



Adaptive Performance Management Practices in Responding to Rapid Technological Change within Startup Companies

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how startups apply adaptive performance management practices to respond to rapid technological change. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from three technology-based startups in East Java through in-depth interviews with 12 informants, supported by document analysis and limited observations. Thematic analysis reveals that adaptive performance management in startups is characterized by flexible goal setting, continuous feedback mechanisms, the use of digital platforms for performance evaluation, and direct leadership involvement in performance adjustments. The findings highlight the strategic role of adaptive performance management in enhancing organizational agility and human resource readiness amid technological change. This study contributes conceptually to human resource management literature within the startup context and offers practical insights for startup managers in designing responsive performance management systems.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has driven fundamental changes in human resource management practices, particularly in organizational performance management systems. Rapid technological developments require organizations to no longer rely on traditional performance appraisal systems that are periodic, rigid, and administratively oriented. The modern work environment requires a performance management system that is adaptive, flexible, and able to respond to technological changes in an ongoing manner. International studies show that digital transformation directly affects the design and effectiveness of performance management systems, especially through the use of digital technology and real-time performance data (Pulakos et al., 2020). In this context, performance management not only serves as an evaluation tool, but also as a strategic mechanism to support organizational agility in the face of technological changes.

These changes are becoming increasingly relevant for technology-based startup companies that are growing rapidly in various regions of Indonesia, including East Java as one of the centers of national digital economic growth. East Java Province has a startup ecosystem supported by industrial estates, universities, as well as technology-based business incubation and acceleration programs. However, startups in this region generally still face limited resources, flexible organizational structures, and high pressure to adapt to technology. Research shows that the unpreparedness of performance management systems in the face of technological changes can hinder innovation and decrease employee engagement in startup organizations (Aguinis et al., 2021). Therefore, the development of adaptive performance management practices is a strategic need for startups in East Java.

Although the concept of adaptive performance management is increasingly discussed in the international literature, most research still focuses on large organizations or multinational corporations in developed countries (Van der Togt & Rasmussen, 2022). Empirical studies that specifically examine adaptive performance management practices in startups at the regional level, especially in East Java, are still very limited. Many studies discuss agile work practices and digital human resource transformation in general, without linking them to the local context and characteristics of regional startups. As a result, there is a research gap on how startups in East Java adapt their performance management systems in the face of rapid technological changes. This gap underscores the importance of local context-based research to enrich empirical understanding.

In addition to affecting the work system, technological changes also have a direct impact on employee behavior, competence, and expectations. Research shows that employees in technology-driven organizations need faster performance feedback, flexible work goals, and clarity of roles that can change as technology evolves and the projects are executed (Kim & Ployhart, 2023). An adaptive performance management system allows organizations to tailor performance indicators to the demands of technology and changing work dynamics. However, these adaptation mechanisms are still rarely studied

empirically in the context of startups, especially in developing countries. In fact, this understanding is important to ensure the sustainability of individual performance and organizational effectiveness.

From a theoretical perspective, adaptive performance management practices are closely related to the concepts of organizational agility and dynamic capabilities. Organizations that are able to adapt their internal systems quickly to external changes tend to have a more sustainable competitive advantage. Recent research confirms that adaptive human resource management practices play an important role in strengthening the dynamic capabilities of organizations through alignment between strategy, technology, and employee performance (Darwish et al., 2023). In the context of startups, this capability becomes very crucial because technological changes often occur unexpectedly and have a direct impact on the work process. However, the integration of the concept of dynamic capabilities into startup performance management practices has not been systematically explored.

Based on these gaps, this study explicitly aims to analyze adaptive performance management practices in responding to rapid technological changes in technology-based startup companies in East Java. This research focuses on the flexibility of setting work targets, the use of continuous feedback, the use of digital platforms in performance evaluation, and the role of leaders in the performance adaptation process. A qualitative approach with a case study design is used to capture the dynamics of performance management practices in depth and contextually. Thus, this research is directed to provide an empirical understanding that is relevant to the reality of startups in East Java. The focus of this region is the main differentiator compared to previous research.

