the skills to demonstrate should be defined in a negotiated manner, but if there is irreducible disagreement between the parties, the position of the manager-appraiser will prevail. It should also be noted that the skills to develop by employees are chosen from a list approved at the governmental level.

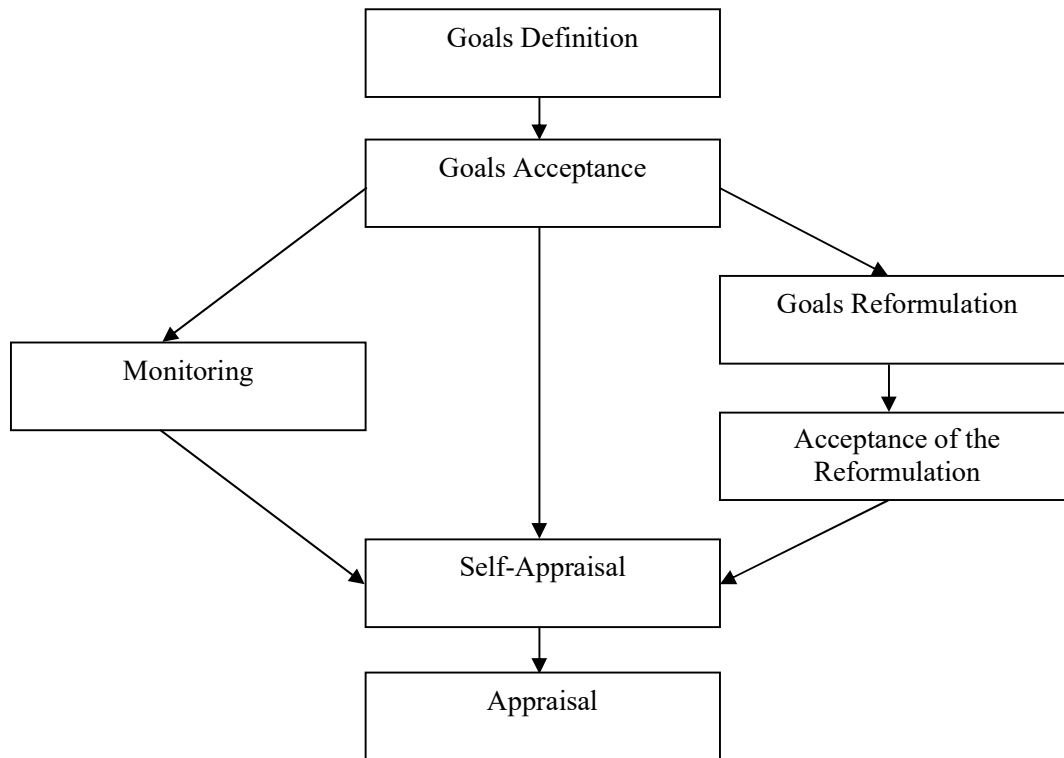
During the appraisal cycle, appropriate measures to monitor performance should be taken, and the respective joint analysis between appraiser and appraisee should be made. This aims at: (1) allowing the reformulation of goals and results to be attained, in case of occurrence of conditions that prevent the planned course of the event; (2) the clarification of aspects that may be useful to the future act of appraisal; (3) the participatory collection of reflections on the effective development of performance.

To conclude, the final performance appraisal is the weighted average of the scores obtained in the two appraisal parameters, wherein the parameter 'results' has a minimum weighting of 60% and the parameter 'skills' has a maximum weighting of 40%; this demonstrates the preponderance attributed to the results attained in the pursuit of individual goals.

The final performance appraisal, obtained as indicated above, is expressed in the following qualitative mentions: (a) 'relevant performance'; (b) 'adequate performance'; (c) 'inadequate performance'.

At the end of the appraisal cycle, a meeting takes place, in which (1) the appraiser informs the appraisee of the qualitative mention obtained by him/her, (2) the evolution profile demonstrated by the appraisee is analysed and (3) his/her expectations of professional development are identified.

