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The Behavioral Foundations of Employee Productivity: A Systematic Literature Review of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT
Employee productivity is shaped by behavioral, psychological, and organizational factors. This systematic literature review synthesizes evidence on behavioral determinants, human resource management (HRM) practices, multilevel antecedents, and mechanisms influencing performance. Searches of SciSpace, Google Scholar, Mendeley, and PubMed identified 7,681 records. After deduplication and AI-assisted relevance screening, 1,000 records underwent abstract screening against six criteria. Of these, 221 passed screening and 194 were retained for synthesis. Data extraction covered study characteristics, determinants, HRM practices, theories, findings, and mediating and moderating factors. Motivation, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior emerged as prominent productivity determinants. Training, performance appraisal, and compensation were HRM practices, although their effects varied across contexts. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment mediated these relationships. Self-Determination Theory, the Job Demands-Resources Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Goal-Setting Theory explained productivity. Individual, team, and organizational factors shaped productivity. The review highlights integrated HRM, employee development, motivation, and well-being as foundations for sustainable productivity.

Keywords: Employee Productivity, Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Work Motivation, Employee Engagement,

I. Introduction

Employee productivity is a fundamental determinant of organizational effectiveness, operational performance, and long-term competitiveness. In contemporary workplaces, organizations face increasing pressure to improve performance amid technological developments, changing workforce expectations, and increasingly complex organizational demands. Productivity, therefore, cannot be understood solely through output, efficiency, or technological resources, but also through the behaviors, attitudes, and psychological conditions of employees. Employees contribute to organizational objectives not only by completing assigned tasks but also through contextual performance, collaboration, and discretionary behaviors that support organizational functioning. Christian et al. (2011) demonstrated the importance of work engagement in explaining both task and contextual performance, indicating that employee productivity involves multiple

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dimensions of work behavior. Behavioral and psychological factors represent important foundations of productive work behavior. Motivation, work engagement, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) influence how employees allocate their effort, respond to organizational demands, and contribute beyond formal job responsibilities. Work engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, has been associated with improved job performance (Corbeanu & Iliescu, 2023). Similarly, organizational citizenship behavior contributes to organizational effectiveness through voluntary actions that extend beyond prescribed job requirements (Nielsen et al., 2009). These findings suggest that employee productivity is not exclusively determined by technical competencies but also depends on employees' willingness, psychological readiness, and commitment to organizational objectives. However, the relationships among these behavioral dimensions are not necessarily uniform across organizational settings.

Beyond individual characteristics, human resource management (HRM) practices provide organizational mechanisms for developing and sustaining employee productivity. Training and development strengthen employee competencies, performance appraisal provides feedback and performance direction, compensation establishes extrinsic incentives, and recruitment and selection help organizations acquire appropriate human capital. Evidence suggests that these practices can improve employee performance, particularly when implemented through coordinated organizational systems rather than isolated interventions (Hanaysha, 2016; Khan et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of HRM practices depends on how employees perceive and experience their implementation. For instance, performance measurement systems may influence autonomous work motivation and managerial performance, demonstrating that managerial practices can generate different behavioral responses depending on their design and implementation (Hauwaert et al., 2022). Furthermore, empowerment and employee voice represent mechanisms through which high-performance management practices translate into improved job performance (Chamberlin et al., 2018).

The relationship between behavioral determinants and HRM practices can also be explained through complementary organizational behavior theories. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining intrinsic motivation. The Job Demands-Resources Model explains how job demands and available resources influence employee well-being, engagement, and performance. Social Exchange Theory highlights reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations, while Goal-Setting Theory explains how specific goals and feedback direct individual effort toward performance outcomes. These perspectives provide different but interconnected explanations of productive work behavior. Research on empowering leadership, for example, demonstrates how psychological resources and meaningful work can influence employee behavior and well-being (Kim & Beehr, 2018). Likewise, work meaningfulness and job characteristics have been examined as mechanisms connecting organizational conditions with work engagement and employee outcomes (Han et al., 2021).

Despite growing scholarly interest, existing research remains dispersed across different behavioral constructs, HRM interventions, theoretical perspectives, and organizational contexts. Previous reviews have examined particular dimensions of employee performance, including engagement outcomes and the relationship between OCB and organizational effectiveness. For example, Kossyva et al. (2023) synthesized the individual and organizational outcomes of employee engagement. However, understanding productivity requires broader integration because behavioral determinants, management practices, and organizational conditions frequently operate simultaneously. Findings concerning motivation, engagement, and performance may vary according to organizational characteristics, employee perceptions, and the availability of workplace resources. Consequently, examining individual relationships separately may provide an incomplete explanation of how productive behavior develops and is sustained.