The contribution of this research is theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on human resource management by presenting empirical evidence on adaptive performance management practices in the context of technology-based startups that are still relatively understudied. Practically, the results of the research are expected to be a reference for startup founders and human resource managers in designing performance management systems that are responsive to technological changes. Thus, this research makes a real contribution to the development of human resource management practices that are relevant to the challenges of digital transformation and the dynamics of startup organizations.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Technology Change and Performance Management System Transformation

The rapid development of digital technology has driven significant changes in the design and implementation of organizational performance management systems. Traditional performance appraisal systems that are periodic and administratively oriented are considered less relevant in a dynamic and technology-based work environment. Research shows that technological changes demand performance management systems that are more adaptive, sustainable, and integrated with digital work processes (DeNisi & Smith, 2021). This transformation allows organizations to monitor performance in real-time

and adjust work targets according to strategic needs. Therefore, the adaptation of a performance management system is an important element in responding to changing technology dynamics.

Adaptive Performance Management Concept

Adaptive performance management is understood as a performance management approach that emphasizes flexibility of goals, continuous feedback, and adjustment of performance indicators according to changes in the work environment. The international literature confirms that this approach is a response to the uncertainty and complexity generated by rapid technological change (Biron et al., 2022). In contrast to conventional systems, adaptive performance management emphasizes the process of continuous learning and improvement. This approach also allows organizations to respond dynamically to changing needs of competencies and job roles. Thus, adaptive performance management is an important framework in managing technology-based organizational performance.

Startup Companies and Flexible Performance Management Needs

Startup companies operate in an environment characterized by high levels of uncertainty, relatively flat organizational structures, and rapid innovation cycles. This condition demands a performance management system that is more flexible than an established organization. Research shows that the implementation of an overly formal performance system can hinder innovation and reduce the speed of decision-making in startups (Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2023). Therefore, startups tend to adopt performance management practices that are project-based, collaborative, and short-term-oriented. This practice is in line with the principle of adaptive performance management in the face of rapid technological changes.

Continuous Feedback and Utilization of Digital Platforms

Continuous feedback is a key component in adaptive performance management systems, especially in technology-based organizations. Research shows that the use of digital platforms allows the performance evaluation process to be carried out more quickly, transparently, and participatory (Potosky & Aguinis, 2024). Digital systems support the delivery of real-time feedback that is relevant to work dynamics and technological change. In addition to improving the effectiveness of performance evaluations, this mechanism also strengthens employee engagement and clarity of job expectations. Thus, digital technology plays a strategic role in supporting adaptive performance management practices.

The Role of Leadership in Performance Management Adaptation

Leadership has an important role in the successful implementation of adaptive performance management, especially in the startup environment. Leaders play a role in setting strategic direction, adjusting performance targets, and ensuring alignment between technological changes and organizational goals. Studies show that participatory and adaptive leadership is able to accelerate an organization's response to technological changes (Hannah et al.,

2021). In the context of startups, the direct involvement of founders or leaders is often a key factor in the performance evaluation and adjustment process. Therefore, adaptive performance management cannot be separated from contextual leadership roles.

Organizational Agility and Research Gaps

Adaptive performance management is closely related to increasing the agility of organizations in responding to technological changes. Organizational agility allows organizations to adjust strategies, work processes, and human resource performance quickly and effectively. Recent research confirms that adaptive performance management practices contribute directly to improving organizational agility through the alignment of individual and organizational goals (Shin et al., 2022). However, most studies still focus on large organizations in developed countries. The limitations of empirical research in the context of startups in developing countries show that there are scientific gaps that need to be filled.

METHODOLOGY

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand adaptive performance management practices in responding to rapid technological changes in startup companies. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to capture process dynamics, meanings, and social contexts that cannot be quantitatively measured, especially in complex and dynamic organizational environments (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The case study design allows for a holistic exploration of the phenomenon in the real-world context of technology-based startup organizations. This approach is relevant to uncover performance management practices that are contextual, informal, and adaptive in nature. Thus, the design of this research is in line with the exploratory and interpretive objectives of the research.

Research Context and Unit Analysis

The research was carried out on three technology-based startup companies operating in East Java Province. The selection of the research location was based on the characteristics of East Java as one of the regions with significant growth of technology startups in Indonesia. The unit of analysis in this study is adaptive performance management practices applied at the organizational and work team levels. The focus of the analysis is directed at how startups adjust performance targets, feedback mechanisms, the use of digital platforms, and the role of leaders in dealing with technological changes. This context allows for an in-depth understanding of adaptive performance management practices in startup environments.