Figure 2 – Managers and employees’ appraisal within the scope of SIADAP



Source: *website* of Entity of Shared Services of Public Administration (<https://www.siadap.gov.pt/PaginasPublicas/TrabalhadoresEDirigentes.aspx>, accessed on May 2, 2015)

Just a brief note to one of the aspects of SIADAP that raises more controversy: the establishment of ‘quotas’ for higher qualitative mentions. Indeed, given the provisions of paragraph 1 of article 75 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28, the differentiation of performances is guaranteed by fixing the maximum percentage of 25% for mentions of ‘relevant performance’ and, of these, a maximum of 5% of all employees can get ‘excellent performance’.

After the universe of employees on which the quotas focus is determined, and after the maximum number of ‘relevant performances’ and ‘excellent performances’ that can be assigned is calculated, the top manager of the service is responsible for distributing that number by the several existing careers, being responsible for ensuring that this distribution is proportionate (see paragraph 2 of article 75 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28).

To conclude, we highlight the fact that individual performance appraisal has effects on the appraisees' professional life. Indeed, it will result – or not – in the allocation of performance bonuses and in the change of the pay positioning in the employee's career (see Law 12-A/2008, of February 27); additionally, in the event that there is a change of the pay positioning, it has been blocked in recent years due to the constraints of Portuguese public finances.

2.3 – Working Hypotheses

Does SIADAP motivate and, consequently, improve the performance of Portuguese civil servants? So as to answer this question, it is critical to determine, first and foremost, which factors related to the performance appraisal systems may generate positive responses from employees and, thus, motivate them to improve their performance.

Park and Word (2012: 707), for example, posit that “work motivation is directly linked to an employee's perceptions and behaviors”. In turn, specialised literature provides abundant evidence that the perceptions and subsequent reactions to the performance appraisal and to the appraisal process have a significant impact on their acceptance and validity and, hence, on the overall effectiveness of that appraisal (see Iqbal, Akbar and Budhwar, 2015; Dusterhoff, Cunningham and MacGregor, 2014; Kuvaas, 2011; Levy and Williams, 2004, Keeping and Levy, 2000; Cawley, Keeping and Levy, 1998; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). Specifically, and referring, once again, to the specialised literature (see Cowandy, 2014; Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012, 2009; Roberson and Stewart, 2006), the perception of justice, in its three dimensions (distributive – fair results; procedural – fair procedures; interactional – fair interpersonal treatment), the perception of accuracy and the satisfaction with the performance appraisal encompass the set of factors that may motivate the appraisees to improve their performance.

Our first three working hypotheses derive from what has been set out above:

- **Hypothesis 1:** The perception of accuracy on the performance appraisal is positively related to the motivation to improve the performance.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Satisfaction with the performance appraisal is positively related to the motivation to improve the performance.

- **Hypothesis 3:** The perception of justice in the performance appraisal is positively related to the motivation to improve the performance.

Various links between the perception of justice and the perception of accuracy have also been identified in the specialised literature. For example, Selvarajan and Cloninger (2012) state that the errors present in a performance appraisal process, which negatively influence the perception of the accuracy of that process, lead the appraisees to perceive their appraisals as unfair.

We formulate, then, the fourth working hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 4:** The perception of accuracy on the performance appraisal is positively related to the perception of justice of that appraisal.

We now explore the hypothesis that the satisfaction expressed with the performance appraisal system is related to the perception of organisational justice. Cook and Crossman (2004: 526), for example, are emphatic regarding this: “The literature suggests that people will only be satisfied with a performance appraisal (PA) process if it fulfils the criteria of ‘fairness’”.

Other authors also advocate that satisfaction with the performance appraisal system is positively related to the perceived justice of that system by the appraisees (see, for example, Cowandy, 2014; Akhtar and Khattak, 2013; Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012; Kluger and DeNisi, 1996; Pooyan and Eberhardt, 1989; Mount, 1984, 1983), which originates our fifth hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 5:** The perception of justice in the performance appraisal is positively related to the satisfaction felt towards that appraisal.