A further gap concerns the integration of individual, team, and organizational levels of analysis. Individual factors such as motivation and self-efficacy interact with team processes, including collaboration and psychological safety, while organizational characteristics such as leadership, culture, and HRM systems establish the conditions within which these behaviors occur. Moreover, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being may function as mediating or moderating mechanisms in these

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relationships. Although previous studies have investigated several of these mechanisms, their combined contributions to employee productivity remain insufficiently integrated within a comprehensive review. This fragmentation limits the development of an overarching understanding of how psychological processes, management interventions, and organizational environments collectively shape productive work behavior.

To address these gaps, the present systematic literature review integrates empirical evidence from organizational settings across different sectors and geographical contexts. Unlike reviews focusing exclusively on engagement, OCB, or individual HRM practices, this study adopts an integrative perspective connecting behavioral determinants, HRM practices, organizational behavior theories, and multilevel antecedents. Specifically, it examines the mechanisms through which individual, team, and organizational factors contribute to employee productivity, including the mediating and moderating roles of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work environment, organizational culture, and employee well-being. Accordingly, this review aims to synthesize empirical evidence on the behavioral foundations of employee productivity through five interconnected objectives: identifying behavioral determinants, examining HRM practices, evaluating relevant theoretical frameworks, analyzing antecedents across multiple organizational levels, and investigating mediating and moderating mechanisms. By integrating these dimensions, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee productivity and offer theoretical and practical insights for developing evidence-based HRM strategies that support sustainable organizational performance.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Employee Productivity and Job Performance

Employee productivity refers to the extent to which employees generate work outputs efficiently through the utilization of available resources, competencies, and organizational support. Although productivity and job performance are closely related, they represent different analytical dimensions. Productivity emphasizes the relationship between outputs and resources, whereas job performance encompasses task execution, contextual contributions, and behaviors that support organizational objectives. Hanaysha (2016) demonstrated that employee empowerment, teamwork, and training positively contribute to employee productivity, highlighting the importance of both individual capabilities and organizational conditions. Contemporary research increasingly recognizes that employee performance cannot be explained exclusively through technical competence or formal job responsibilities. Mackay et al. (2017) demonstrated that employee engagement provides explanatory value in understanding employee effectiveness beyond several individual job attitudes. Similarly, Corbeanu and Iliescu (2023), through a meta-analysis of 174 studies, identified a positive relationship between work engagement and job performance, including task and contextual performance. These findings indicate that productivity should be examined through an integrated perspective encompassing work outcomes and the behavioral processes underlying them.

2.2. Behavioral Determinants of Employee Productivity

Employee productivity is influenced by several interconnected behavioral and psychological determinants, particularly motivation, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and individual psychological resources. These factors explain why employees differ in their willingness to invest effort, maintain commitment, and contribute to organizational objectives.

a. Work Motivation. Motivation represents the psychological process that initiates, directs, and sustains work-related behavior. Intrinsic motivation emerges from personal interest and satisfaction derived from performing work, whereas extrinsic motivation is associated with external rewards and organizational incentives. Chua and Ayoko (2021) demonstrated that employees' self-determined

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motivation helps explain the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Furthermore, Hauwaert et al. (2022) showed that autonomous work motivation mediates the relationship between enabling performance measurement and managerial performance. These findings suggest that productivity enhancement requires organizational practices that support employees' psychological needs rather than relying exclusively on external incentives.

b. Work Engagement. Work engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work activities. It represents a positive motivational state that influences employees' involvement and persistence in completing organizational responsibilities. Knight et al. (2017) identified the effectiveness of workplace interventions in developing work engagement, while Neuber et al. (2022) found that engagement is positively associated with task performance and negatively associated with absenteeism. Bakker et al. (2023) further explained that work engagement develops through the interaction between job resources, personal resources, and job demands within the Job Demands-Resources framework. Collectively, these findings establish engagement as an important mechanism connecting workplace conditions with productive behavior.

c. Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to discretionary employee behaviors that contribute to organizational functioning beyond formally prescribed job requirements. Such behaviors include helping colleagues, demonstrating initiative, and participating in activities that support organizational effectiveness. Chamberlin et al. (2018) demonstrated that empowerment and employee voice help explain how high-performance managerial practices are translated into job performance. In addition, Cudjor et al. (2024) found that employee engagement mediates the relationship between psychological meaningfulness and contextual performance. These findings suggest that productive behavior extends beyond individual task completion to include voluntary contributions that strengthen organizational effectiveness.