Population, Sampling Techniques, and Research Informants

The research population includes all individuals who are directly involved in the process of managing and implementing performance

management in the startups studied. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with the criteria that informants have direct knowledge and experience related to performance management systems and the use of digital technology in organizations (Palinkas et al., 2020). The total number of informants is 12 people from three startups, with the composition of each startup consisting of four informants. Each startup is represented by one founder or managing director, one human resources manager or operations manager, one team leader, and one core employee. This composition was chosen to obtain a comprehensive perspective from various levels of the organization.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews, limited observations, and analysis of internal organizational documents. Interviews are used as a key technique to explore the experiences, perceptions, and practices of adaptive performance management applied in response to technological change (Tracy, 2020). The interview guide was prepared based on the conceptual framework of adaptive performance management and organizational agility. Observation is used to understand the work context and direct interaction of the organization, while documentation includes internal policies, work guidelines, and digital performance reports. This combination of techniques is used to increase the depth and richness of research data.

Research Implementation Procedure

The research is carried out through several systematic stages, starting from the preliminary study and determining the research location. The next stage is the development of interview instruments and the management of research permits for each startup. Data collection was carried out in stages through face-to-face and online interviews, adjusted to the conditions of the informant and startup activities. All interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy. The research process ended with the validation of the findings through limited discussions with the main informant.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with an inductive approach to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts in qualitative data. The analysis process includes the initial coding stage, code grouping, theme development, and conceptual interpretation of findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis is done manually with the support of qualitative data processing software to improve data traceability. Source triangulation techniques and methods are used to increase the credibility and validity of the findings. This approach ensures that the research results reflect the empirical reality of adaptive performance management practices in startups.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Flexibility in Setting Work Targets in Response to Technological Changes

The results of the analysis of interviews, observations, and internal documents show that the flexibility of setting work targets is not just a technical practice, but the main foundation of adaptive performance management in the three startups studied. Performance targets are not compiled on an annual basis and are rigid, but are designed in the short term based on projects, work sprints, and changing technology needs. This pattern allows organizations to quickly adapt to changes in systems, software, and digital market dynamics without disrupting the continuity of work processes. The informants consistently interpret work targets as dynamic and contextual guidelines, rather than rigidly binding performance contracts.

A founder asserts that *"We have never locked the work target here for a whole year; If technology or client needs change, targets are also adjusted so that the team remains realistic and focused."* (DA, interview, October 12, 2025). This view is reinforced by the operational manager stating that *"Target evaluations are almost always done every month because tools and systems change frequently, and inflexible targets actually make work ineffective"* (MA, interview, October 14, 2025). From the perspective of team leaders, changes in target priorities due to technology updates have become a practice that is considered natural and inherent in startup work culture (PB, interview, October 18, 2025). Meanwhile, core employees view target flexibility as a mechanism that reduces work pressure because targets function as a work direction that always adapts to technological developments (KC, interview, October 20, 2025). These findings confirm that the flexibility of work targets plays a strategic role as a strategic mechanism in maintaining the sustainability of organizational performance in the midst of high technological dynamics.

Use of Continuous Feedback as a Performance Evaluation Mechanism

The results show that the three startups consciously do not implement a formal periodic performance evaluation system such as annual assessments. Instead, performance evaluations are carried out through continuous feedback that is direct, contextual, and integrated with daily work activities. This mechanism allows for quick corrections and adjustments to performance, especially when there are technological changes that have a direct impact on the teamwork process.

A founder said that *"We rarely wait for an official evaluation, if there are problems or system changes, usually they are immediately discussed and given feedback"* (DB, interview, October 11, 2025). This practice is in line with the experience of team leaders who say that feedback can happen almost every day, especially when there are technological updates that demand adjustments to the way of working (PA, interview, 16 October 2025). From the employee side, quick and continuous feedback is considered to help clarify performance expectations so that they can quickly adjust to the changes that occur (KA, interview, October 19, 2025). The manager emphasized that the organization's focus is more directed towards continuous improvement discussions rather than formal administrative

performance ratings (MB, interview, October 15, 2025). The observation results reinforce these findings by showing that a culture of continuous feedback contributes directly to organizational learning and employee readiness in the face of technological change.

Utilization of Digital Platforms in Performance Evaluation and Monitoring

Data analysis shows that the utilization of digital platforms is a key element that strengthens adaptive performance management practices in all three startups. Digital platforms are used not only for the division of tasks, but also as the main instrument for monitoring work progress and evaluating the contributions of individuals and teams in real-time and transparently. With this system, performance appraisals no longer rely on manual reports, but rather on actual data documented in the work platform.