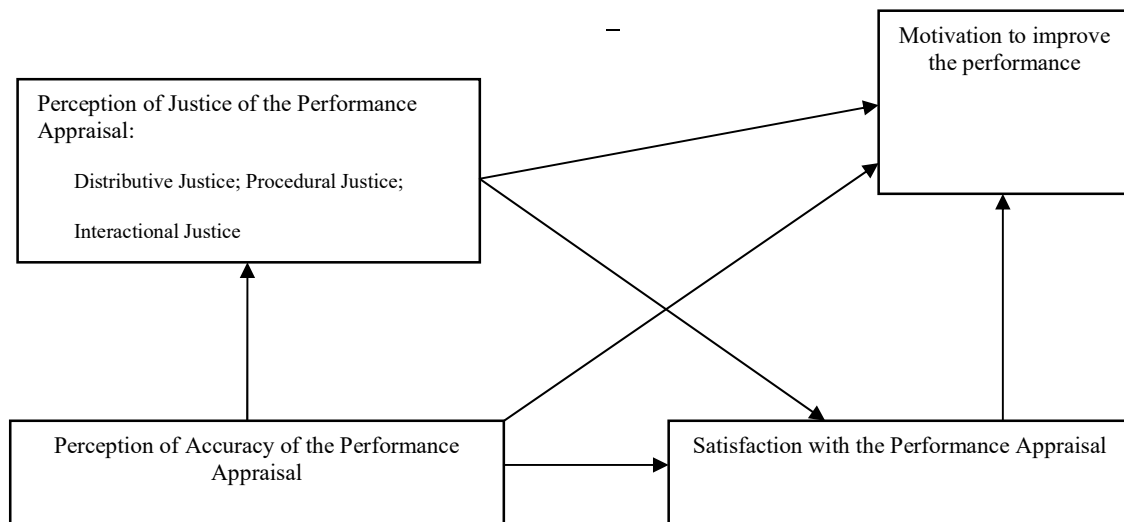
With regard to the relationship between the perception of accuracy of the performance appraisal by the appraisees and their satisfaction with the performance appraisal, we refer to Selvarajan and Cloninger (2012). These authors corroborated this link in their study on the perceptions of Mexican employees, having concluded that “appraisals that were perceived as more accurate were related to higher levels of appraisal satisfaction” (*Ibidem*: 3076).

We formulate, then, the sixth and final working hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 6:** The perception of accuracy on the performance appraisal is positively related to the satisfaction felt towards that appraisal.

Based on the aforementioned six working hypotheses, we have built the following *theoretical-conceptual model* (Figure 3). The aim of this model is to test the extent to which SIADAP can motivate Portuguese civil servants to improve their performance.

Figure 3 – Theoretical-conceptual model



Source: Own production (2016)

3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A questionnaire was design, aiming to collect data for analysis and discussion, and, thus, test the research hypotheses. The questionnaire was divided into groups, each of which contained statements/items, each group being associated with a variable from the model ('motivation to improve the performance'; 'perception of interactional justice in the performance appraisal'; 'satisfaction with the performance appraisal'; etc.); with the exception of the last group, which was dedicated to general data, of a biographical and

demographic nature (age, gender, educational level, professional category, etc.). Finally, respondents were asked to comment on the themes from the questionnaire.

The operationalisation of the variables was adapted from previous research studies on the issues under analysis, although some items have been added, which related to specific issues of the functioning of SIADAP.

Thus, the operationalisation of the variable *Motivation to improve the performance* was based on studies carried out by Roberson and Stewart (2006) and Brudney and Condrey (1993). We highlight the authors used for the operationalisation of the other variables: *Perception of the accuracy of the performance appraisal* – Vest, Scott and Tarnoff (1995) and Brudney and Condrey (1993); *Perception of the interactional justice of the performance appraisal* – Colquitt (2001) and Moorman (1991); *Perception of the distributive justice of the performance appraisal* – Colquitt (2001) and Korsgaard and Roberson (1995); *Perception of the procedural justice of the performance appraisal* – Colquitt (2001) and own production; *Satisfaction with the performance appraisal* – Colquitt (2001) and Greller (1978).

A scale of classification by items, specifically the Likert scale, was used, with the following positions: 1 – I strongly disagree; 2 – I disagree; 3 – I neither agree nor disagree; 4 – I agree; 5 – I totally agree.