2.3. Human Resource Management Practices and Productivity

Human resource management practices provide organizational mechanisms for developing employee competencies, strengthening motivation, and facilitating productive work behavior. Strategic HRM research emphasizes that recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, and employee participation should be considered as interconnected practices rather than isolated interventions. Training and development strengthen employees' knowledge, skills, and work capabilities. Garavan et al. (2021), through a meta-analysis of training and organizational performance, demonstrated that training contributes positively to organizational outcomes, although its effectiveness varies according to temporal, institutional, and organizational conditions. Similarly, Hanaysha (2016) found positive relationships between employee training, empowerment, teamwork, and productivity. These findings indicate that training effectiveness depends not only on the availability of development programs but also on their relevance and organizational implementation.

Performance appraisal and performance management establish mechanisms for evaluating employee contributions, providing feedback, and directing performance improvement. Hauwaert et al. (2022) highlighted that enabling performance measurement can strengthen autonomous motivation and managerial performance. More recently, Giamos et al. (2025) identified development-oriented performance management practices, including feedback, coaching, and employee development, as important approaches for connecting performance management with employee growth. Therefore, performance management should function as both an evaluative and developmental organizational process. Compensation and rewards constitute important mechanisms for recognizing employee contributions and supporting motivation. However, the relationship between compensation and performance cannot be understood independently of employee perceptions of fairness, recognition, and organizational support. Jo and Shin (2025) demonstrated that recognition, fairness, and leadership are associated with employee outcomes, including engagement,

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burnout, and job satisfaction. This suggests that compensation and recognition systems should be designed in ways that support both employee motivation and organizational objectives. Importantly, HRM effectiveness depends on the coherence of organizational practices. Jiang and Messersmith (2018) emphasized the importance of integrating strategic HRM research, while Boon et al. (2019) identified conceptual and measurement challenges in examining HR systems as interconnected configurations of practices. These perspectives support the argument that employee productivity is more appropriately understood through integrated HRM systems than through the independent effects of individual practices.

2.4. Theoretical Foundations of Productive Work Behavior

Several theoretical perspectives provide complementary explanations of the mechanisms connecting employee behavior, organizational practices, and productivity.

a. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains how autonomy, competence, and relatedness support intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement. Chua and Ayoko (2021) provide empirical support for the importance of self-determined motivation in explaining work engagement. This perspective suggests that organizations can strengthen productivity by creating working conditions that support employees' psychological needs.
b. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory explains how job demands and job resources influence employee well-being, motivation, and performance. Bakker et al. (2023) extended this perspective through discussions of person–situation interactions, multilevel processes, and proactive work behavior. Their analysis emphasizes that resources such as autonomy, social support, and opportunities for development can strengthen engagement, whereas excessive demands may increase exhaustion and undermine sustainable performance.
c. Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains employee behavior through reciprocal relationships between individuals and organizations. When employees perceive organizational support, fairness, and appropriate recognition, they may respond through stronger commitment and constructive work behavior. Chamberlin et al. (2018) demonstrate how empowerment and employee voice can function as mechanisms connecting managerial practices with job performance.
d. Goal-Setting Theory emphasizes the motivational role of specific goals, performance feedback, and goal commitment in directing employee effort. This perspective provides a basis for understanding the relationship between performance management and employee outcomes. Giamos et al. (2025) highlight the developmental value of feedback and coaching practices, which can support employees in understanding performance expectations and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Taken together, these theories offer complementary explanations of productive work behavior. SDT emphasizes psychological needs, JD-R explains the interaction between demands and resources, SET highlights reciprocal organizational relationships, and Goal-Setting Theory explains the direction and regulation of work effort.