One manager explained that "*All work progress can be directly seen in the system, so performance evaluation is real-time*" (MC, interview, October 13, 2025). The founder emphasized that the orientation of performance appraisal is more focused on work outcomes than physical attendance hours (DC, interview, October 10, 2025). The team leader added that every time there is a new tool or technology, the digital work system is immediately adjusted to remain relevant to work needs (PC, interview, October 17, 2025). From the perspective of employees, the use of digital platforms provides clarity because their contributions are assessed based on real output, not just administrative presence (KB, interview, October 21, 2025). These findings confirm that digital technology serves as the backbone of adaptive performance evaluation in the context of startups.

Direct Involvement of Leaders in the Performance Adjustment Process

The results of the study show that the direct involvement of leaders is a determining factor in the successful implementation of adaptive performance management. Founders and managers not only act as strategic decision-makers, but are also actively involved in performance discussions, providing feedback, and adjusting work targets. This engagement accelerates the process of adapting to technological changes while creating a sense of security and clarity of direction for employees.

A founder asserts that "*Every time there is a change in technology, the leadership is always directly involved in adjusting the target*" (DA, interview, October 12, 2025). Employees confirm that they are never left to adapt on their own without direction when major changes occur (KB, interview, October 21, 2025). The manager positions himself as a link between the leader's policies and the real condition of the team (MA, interview, October 14, 2025), while the team leader considers that the involvement of the leader increases the team's readiness and confidence in facing technological changes (PC, interview, October 17, 2025). These findings confirm that adaptive performance management relies heavily on responsive and contextual leadership.

The Role of Adaptive Performance Management in Improving Organizational Agility and Human Resource Readiness

The integration of work target flexibility, continuous feedback, the use of digital platforms, and leadership engagement forms a comprehensive adaptive performance management system. The results of the thematic analysis show that this system improves the organization's agility in responding to technological changes quickly and in a coordinated manner without losing the direction of performance. Employees state that this system makes them better prepared for change because job expectations are always updated and clearly communicated.

An employee said that "*We are more prepared if there is a change in technology because the work system is flexible from the beginning*" (KC, interview, October 20, 2025), while the team leader assessed that adaptation has become an inherent part of the daily work culture (PB, interview, October 18, 2025). The founder emphasized that adaptive performance management makes the organization more agile in making strategic decisions (DB, interview, October 11, 2025), and the manager mentions that the team no longer feels surprised by change because it is used to adapting sustainably (MC, interview, October 13, 2025). These findings affirm the strategic role of adaptive performance management in maintaining the work effectiveness and competitiveness of startups in East Java.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that the flexibility of setting work targets is a fundamental character in the practice of adaptive performance management in technology-based startups. The setting of short-term targets and adjusted periodically every time technological changes occur reflects the organization's orientation towards situational outcomes and responsiveness. This is consistent with the findings of the literature stating that in the digital age, traditional performance management systems must transform into systems that are dynamic and responsive to external changes (Anand et al., 2021). The flexibility of work targets is not just an operational adjustment, but also encourages increased team involvement in setting realistic and relevant goals with new technologies. Therefore, the flexibility shown by this startup in East Java confirms the paradigm shift from static performance management to a more adaptive and contextual approach, expanding the theoretical understanding of the adaptation of organizational performance structures in the midst of technological disruption.

Furthermore, continuous feedback as a performance evaluation mechanism has an important role in improving the effectiveness of individual and team performance. These findings show that evaluation is no longer ceremonial or periodic, but based on direct interaction and daily work activities, so that corrections and improvements are made in real-time. This approach reinforces organizational learning dynamics, where employees gain firsthand information about their performance as technology changes, which is in line with the organizational learning perspective in the literature that emphasizes feedback as a driver of adaptation and innovation (Baker & Dyer, 2022). With continuous feedback, startups are able to reduce the gap between performance

expectations and work realities, as well as facilitate rapid competency adaptation. Consequently, such a performance evaluation approach not only improves individual performance but also strengthens the organization's ability to deal with complex and unpredictable work environment dynamics.