After the operationalisation, in the first months of 2013 a pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out, so as to verify aspects such as its language, validity and reliability. Thus, the *item-total correlation* was made and the *Cronbach's alpha coefficient* was determined, in order to assess the internal consistency of the instrument, given that the higher the consistency, the more the wordings of the items are correlated with each other, and the greater the homogeneity. In short, the pre-test allowed identifying and correcting the weaknesses of this draft version of the questionnaire, and building its final version, to be sent to respondents.

Subsequently to the process described above, the procedures for data collection took place. Due to constraints of time and financial resources, it proved impossible to consider the population of all Portuguese civil servants appraised by SIADAP. Thus, we considered the population of all civil servants from three public higher education institutions, totalling

2,247 individuals, who are subject to the performance appraisal through SIADAP. The three public institutions of the central region of mainland Portugal are here referred to as:

- *Alfa institution*, with 391 individuals (17%);
- *Beta institution*, with 1,770 individuals (79%);
- *Gama institution*, with 86 individuals (4%)⁴.

The individuals to inquire were contacted, between May and June 2013, via an email message with the information of the study's purposes, the estimated duration of the questionnaire completion, its confidential nature and the link to access the questionnaire. There was obtained, in return, 334 questionnaires completed and considered valid.

After the period of data collection, data were exported to the Excel and, subsequently, to the SPSS 22 software, so as to organise and systematise the information and perform statistical analysis, in its descriptive and inferential aspects.

4 – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The minimum size of the sample– required to enable the research – depends on several factors, one being the type of statistical analysis to use. As each statistical technique requires a certain minimum size, it is important to select the biggest of these sizes.

The multivariate statistical techniques, such as factor analysis, require large samples. Several recommendations have been proposed on the n sample size to consider in factor analysis. Some authors propose a minimum value for the sample size, others suggest a minimum value for the ratio between the sample size and the number of items to be analysed. For example, Gorsuch (1983), in line with Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (2005), suggests that the n sample size should be, at least, 100, and that there should be a minimum of five respondents per item. In turn, Cattell (1978) argues that 250 is the minimum recommended number for n and that there should be between three and six respondents per item. Comrey and Lee (1992) propose a scale to describe the adequacy of

⁴ The names of the HEIs used in this work are fictitious, so as to preserve anonymity and confidentiality that we have committed to respect.

the sample size in factor analysis: 100 = poor; 200 = reasonable; 300 = good; 500 = very good; 1000 or more = excellent.

In the absence of consensus regarding the minimum sample size, we were aware that the higher it was, the greater the accuracy of the results.

Of the 439 questionnaires received, 94 were immediately excluded on the grounds of not having been completed in full. 345 fully completed questionnaires remained, of which we excluded 11, for three distinct reasons:

- 1) Two questionnaires were excluded because respondents reported that they had never been appraised under the current version of SIADAP, deriving from Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28;
- 2) Seven questionnaires were excluded because respondents reported that they had never been appraised;
- 3) Two questionnaires were excluded because respondents reported that they were not assigned to any of the institutions covered by this research study.

The sample size was, thus, $n = 334$. There was a significant agreement between the distribution of the subjects of the sample by the institutions covered and the distribution of elements of the population by the institutions covered.

Concerning gender, 71% of the individuals from the sample are women. In terms of age, 32.3% of the individuals from the sample were between 30 and 39 years old, 31.4% were between 50 and 59 years old, and 30.8% were between 40 and 49 years old. Only 5.5% of the individuals from the sample were under 30 years old and over 60 years old. In terms of the educational level, only 33.2% of the individuals from the sample had no higher education qualification, which justifies that almost 50% of the respondents had professional category of 'senior technician', followed by the category of 'technical assistant', with about 37%. Finally, regarding the institution where respondents carried out their work, the majority (68.6%) reported the Beta Higher Education Institution (university), whereas 28.7% reported having a contractual relationship with the Alfa Higher Education Institution (polytechnic institute). Only 9 (i.e., 2.7%) are connected to the Gama Higher Education Institution (school of polytechnic nature, although not integrated).

We began our statistical analysis by applying the *confirmatory factor analysis* technique to the variables. So as to test the validity of the implementation of this technique, we used the *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics* (KMO), whose values are between 0 and 1, wherein the higher these values, the more appropriate the implementation of factor analysis. In our case, the values obtained were, at least, 0.775 (see *Table 1*).