2.5. Multilevel Antecedents and Mediating–Moderating Mechanisms

Employee productivity emerges through interactions among individual, team, and organizational factors. At the individual level, motivation, self-efficacy, psychological resources, and job satisfaction influence employees' capacity and willingness to perform. At the team level, collaboration, empowerment, and employee voice create social conditions that facilitate knowledge sharing and coordinated work. At the organizational level, leadership, culture, HRM systems, and performance management establish the broader

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environment within which employee behavior develops. Aljbour et al. (2022) proposed an evidence-based multilevel framework demonstrating how talent management perspectives and practices influence employee, group, and organizational outcomes. Similarly, Bakker et al. (2020) demonstrated that job crafting and playful work design are positively associated with job performance under different daily work conditions. These studies indicate that productive behavior is shaped by interactions between personal initiative, work characteristics, and organizational resources.

Furthermore, the relationships between behavioral determinants and productivity may operate through mediating and moderating mechanisms. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment can explain how HRM practices and leadership influence employee performance. Employee engagement can also function as a mediating mechanism connecting psychological meaningfulness and contextual performance (Cudjor et al., 2024). In addition, employee well-being represents an important consideration in evaluating the sustainability of productivity outcomes. Guest (2017) argued that HRM systems should consider employee well-being alongside organizational performance rather than treating employee interests as secondary concerns. The contextual nature of these relationships is also evident in strategic HRM research. Kim et al. (2026) demonstrated through a meta-analytic investigation that organizational-level training is positively associated with organizational performance, while the magnitude of this relationship varies across organizational and contextual conditions. Thus, productivity cannot be explained through universal assumptions that identical HRM practices produce equivalent outcomes across all organizations.

2.6. Integrative Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature establishes that employee productivity is a multidimensional outcome shaped by behavioral, psychological, and organizational processes. Previous studies have provided important evidence concerning individual determinants, HRM practices, work engagement, and organizational performance. However, much of the existing literature has concentrated on particular relationships or specific organizational mechanisms. For example, Mackay et al. (2017) examined the contribution of engagement to employee effectiveness, Kossyva et al. (2023) synthesized the antecedents and outcomes of engagement, and Boon et al. (2019) examined the conceptualization and measurement of HR systems. Although these contributions provide valuable insights, they address different dimensions of productive work behavior. The remaining challenge concerns integrating these perspectives into a comprehensive understanding of employee productivity. In particular, the connections between individual behavioral determinants, organizational HRM practices, theoretical mechanisms, and contextual factors require further synthesis. Existing evidence also indicates that organizational practices may produce different outcomes depending on employee perceptions, workplace resources, and organizational characteristics (Jo & Shin, 2025; Garavan et al., 2021). Accordingly, the present review develops an integrative perspective that connects behavioral determinants, HRM practices, organizational behavior theories, and multilevel organizational conditions. Its contribution lies in synthesizing how individual, team, and organizational factors interact and how job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being may shape the relationships between these factors and productivity.

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design and Review Protocol

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the behavioral foundations of employee productivity within the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management (HRM). The review focused on identifying behavioral determinants, examining the contribution of HRM practices, evaluating the theoretical perspectives used to explain productive work behavior, and exploring the

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individual, team, and organizational factors associated with employee productivity. The review process was structured around four main activities: literature identification, study selection, data extraction, and evidence synthesis. The reporting of the review process was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to improve transparency in the identification and selection of relevant studies. The review addressed five research objectives: (1) identifying behavioral determinants of employee productivity; (2) examining the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance outcomes; (3) identifying organizational behavior theories used to explain workplace productivity; (4) examining antecedents of productive behavior at individual, team, and organizational levels; and (5) identifying mediating and moderating factors that influence the relationships between behavioral determinants, HRM practices, and employee productivity.

3.2. Search Strategy and Information Sources

The literature search was conducted between August and September 2026. The original search strategy covered SciSpace Deep Search, SciSpace Full Text, Google Scholar, Mendeley, and PubMed. The search process involved combinations of terms related to employee productivity, work performance, organizational behavior, human resource management, motivation, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior. Search terms were combined using Boolean operators, including AND and OR, to identify studies addressing the behavioral and organizational dimensions of employee productivity. The search strategy was designed to cover five thematic areas: behavioral determinants, HRM practices, theoretical frameworks, multilevel antecedents, and mediating or moderating factors. The search initially identified 7,681 records across the reported sources. The search results were exported and organized for subsequent deduplication and screening.

3.3. Eligibility Criteria

Studies were assessed using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure their relevance to the objectives of the review. Studies were eligible for inclusion if they: (1) examined employees working in organizational or professional settings; (2) investigated behavioral or psychological determinants, such as motivation, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or self-efficacy; (3) examined HRM practices, including training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, recruitment, or employee empowerment, where relevant to the review objectives; and (4) reported employee productivity, job performance, or other clearly defined work-related performance outcomes. Studies were excluded if they: (1) focused on populations outside professional organizational settings; (2) did not examine employee-related productivity or performance outcomes; or (3) lacked sufficient methodological or empirical information to support the review objectives. Editorials and anecdotal publications were also excluded.

