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**THE MECHANISM OF EMPLOYEE IDEA
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS:
AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
INTENTION-BEHAVIOUR GAP AND THE
ROLE OF FEEDBACK PROCESSES**

Thesis booklet of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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1 BACKGROUND, RELEVANCE, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

1.1 Rationale for topic selection and research relevance

Corporate innovation capability increasingly depends on the utilisation of collective knowledge accumulated within the organisation. Employees' improvement proposals draw on direct knowledge of processes and therefore convey practical knowledge that is only partially visible at the level of strategic decision-making. Employee suggestion systems (ESS) provide the institutional framework for the systematic collection, evaluation and utilisation of this knowledge.

The existence of a formal system does not in itself ensure repeated participation. Protracted review processes, substantively poor or generic feedback, insufficient justification of rejections and uncertainty in the allocation of responsibilities may weaken motivation to submit further ideas. The dissertation therefore applies the theoretical framework of the Intention-Behaviour Gap (IBG) to the organisational context of employee idea management. It does not, however, track actual future idea submissions; it directly examines the organisational conditions associated with future motivation.

The scientific significance of the research lies in the fact that no empirical study could be identified in the English-, German- and Hungarian-language literature reviewed that examined the roles of turnaround time, feedback quality, reviewer capacity, managerial recognition and strategic relevance within a unified research framework using coordinated quantitative analyses. The qualitative phase identified recurring process-related problems across several large companies, while the quantitative phase produced detailed findings for activated idea submitters in a Central European transport and logistics corporate group.

1.2 Research objectives

Overall objective: to explore how the process-related, system-level and organisational characteristics of an employee idea management system are associated with the willingness of employees who have submitted at least one idea to submit ideas again.

Theoretical objective: to adapt and interpret the concept of the IBG in organisational idea management, with particular attention to the possibility that the gap may re-emerge or persist even among already activated idea submitters.

Empirical objective: to examine the direct and indirect associations of turnaround time, feedback quality, system user-friendliness and reviewer resources with future motivation, as well as the proposed moderating roles of managerial recognition and perceived strategic relevance.

Practical objective: to determine development priorities for the organisation studied on the basis of the identified relationships and, through cautious analytical generalisation, to formulate working hypotheses for organisations operating similar ESSs.

1.3 Research hypotheses

The dissertation tested five focused hypotheses.

H1: Long review turnaround time significantly reduces future idea-submission motivation: the shorter employees perceive the decision-making process to be (Q7), the higher their future innovation intention (Q5).

H2: The content quality of feedback received (Q9) is a stronger predictor of future idea-submission motivation (Q5) than system user-friendliness (Q4). Feedback quality provides significant incremental explanatory power (ΔR^2) beyond user-friendliness.

H3a: Perceived reviewer resource shortages are negatively associated with perceptions of review turnaround time: employees who perceive signs of resource shortages rate decision-making as significantly slower (lower Q7).

H3b: Reviewer resource shortages significantly increase the probability of idea rejection (BO).

H4: Managerial recognition (BF) moderates the demotivating effect of idea rejection (BO) on future innovation motivation (Q5): among employees who received a higher level of recognition, rejection has a weaker negative effect on motivation (significant $BO \times BF$ interaction).

H5: The perceived strategic relevance of an idea (Q11a) motivates future idea-submission intention (Q5) only when feedback is timely (Q7). When review turnaround time is unfavourable, the motivational effect of perceived strategic relevance does not materialise (significant $Q11a \times Q7$ interaction).

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research questions

The central research question is formulated as follows:

Through what organisational and behavioural mechanisms do employee idea management systems influence employees' idea-submission intention, actual participation and future innovation motivation?

Five sub-questions were examined in relation to the central question.

SQ1: Which organisational factors embedded in the processes shape employees' perceptions of the operation of the employee idea management system?

SQ2: What roles do the quality, comprehensibility and timeliness of feedback play in shaping employees' future willingness to submit ideas?

SQ3: How can the Intention-Behaviour-Gap be interpreted and quantified in the context of employee idea management systems?

SQ4: What roles do perceived organisational justice and managerial recognition play in shaping the motivational consequences of idea rejection?

SQ5: Under what contextual conditions – including the perceived strategic relevance of the idea – is submission motivation sustained among activated idea submitters?

2.2 Research design and methodology

Literature review: In the iterative, two-stage process, the narrative review underpinning questionnaire development was followed by a systematic update conducted in accordance with the principles of

PRISMA 2020. During the parallel identification of English-, German- and Hungarian-language sources, 270 records underwent full-text assessment and 62 sources formed the basis of the final synthesis. The purpose of the trilingual approach was the documented and reproducible integration of distinct research traditions.