According to Pestana and Gageiro (2008), Kaiser describes the adequacy of factor analysis as *very good*, *good* and *medium* if KMO varies between 0.9 and 1, between 0.8 and 0.9 and between 0.7 and 0.8, respectively. Therefore, it proved appropriate to use factor analysis and, as such, we applied it to the set of items that compose the variables under study, with the purpose of confirming the existence of a single factor (variable).

Table 1 also presents the values of *commonalities*, which represent the ratio of variance of each item explained by the factors retained. Usually, the minimum acceptable value is 0.5, but if there is theoretical justification for the permanence of the item, we can accept slightly lower values. We stress that, on three variables (i.e., '*Motivation to improve the performance*'; '*Perception of the accuracy of the performance appraisal*', and '*Satisfaction with the performance appraisal*'), we excluded one item from the analysis due to the very low value of commonality.

We have also found that the *factor loadings* (which represent the contribution of each item to each factor) are high, all higher than 0.5, and that the variance explained by the single retained factor, in each case, is higher than 60%. These results confirm, statistically, the existence of a single factor for each set of items.

Afterwards, the *Cronbach's alpha coefficient* and the *item-total correlation* were calculated and analysed. As depicted in *Table 1*, no problems were detected at this level since (a) all item-total correlations present values higher than 0.200 and (b) Cronbach's alpha values are located above 0.700 (see Maroco and Garcia-Marques, 2006). It is also noted that the elimination of any of the items would not increase – or increase insignificantly – the value of the Cronbach's alpha. Thus, it would not improve the internal consistency of the items.

Table 1 – Results of factor analysis and internal consistency of the items

| Variable | Items of the questionnaire | I | II | III | IV |
|--|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Motivation to improve the performance | SIADAP encourages me to increase the amount of work that I do | 0.895 | 0.800 | 0.840 | 0.968 |
| | SIADAP leads me to try to do a better work | 0.934 | 0.873 | 0.897 | 0.959 |
| | SIADAP encourages me to improve the quality of my work | 0.966 | 0.934 | 0.945 | 0.951 |
| | SIADAP encourages me to improve performance | 0.954 | 0.910 | 0.926 | 0.954 |
| | SIADAP increases my commitment to work well | 0.943 | 0.889 | 0.909 | 0.957 |
| KMO=0.912; Explained variance=88.119%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.966 | | | | | |
| Perception of the interactional justice of the performance appraisal | The appraiser treated me with dignity and respect | 0.902 | 0.814 | 0.846 | 0.898 |
| | The appraiser took my standpoints into account | 0.906 | 0.821 | 0.851 | 0.896 |
| | The appraiser was able to avoid personal prejudices | 0.892 | 0.796 | 0.832 | 0.899 |
| | The appraiser provided timely feedback on my performance and its implications | 0.822 | 0.676 | 0.739 | 0.913 |
| | The appraiser showed concern for my rights as an employee | 0.877 | 0.770 | 0.815 | 0.901 |
| | The appraiser refrained from making inadequate and inappropriate comments and observations | 0.676 | 0.457 | 0.574 | 0.932 |
| KMO=0.911; Explained variance=72.220%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.921 | | | | | |
| Perception of the distributive justice of the performance appraisal | The final classifications obtained by me reflect the effort I put into my work | 0.943 | 0.889 | 0.910 | 0.967 |
| | The final classifications obtained for me are appropriate for the work I have accomplished | 0.946 | 0.895 | 0.916 | 0.966 |
| | The final classifications obtained by me reflect what I have contributed to the organisation | 0.947 | 0.898 | 0.917 | 0.966 |
| | The final classifications obtained by me are fair | 0.961 | 0.924 | 0.938 | 0.963 |
| | I agree with my final classifications | 0.948 | 0.899 | 0.918 | 0.966 |
| KMO=0.893; Explained variance =90.090%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.972 | | | | | |
| Perception of the procedural justice of the performance appraisal | The procedures used in the appraisals of my performance are fair, appropriate and impartial | 0.816 | 0.665 | 0.743 | 0.888 |
| | The procedures took place within the legally established deadlines | 0.722 | 0.521 | 0.635 | 0.899 |
| | Those procedures were applied consistently | 0.839 | 0.704 | 0.780 | 0.885 |
| | I was able to express my opinions and feelings during those procedures | 0.652 | 0.425 | 0.563 | 0.904 |
| | Those procedures are based on accurate and rigorous information | 0.837 | 0.700 | 0.772 | 0.886 |
| | I was able to influence the decisions that resulted from those procedures, namely with regard to my final classifications | 0.718 | 0.516 | 0.630 | 0.898 |
| | Those procedures are free from preconceived ideas | 0.818 | 0.670 | 0.743 | 0.889 |
| | Those procedures are based on ethical and moral standards | 0.800 | 0.641 | 0.721 | 0.891 |
| KMO=0.895; Explained variance =60.515%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.905 | | | | | |
| Perception of the accuracy of the performance appraisal | The performance appraisals were rigorous and accurate | 0.87 | 0.757 | 0.748 | 0.771 |
| | The final classifications obtained are based more on favouritism than on the actual performance of individuals (R) | 0.701 | 0.492 | 0.530 | 0.866 |
| | Performance appraisals describe with accuracy and precision my strengths and my weaknesses | 0.874 | 0.718 | 0.699 | 0.794 |
| | Performance appraisals reflect with accuracy and precision my real performance | 0.886 | 0.785 | 0.756 | 0.765 |
| KMO=0.775; Explained variance =68.792%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.843 | | | | | |
| Satisfaction with the performance appraisal | The final classifications I received are acceptable | 0.865 | 0.748 | 0.784 | 0.888 |
| | Overall, I am satisfied with the appraisal system (SIADAP) used to appraise my performance | 0.789 | 0.622 | 0.684 | 0.908 |
| | From my standpoint, the appraisal meetings with my appraiser were a satisfactory experience | 0.850 | 0.723 | 0.758 | 0.893 |
| | I am satisfied with the final classifications I received | 0.891 | 0.794 | 0.821 | 0.880 |
| | Overall, I am satisfied with the appraisal meetings with my appraiser | 0.892 | 0.796 | 0.820 | 0.881 |
| KMO=0.797; Explained variance =73.667%; Cronbach's Alpha =0.910 | | | | | |