3.4. Study Selection and Screening

The study selection process involved identification, deduplication, title and abstract screening, and full-text eligibility assessment. Initially, 7,681 records were identified from the reported information sources. After the removal of 1,530 duplicate records, the remaining records were subjected to relevance screening. The original review also reported the use of AI-assisted relevance ranking to reduce the number of records considered for abstract screening. However, the use of automated ranking should be accompanied by a transparent description of the ranking procedure, selection threshold, and validation process to minimize the risk of excluding relevant studies. Following the initial screening, 1,000 records were assessed based on their titles and abstracts. A total of 221 records met the reported abstract-screening threshold and were considered for further eligibility assessment. Full-text assessment was intended to determine whether the selected

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studies satisfied the inclusion criteria. However, the original screening record indicated that only one of the 51 attempted PDF downloads was successful, while 220 records were automatically included based on their abstract scores. Therefore, the full-text eligibility assessment must be verified and completed before the final number of included studies can be established.

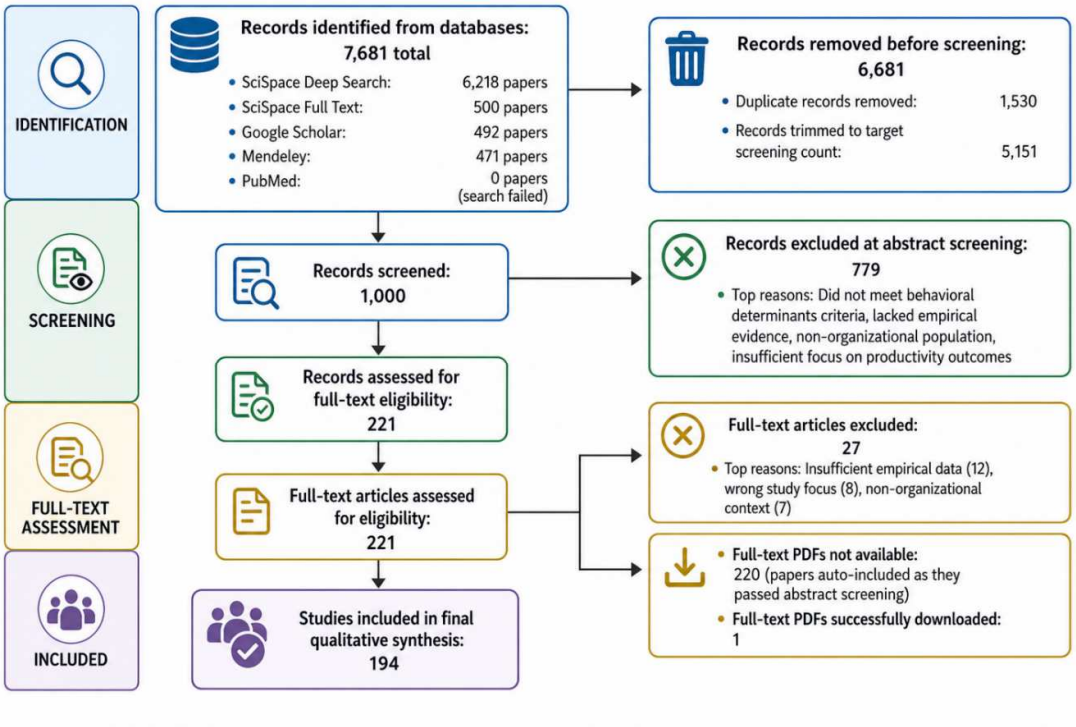


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow

3.5. Data Extraction and Quality Appraisal

Data extraction was conducted using a structured framework developed in accordance with the objectives of the review. The framework covered six dimensions:

a. Study Design: The methodological approach used in each study, including quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, meta-analytic, or case-study designs.
b. Behavioral Determinants: Psychological and behavioral factors examined, including motivation, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and self-efficacy.
c. HRM Practices: Human resource management practices investigated, such as training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and rewards, recruitment and selection, and employee empowerment.
d. Theoretical Framework: The theories applied or tested, including Self-Determination Theory, the Job Demands-Resources Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Goal-Setting Theory.
e. Key Findings: The principal findings and conclusions concerning the relationships between behavioral determinants, HRM practices, and employee productivity.
f. Moderators and Mediators: Variables identified as influencing or explaining the relationships among the main constructs, including organizational culture, work environment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being.