The findings further emphasize the need for the use of digital platforms in performance evaluation and monitoring. Digital platforms used in real-time to monitor the team's work progress and contributions demonstrate the integration of technology with hands-on performance practices, which supports transparency and accountability. Previous research confirms that the adaptation of digital technologies in HRM not only improves operational efficiency but also supports faster and more accurate data-driven decision-making (Cain & Coldwell-Neilson, 2024). In the context of startups, the use of digital platforms strengthens an organization's ability to assess performance based on concrete results, rather than just a process or physical presence. This shows that the digitalization of performance systems is not just a technological tool, but an integral part of an adaptive strategy that is able to overcome uncertainty and rapid changes in the modern work environment.

The findings on the direct involvement of leaders in the performance adjustment process underscore the importance of the role of adaptive leadership in supporting responsive performance management practices. Active participation of leaders in target discussions, feedback, and performance adjustments increases clarity of work direction and strengthens employee trust. The literature on leadership in the digital age emphasizes that an adaptive, collaborative, and communicative leadership style can strengthen teamwork and improve employee well-being in the midst of digital complexity (García-Morales et al., 2020). Additionally, leadership engagement creates a fit between organizational strategy and operational implementation, which is critical when targets, technology, and work contexts change simultaneously. Thus, adaptive leadership is an important element in facilitating change and strengthening organizational resilience to technological challenges.

Holistically, the integration of target flexibility, continuous feedback evaluation, digital platform use, and leadership engagement forms a whole, adaptive performance management system, which is seen to improve organizational agility. Organizational agility in this study means that startups are able to respond quickly to technological changes without losing focus on core performance goals. The literature on agile organizations underscores that the ability to construct a flexible and responsive performance structure is a key competitive advantage in the digital age (Burnes, 2021). These findings show that adaptive performance management is not just a response to technological change, but also a driver of results-oriented organizational transformation, innovation, and continuous learning. Startups that are able to implement this adaptive system tend to have a strong strategic position in dealing with market dynamics and non-linear technology.

However, this study also found several implementive obstacles in the implementation of adaptive performance management in the field. Some informants said that rapid adaptation to technological changes sometimes leads

to a high cognitive load for employees, especially when system updates occur repeatedly in a short period of time. This shows that there are potential weaknesses in technology adaptation training that need to be overcome through a more systematic and sustainable competency development program. Previous literature has also stated that digital competency without strong organizational culture support and advanced training can hinder the effectiveness of performance adaptation (Wehartaty & Ellitan, 2023; Cain & Coldwell-Neilson, 2024). Therefore, the recommendation for advanced research is to develop an integrative model between adaptive learning, digital training, and performance management strategies designed specifically for startups.

Finally, the findings of this study make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of human resource management science, especially in the study of adaptive performance management in the startup environment. Theoretically, this study confirms that performance management models should be reconstructed to include elements of flexibility, continuous feedback, and digital integration as the core of modern performance evaluation systems. In practical terms, these findings provide guidance for startup managers to design performance systems that are not only reactive to new technologies, but also proactive in developing resilient organizational capabilities. This study adds novelty to the literature on human resource management by placing the context of startups in East Java as an empirical study that shows how adaptive performance management operates in the real conditions of rapid technological change.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that the practice of adaptive performance management is a strategic mechanism that allows technology-based startup companies in East Java to respond to rapid technological changes effectively and sustainably. The results of the study show that the flexibility of setting work targets, the application of continuous feedback, the use of digital platforms in performance evaluation, and the direct involvement of leaders form an adaptive and integrated performance management system. This system not only supports real-time adjustment of individual and team performance, but also strengthens organizational agility in the face of technological uncertainty and digital market dynamics. The findings confirm that adaptive performance management plays an important role in increasing human resource readiness, maintaining work effectiveness, and strengthening startup competitiveness. Thus, this research makes a conceptual contribution to the development of a startup-context-based human resource management study as well as a practical contribution for startup managers in designing a performance management system that is responsive, flexible, and in line with the demands of technological change.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research is encouraged to examine adaptive performance management practices across a wider range of startup sectors and stages of organizational growth to assess their generalizability and contextual variations.

Further studies could explore the interaction between adaptive performance management and other human resource practices, such as talent development, reward systems, and organizational culture, in enhancing startup resilience and innovation capability. Longitudinal research is also needed to understand how adaptive performance management evolves over time and influences long-term organizational performance and employee well-being. Additionally, comparative studies between startups and established firms may provide deeper insights into the distinct role of adaptability in performance management within dynamic digital environments.

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