I – Factor loading II – Commonality III – Correlation item-total IV – Cronbach Alfa if the item were eliminated

Source: Own production (2016)

Once the variables were constructed, we verified their normality, so as to decide which of the techniques should be used: parametric or nonparametric techniques. We applied the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (with Lilliefors correction)* and concluded that none of the variables follows normal distribution. Thus, in order to test our research hypotheses, we used the *Spearman correlation coefficient* and the respective *significance test*.

Table 2 – Correlation between the variables of the proposed theoretical-conceptual model

| | <i>Motivation</i> | <i>Interactional justice</i> | <i>Distributive justice</i> | <i>Procedural justice</i> | <i>Accuracy</i> | <i>Satisfaction</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <i>Motivation</i> | 1 | 0.216 | 0.269 | 0.297 | 0.352 | 0.295 |
| <i>Interactional justice</i> | 0.216 | 1 | – | – | 0.634 | 0.711 |
| <i>Distributive justice</i> | 0.269 | – | 1 | – | 0.760 | 0.795 |
| <i>Procedural justice</i> | 0.297 | – | – | 1 | 0.751 | 0.760 |
| <i>Accuracy</i> | 0.352 | 0.634 | 0.760 | 0.751 | 1 | 0.824 |
| <i>Satisfaction</i> | 0.295 | 0.711 | 0.795 | 0.760 | 0.824 | 1 |

Source: own production (2016)

The results presented in *Table 2* allow concluding that all correlations are positive. It should be added that all correlations are highly significant, given that all test values associated to the respective unilateral tests of significance of the Spearman correlation coefficient are lower than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$)⁵. Therefore, we can extrapolate to the population, with high confidence, the conclusions drawn from the study sample.

We conclude, thus, that the research hypotheses formulated, which we state again, are to be validated:

⁵ The convention used in this study as to whether the correlation between variables is, or is not, significant was the following: the correlation is not significant if $p \geq 0.050$; significant if $p < 0.050$; very significant if $p < 0.010$; and highly significant if $p < 0.001$.