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Automated language-model-assisted extraction was used to support the organization and initial classification of information from the included studies. The extracted information was subsequently checked against the original publications to verify its accuracy and completeness. The language model was treated as an auxiliary tool rather than an independent source of research evidence.

3.6. Data Synthesis

The extracted evidence was synthesized using a qualitative narrative approach. Studies were organized according to their research designs, behavioral determinants, HRM practices, theoretical frameworks, and reported productivity outcomes. The synthesis involved identifying recurring patterns, comparing findings across studies, and examining similarities and differences in the relationships reported by the original authors. Particular attention was given to the mechanisms through which behavioral determinants and HRM practices were associated with employee productivity, including the potential roles of mediating and moderating variables. The findings were further organized across individual, team, and organizational levels to provide an integrated understanding of the behavioral foundations of employee productivity. The resulting synthesis was used to identify areas of convergence, inconsistencies in the existing evidence, and directions for future research.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Study Selection and Characteristics

The systematic search identified 7,681 records. After removing 1,530 duplicates and excluding 5,151 records through AI-assisted relevance ranking, 1,000 records remained for abstract screening. Of these, 221 met the initial eligibility threshold, while 194 studies were reported as included in the final synthesis. The selection process is presented in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Figure 1). The included studies employed diverse research designs, although quantitative surveys represented approximately 65% of the reported sample. Other approaches included qualitative case studies, mixed-methods research, and meta-analytic reviews. The studies covered multiple geographical contexts, including Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America. The sectors examined included higher education, healthcare, hospitality, telecommunications, manufacturing, financial services, and public organizations. The publication period ranged from 2004 to 2026, with substantial representation from studies published between 2016 and 2025. These characteristics indicate that employee productivity has been examined across different organizational settings and methodological traditions. However, the predominance of cross-sectional quantitative research should be considered when interpreting the relationships identified in this review.

4.2. Synthesis of Evidence

a. Behavioral Determinants of Employee Productivity

The synthesis identified motivation, work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), psychological factors, and leadership as major behavioral determinants associated with employee productivity. Motivation was consistently associated with employee performance. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation appeared in the reviewed literature, although they represented different motivational processes. Intrinsic motivation was associated with autonomy, competence development, and meaningful work, whereas extrinsic motivation was related to compensation, recognition, promotion, and organizational rewards. The findings also indicated that job security, working conditions, and performance management practices could contribute to employee motivation.

Work engagement was another recurring determinant. Studies reported positive relationships between engagement and individual work performance, although the strength of these relationships varied according to organizational context and performance outcomes. Engagement was also identified as a

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potential mediating mechanism linking leadership and HRM practices with employee outcomes. OCB contributed to organizational effectiveness through cooperation, helping behavior, and discretionary contributions beyond formal job requirements. Nevertheless, its relationship with individual outcomes was not uniformly positive. Evidence from academic settings indicated that additional citizenship activities could support organizational or research productivity while potentially creating trade-offs with individual career outcomes (Bergeron et al., 2014). Other psychological factors included self-efficacy, psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and employee well-being. These factors were associated with employees' capacity to perform, participate, and respond to workplace demands. Leadership also emerged as an important organizational influence. Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership were associated with employee performance through mechanisms involving engagement, psychological need satisfaction, job crafting, and job satisfaction.

b. HRM Practices and Employee Productivity

Four major categories of HRM practices were identified: training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and rewards, and recruitment and selection. Training generally demonstrated positive relationships with employee productivity and job performance. However, its effectiveness varied across contexts. Some studies reported positive associations, while others identified non-significant or negative relationships. These differences suggest that training outcomes depend on program relevance, implementation quality, and opportunities to apply acquired competencies in the workplace. Performance appraisal was associated with performance through evaluation, feedback, goal clarification, and accountability. Nevertheless, negative relationships were also reported in some contexts, indicating that appraisal systems may be less effective when employees perceive the process as unfair or excessively controlling. Compensation and rewards were associated with motivation and performance through financial and non-financial incentives. Recognition, appreciation, and equitable compensation were identified as mechanisms that could strengthen employees' willingness to contribute. Recruitment and selection also contributed to performance by aligning employee competencies and organizational requirements. The reviewed studies further suggested that HRM practices should be considered as interconnected organizational interventions. Recruitment, training, appraisal, and compensation may jointly shape employee abilities, motivation, and opportunities to participate. However, the effectiveness of integrated HRM systems depends on the coherence and implementation of individual practices.