Qualitative phase: Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with managers responsible for idea management at fourteen independent large companies selected through purposive expert sampling. The thematic coding results served to identify recurring process-related problems, operationalise the hypotheses and develop the questionnaire content; they were not intended to support statistical generalisation across organisations.

Quantitative phase: The study population comprised employees of a Central European rail transport and logistics corporate group who had previously submitted an idea. Of the 1,318 invitations sent, the net accessible population was 1,252 after undeliverable addresses were excluded. The 554 valid responses represented a response rate of 44.25%.

Analytical strategy: The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, hierarchical regression, mediation and moderation analyses, and logistic regression. A PLS-SEM-based robustness reanalysis, carried out in two independent software environments (SmartPLS 4 and R/seminr), was used to complement the diagnostic pattern of associations. Because the design was cross-sectional and based on self-reports, the findings are interpreted as statistical and indirect associations rather than as established causal mechanisms.

Ethics and data protection: Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent; the data were processed in anonymised form in accordance with the GDPR.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Summary of hypothesis tests

H1 – supported: The simple regression association was significant ($\beta = 0.299$; $p < 0.001$). The supplementary mediation analysis yielded a result consistent with an indirect-only mediation pattern (Sobel $z = 7.03$; $p < 0.001$). In the PLS-SEM robustness analysis, the indirect association of turnaround time through feedback quality was significant (indirect effect = 0.184; $p < 0.001$), whereas the direct path was not ($\beta = -0.005$; $p = 0.906$).

H2 – supported: Feedback content quality ($\beta = 0.374$) was a stronger predictor than user-friendliness ($\beta = 0.274$) in the joint model and provided incremental explanatory power of $\Delta R^2 = 0.130$.

H3a – partially supported; H3b – not supported: A bivariate association was found between perceived reviewer resource shortages and less favourable process-speed perceptions ($d = -0.33$), but it did not remain statistically stable after controls were included. Resource shortages were not detectably associated with idea rejection ($OR = 0.975$; $p = 0.914$).

H4 and H5 – not supported: Neither the $BO \times BF$ interaction ($p = 0.986$) nor the $Q11a \times Q7$ interaction ($p = 0.746$) was significant. Because BF was operationalised as a preference-based measure, the H4 result cannot be interpreted as evidence of either the general buffering effect or the ineffectiveness of managerial recognition actually received.

Exploratory multi-group finding: The PLS-SEM analysis indicated no significant path-coefficient differences between respondents active during the preceding twelve months ($n = 393$) and those active at an earlier point ($n = 161$) ($p = 0.52$ – 0.85).

3.2 The satisfaction-motivation divergence and the importance-performance ranking

In the organisation studied, 72.5% of respondents were satisfied with the technical operation of the system, whereas only 30.7% reported a strong future innovation intention. The so-called satisfaction-motivation divergence is not a direct measure of the IBG because it compares technical satisfaction with future intention. Its diagnostic significance lies in showing that motivation to submit further ideas may be low even among employees who have previously submitted an idea. This is consistent with the theoretical possibility that the IBG may re-emerge or persist, but it does not establish its occurrence over time.

According to the Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) based on the PLS-SEM model, feedback quality exerted the largest total effect on future motivation (importance = 0.38), while its performance, rescaled to the 0–100 range, was 49 points. System quality showed more moderate importance (0.27) but high performance (74 points). Turnaround time recorded the lowest performance (26 points), although its total effect was smaller (0.18) and operated largely through feedback quality. The systematic divergence between importance and performance orders development priorities on an empirical basis.

3.3 New and novel scientific results (theses)

The dissertation's new scientific contributions can be formulated in six theses.

Thesis 1: Substantive integration of research traditions. The joint examination of the German Vorschlagswesen tradition, the Hungarian-language management literature and English-language ESS research makes a substantive contribution to the theoretical framework of employee idea management. The integration

incorporates knowledge concerning the institutional and organisational features of the review process – particularly turnaround time, reviewer roles and the allocation of responsibility – which receive less emphasis in the English-language literature. The trilingual, PRISMA 2020-based procedure provides a transparent and reproducible methodological framework for this substantive integration; the novelty does not lie in the use of three languages in itself.

Thesis 2: Pattern of indirect association. The relationships among review turnaround time, feedback content quality and future motivation are consistent with an indirect-only mediation pattern: the indirect path is significant, whereas the direct path is not established at the selected significance level. The result is supported by three complementary model specifications (observed-variable mediation, full multivariate OLS model, latent-variable PLS-SEM). It supports combining predictable scheduling with substantively rich feedback rather than treating speed alone as a sufficient development objective. The cross-sectional data do not establish a causal order or mechanism.