- **Hypothesis 1** – employees who have a better perception of accuracy on the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to be more motivated to improve their performance;
- **Hypothesis 2** – employees who are more satisfied with the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to be more motivated to improve their performance;
- **Hypothesis 3** – employees who have a better perception of justice in the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to be more motivated to improve their performance;
- **Hypothesis 4** – employees who have a better perception of accuracy on the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to attribute greater justice to it;
- **Hypothesis 5** – employees who have a better perception of justice in the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to express higher satisfaction with it;
- **Hypothesis 6** – employees who have a better perception of precision in the performance appraisal based on SIADAP tend to express higher satisfaction with it.

This research study concluded, thus, that: SIADAP, the current performance appraisal system of Portuguese civil servants, may be an important motivational tool, provided that the appraisees perceive it as an accurate, fair system, and are satisfied with it.

These results are in line with diverse literature on this topic. Consider, for example, the following: the performance appraisals perceived as accurate will have a greater motivational effect for improving the appraisees' performance (see, for example, Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012; Roberson and Stewart, 2006); there is a positive relationship between the appraisees' satisfaction and the motivation to improve their performance (see DeNisi and Pritchard, 2006); the performance appraisals perceived as fair will have a greater motivational effect to improve the appraisees' performance (see Cowandy, 2014; Selvarajan and Cloninger, 2012, 2009).

In general, this is in line with what Kuhlman (2010) advocates. This author stresses that the performance appraisal will originate organisational beneficial effects only if it is implemented within the framework of a culture of transparency and acceptance of appraisal tools by all stakeholders.

And how do appraisees perceive SIADAP? To help answer this question, we calculated some descriptive statistics of the responses from the 334 employees; the results are depicted in *Table 3*.

For a better understanding of the values presented in *Table 3*, we recall that respondents had to indicate their perception as to each of the items from the questionnaire, marking one of the following values of the scale: 1 – I strongly disagree; 2 – I disagree; 3 – I neither agree nor disagree; 4 – I agree; 5 – I totally agree.

Table 3 – Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | \bar{x} | Md | Q _{1/4} | Q _{3/4} | Mo | x _{min} | x _{max} |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|------------------|------------------|----|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Motivation</i> | 2.19 | 2.00 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Satisfaction</i> | 2.58 | 2.55 | 2.00 | 3.28 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Accuracy</i> | 2.38 | 2.25 | 1.77 | 3.00 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Distributive justice</i> | 2.56 | 2.00 | 1.60 | 3.80 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Procedural justice</i> | 2.64 | 2.63 | 2.00 | 3.24 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| <i>Interactional justice</i> | 3.30 | 3.32 | 2.62 | 4.00 | 4 | 1 | 5 |

Source: own production (2016)

As it may be observed, (a) on all items we have $x_{\min} = 1$ and $x_{\max} = 5$; (b) all variables have relatively low means and medians, except for the highest values regarding ‘Perception of the interactional justice of the performance appraisal’ (3.30; 3.32); (c) the value of the mode is very low (usually, the ‘1 – I strongly disagree’), except, once again, the case of ‘Perception of the interactional justice of the performance appraisal’ (‘4 – I agree’).

In short, we found that the respondents/appraisees tend to express, regarding the performance appraisal by SIADAP:

- relatively low perception of the accuracy, distributive justice and procedural justice of that appraisal;
- relatively low satisfaction with that appraisal;
- somewhat high perception of the interactional justice of that appraisal;

- *and, as desideratum, that the appraisal by SIADAP does not motivate them to improve their performance.*

Based on the *Mann-Whitney U* and *Kruskal-Wallis* nonparametric tests, we sought to ascertain whether the variables under analysis diverge according to (1) the respondents' professional category; (2) their gender; (3) the fact that they have had, or not, responsibilities as appraisers; (4) the institution where they work; (5) the qualifications held; (6) their age; or (7) the last year they have been informed of the classification of their performance appraisal.

Not considering exceptions of a residual nature, the results of the tests showed no statistically significant differences, given that the test values are higher than 0.05. There is, then, statistical evidence that allows us asserting that the (weak) results attained are similar, regardless of differences in the characteristics of the subjects from the sample, listed in the previous paragraph.