c. Theoretical Perspectives

Four theoretical frameworks were prominent in the reviewed literature. Self-Determination Theory explained how autonomy, competence, and relatedness support intrinsic motivation and employee well-being. The Job Demands–Resources Model explained how job resources can stimulate engagement, whereas excessive job demands may contribute to exhaustion. Social Exchange Theory explained reciprocal relationships between employees and organizations, particularly how favorable organizational treatment may encourage commitment and constructive work behavior. Goal-Setting Theory explained how specific goals, feedback, and goal commitment direct employee effort toward expected outcomes. Additional perspectives, including Expectancy Theory, Two-Factor Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Equity Theory, provided complementary explanations concerning rewards, self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived fairness.

d. Multilevel Antecedents and Mediating–Moderating Factors

The synthesis identified antecedents operating at individual, team, and organizational levels. Individual-level factors included self-efficacy, psychological capital, digital skills, personality, and self-regulation. Team-level factors included teamwork, information sharing, psychological safety, coordination, and collective efficacy. Organizational-level factors included leadership, HRM systems, organizational culture, perceived organizational support, and working conditions. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement were frequently examined as mediating mechanisms connecting organizational practices and employee outcomes. Work environment, organizational culture, and employee well-being were also identified as contextual factors that could shape the relationships between behavioral determinants, HRM

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practices, and productivity. Overall, the evidence indicates that employee productivity is associated with interconnected psychological, behavioral, and organizational conditions rather than a single determinant.

4.3. Discussion

a. Interpretation of the Main Findings

This review demonstrates that employee productivity is a multidimensional outcome shaped by behavioral determinants, HRM practices, and organizational contexts. Motivation, work engagement, and OCB represent important dimensions of productive work behavior, while organizational practices provide conditions that can support or constrain these behaviors. The findings suggest that productivity should not be understood exclusively as the amount of work completed. It also involves the quality of performance, employees' capacity to contribute beyond formal responsibilities, and the organizational conditions required to sustain effective work behavior. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature connecting work engagement with job performance (Corbeanu & Iliescu, 2023). However, the relationships identified in the reviewed studies should not automatically be interpreted as causal. The predominance of cross-sectional survey designs limits the ability to establish temporal relationships between organizational practices, psychological mechanisms, and productivity outcomes.

b. Behavioral Mechanisms Underlying Productivity

Motivation appears to be an important foundation of productive work behavior. Nevertheless, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should be distinguished because they operate through different psychological mechanisms. Self-Determination Theory suggests that employees are more likely to demonstrate autonomous and sustained motivation when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported. Chua and Ayoko (2021) examined the relationship between self-determined motivation, transformational leadership, and work engagement. Their findings provide a basis for understanding how leadership practices can support motivational conditions at work. This suggests that organizations should combine fair compensation and recognition with meaningful responsibilities, opportunities for development, and supportive relationships. Work engagement provides another mechanism linking workplace conditions with employee performance. Corbeanu and Iliescu (2023) reported a positive association between engagement and job performance in their meta-analysis. The Job Demands–Resources framework further explains this relationship by distinguishing between motivational processes, supported by job resources, and health impairment processes, associated with excessive demands (Bakker et al., 2023).

These perspectives indicate that increasing workload alone is not a sufficient productivity strategy. Employees also require feedback, social support, autonomy, and opportunities to use their competencies. Without these resources, higher demands may increase exhaustion and undermine sustainable performance. OCB further demonstrates that productive work behavior includes contributions beyond formal job responsibilities. Cooperation, helping colleagues, and sharing knowledge may support organizational effectiveness. However, organizations should recognize these contributions and avoid treating discretionary behavior as an unlimited source of additional labor. The potential trade-off between extra-role contributions and individual career outcomes highlights the importance of balanced performance evaluation and reward systems.

c. HRM Practices and Context-Dependent Outcomes

The findings indicate that training, performance appraisal, compensation, and recruitment are associated with employee performance. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on implementation and organizational context. Training can strengthen employee competencies, but the acquisition of knowledge does not automatically translate into improved productivity. Garavan et al. (2021) highlight the importance of temporal, institutional, and organizational moderators in the relationship between training and organizational performance. This suggests that training should be relevant to job requirements and

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supported by opportunities to apply new competencies. Performance appraisal can clarify expectations and provide developmental feedback. However, appraisal systems may undermine motivation when employees perceive the process as unfair, punitive, or disconnected from actual performance. Similarly, compensation can encourage effort, but financial rewards alone cannot compensate for poor leadership, inadequate resources, or limited opportunities for development.