Thesis 3: Greater relative explanatory power of feedback content quality. In the hierarchical regression analysis, the association between feedback content quality and future motivation was stronger than that of user-friendliness, and content quality provided meaningful incremental explanatory power beyond user-friendliness. Comparing the two factors within a joint model has not been systematically documented in the ESS literature; it provides an empirical basis for assigning greater development priority to feedback content than to further technical refinement in the organisation studied.

Thesis 4: Differentiating the consequences of reviewer capacity constraints. Perceived resource shortages showed a bivariate association with less favourable turnaround-time perceptions but not

with rejection experience. As the first association was not stable after the inclusion of controls, the result does not establish a deterministic mechanism. Its scientific contribution lies in making the possible consequences of capacity constraints separately testable in the dimensions of process speed and decision outcome, thereby contributing to the application of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework to organisational processes.

Thesis 5: Primacy of process-related factors in the sample of activated idea submitters. In the sample of activated idea submitters, process variables showed stronger associations with future motivation than the moderators examined. No evidence was found that the association between idea rejection and future innovation motivation differed according to whether the respondent identified greater managerial recognition as a possible incentive. Likewise, no evidence was found that the association between the perceived strategic relevance of an idea and future innovation motivation depended on the perceived review turnaround time. These non-significant results do not establish the ineffectiveness of actual managerial recognition or the general irrelevance of strategic relevance; they do, however, indicate the need for more precise, multidimensional measurement of the constructs. The pattern is consistent with the theoretical possibility that the IBG may re-emerge or persist, but it does not prove this in the absence of tracking actual subsequent behaviour.

Thesis 6: A process-based diagnostic framework. The effectiveness of idea management systems cannot be inferred from technical satisfaction indicators. In the population of activated idea submitters, satisfaction with the technical operation of the system and the intention to participate again develop at divergent levels, and a systematic gap emerges between the importance and the performance of the process-related constructs. Taken together, these two observations establish a process-based diagnostic framework that

ranks development priorities on an empirical basis: first the content quality of feedback, second the reviewer capacity that indirectly shapes turnaround time, while system quality can be identified as a strength to be maintained. The framework is reusable in other organisations, but the reported values apply to the activated idea-submitter population of the corporate group studied.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central practical conclusion of the research is that, in the organisation studied, future idea-submission motivation has a stronger statistical association with review feedback quality than with the system's technical characteristics and user-friendliness. Development interventions can therefore be summarised in five mutually reinforcing packages of measures.

4.1 Packages of development measures

Feedback quality standard: Every decision notification should clearly state the decision, provide an individualised justification focused on the idea and identify the possible next step. Status changes should be traceable, and the quality of outgoing feedback should be reviewed through regular sampling.

Staged decision protocol: Acknowledgement of receipt, a substantive status update when a review is delayed, and the deadline for the decision and its justification should be defined as sequential service levels. The objective is predictable and meaningful communication, not speed at any cost.

Formalisation of reviewer capacity and roles: Review tasks, responsibilities, deadlines and the required time allocation should be formally defined at job and process-management levels. A capacity threshold and a reallocation rule can be established on the basis of the number of open cases assigned to each reviewer.

Dialogue-based rejection communication: A rejection should explain the substantive rationale for the decision, indicate the possibility of revision or resubmission and, where appropriate, provide an opportunity for personal discussion. This recommendation is supported by the stable negative main effect of rejection and by the qualitative findings; it is not based on an assumption that actual managerial recognition is ineffective.

Institutionalisation of managerial commitment: Executive sponsorship, resource allocation for reviewer capacity, and regular monitoring of turnaround time, feedback quality and the proportion of previously active idea submitters who become inactive should be embedded in a formal management framework.

4.2 Validity limitations and further research

The results are based on activated idea submitters in a single corporate group and on cross-sectional, self-report data. Q5 is a single-item motivation variable, ReviewerRes_Score is a mention-based perceptual indicator, and BF is a preference-based indicator. The study did not measure actual future idea submissions, and the exploratory multi-group analysis was not preceded by a complete measurement-invariance assessment. The specific coefficients and rankings therefore cannot be transferred unchanged to other organisations; transferring the intervention logic is warranted only subject to local verification.

Further research should examine the validity of the identified relationships using multi-organisational and cross-sector samples, multi-wave longitudinal designs, the inclusion of employees not yet activated as idea submitters, and direct measurement of managerial recognition actually received and of objective reviewer capacity.

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DECLARATION OF IDENTITY

I, the undersigned, Viktória Angyal, declare that the printed and electronic versions of the doctoral dissertation and thesis booklet are identical in all respects.

Sopron, 24th August 2026

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