Therefore, the results of this research study suggest, concerning the population, that the performance appraisal tool used in the Portuguese public administration, known as SIADAP, has failed in achieving one of its main goals, which is even written in the legal act that established it (subparagraph d) of article 6 of Law No. 66-B/2007, of December 28): the motivation of Portuguese civil servants.

While the performance appraisal is a motivational factor and, as referred to in *sub-section 2.1.* of this text, considering the plentiful evidence in literature of a positive correlation between motivation and job performance; then, the results of this research study *indicate* that SIADAP is a negative contribution to the functioning of the Portuguese public administration. Thus, "a tool that seeks to improve the performance may be causing the exact opposite" (Rego, Marques, Leal, Sousa and Cunha, 2010: 1547).

There is the need to determine what lies behind these poor results. Drawing on literature, specifically the study by Kondrasuk and associates (Kondrasuk, 2012; Kondrasuk, Crowell, Dillon, Kilzer and Teeley, 2008), we can infer, in a first instance, that *this dissatisfaction may stem from the mistakes that are common to the performance appraisal processes*, which are included the following four categories:

- Problems with the purposes and goals of the performance appraisal: different perceptions of these purposes and goals by different appraisers, between appraisers and appraisees, etc.;
- Problems with the actors involved in the performance appraisal process: stereotypes, appraisees' expectations, etc.;
- Problems with what is appraised: difficulty in appraising employees whose functions are diverse, performed atypically or the result of which is difficult or impossible to quantify, as it often happens in the public administrative sector, etc.;
- Problems with the system and the performance appraisal process: poor – or no – use of the results attained, inadequate timing of the performance appraisal process, etc.

In this concrete case, the imposition of quotas for qualitative mentions of 'relevant performance' and, from among these, for the mentions of 'excellent performance', seems to be a clear problem. There is even literature stressing the imposition of quotas as the major reason for the contention of Portuguese civil servants against SIADAP (see Parrinha and Barbosa, 2011; Pereira, 2009; Vaz, 2008). Likewise, the data obtained in the empirical study carried out by Serrano (2011: 61) show that the majority of the stakeholders involved in the appraisal process state that the model does not ensure performance differentiation and appreciation, due to the existence of quotas.

5 – CONCLUSIONS

The research question of this research study was as follows: '*does SIADAP motivate civil servants to improve their performance?*'

So as to answer the question, we started by making some theoretical references, aiming to establish the link between performance appraisal and motivation. Specifically, we tried to build a link between the perception of accuracy of that appraisal, the perception of justice (distributive, procedural and interactional) of that appraisal, the satisfaction with that appraisal and, finally, the motivation generated by that appraisal.

Six working hypotheses resulted from this initial work, which embodied a conceptual model. This model was tested in a population of 2,247 civil servants who are subject to performance appraisal via SIADAP, assigned to three public higher education institutions of the central region of mainland Portugal.

The six working hypotheses were accepted for the considered population, which indicates that SIADAP, as a performance appraisal system of Portuguese civil servants, may be an important motivational tool, provided that the appraisees perceive it is accurate, fair, and are satisfied with it. This was the first finding of this study.

However, we infer that respondents tend to express, towards the performance appraisal by SIADAP:

- Relatively low perception of the accuracy, distributive justice and procedural justice of that appraisal;
- Relatively low satisfaction with that appraisal;
- Somewhat high perception of the interactional justice of that appraisal;
- *And, as desideratum, that the appraisal by SIADAP does not motivate them to improve their performance.* This was the *second finding* of this study.

The concatenation of the two conclusions obtained from this study *suggests*, therefore, that SIADAP is a negative contribution to the functioning of the Portuguese public administration.

However, we recall that the results cannot be generalised to all Portuguese civil servants. For that purpose, they are mere *indications*. What to say, so as to conclude this paper?

The appeal to the effective and efficient functioning of the Portuguese public administration is on the agenda. As a consequence, that is an appeal to the appropriate professional performance of its workforce, which, in turn, requires its motivation.

Performance appraisal is a motivational factor and, thus, it proves pertinent that other research studies speak out, either on the explanations of the poor results attained by this research, or on the adequacy of the two conclusions of this research study to the universe of Portuguese public servants appraised by SIADAP.

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