The distinction between individual HRM practices and integrated HRM systems is therefore important. Boon et al. (2019) identify conceptual and measurement challenges in the study of HRM systems. Their review supports the need to examine how practices interact rather than assuming that the presence of multiple HRM policies automatically produces synergistic effects. Consequently, organizations should evaluate both the quality of individual practices and their alignment. Recruitment, training, appraisal, and compensation are more likely to support consistent employee outcomes when they communicate compatible expectations and reinforce organizational objectives.

d. Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

The four main theories identified in this review provide complementary explanations of employee productivity.Self-Determination Theory explains how psychological need satisfaction supports autonomous motivation. The Job Demands–Resources Model explains how workplace resources stimulate engagement and how excessive demands may contribute to exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2023). Social Exchange Theory explains why employees may reciprocate fair treatment and organizational support through commitment and constructive behavior. Guest (2017) emphasizes that employee well-being should also be considered when evaluating the relationship between HRM and organizational outcomes. Goal-Setting Theory adds an explanation of how specific goals and feedback direct employee effort. Together, these perspectives connect psychological motivation, workplace resources, reciprocal relationships, and goal-directed behavior. Their integration should not be interpreted as evidence that all mechanisms operate identically in every organization. Rather, each theory explains a different dimension of the productivity process, and the relevance of each mechanism depends on the organizational context.

e. Multilevel Implications for Employee Productivity

The findings support a multilevel understanding of productivity. At the individual level, motivation, self-efficacy, competence, and well-being shape employees' willingness and capacity to perform. At the team level, psychological safety, collaboration, and coordination influence how individual contributions are combined. At the organizational level, leadership, HRM systems, culture, and working conditions provide the broader environment for productive behavior. These levels interact. For example, organizational training may improve individual competencies, but its contribution to team performance depends on opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Similarly, employee motivation may be constrained when organizational policies and leadership practices do not provide sufficient support. A central contribution of this review is therefore the integration of organizational practices, psychological mechanisms, productive work behavior, and multilevel contextual conditions. This framework suggests that sustainable productivity improvement requires coordinated interventions rather than isolated efforts directed only at individual employees.

V. Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesizes evidence from 194 studies to explain the behavioral, psychological, and organizational factors associated with employee productivity. The findings indicate that motivation, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior are important behavioral determinants of productive work behavior. Their relationships with productivity are shaped by individual attitudes, particularly job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as contextual factors such as organizational culture, the work environment, and employee well-being. The review also highlights the relevance of human resource management practices, particularly training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and recruitment, with their effectiveness depending partly on how these practices are integrated and implemented within organizational settings. Furthermore, the Self-Determination Theory,

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Job Demands-Resources Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Goal-Setting Theory offer complementary perspectives for explaining the mechanisms underlying employee productivity across individual, team, and organizational levels.

These findings have important implications for organizational theory and management practice. Theoretically, this review brings together behavioral determinants, HRM practices, and organizational context in an integrated framework, emphasizing that employee productivity cannot be adequately understood through individual motivation or organizational policies alone. Rather, productivity reflects the interaction between employee characteristics, team processes, leadership, and organizational systems. Practically, organizations should develop integrated HRM strategies that combine relevant training, fair performance appraisal, appropriate compensation, and effective recruitment with supportive leadership and a positive work environment. Managers should also strengthen employee autonomy, competence development, collaboration, and psychological safety while monitoring job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being. Such an approach can support productivity improvements while maintaining the conditions necessary for sustainable employee performance.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The review was restricted to English-language publications and selected databases, which may have excluded relevant studies and introduced language or database bias. The absence of a standardized quality appraisal, the predominance of cross-sectional research designs, and the substantial heterogeneity in study populations, measurements, and analytical approaches also limit the strength and generalizability of the conclusions. In addition, the narrative synthesis does not provide pooled effect estimates or establish causal relationships. Future research should therefore employ longitudinal, experimental, and quasi-experimental designs to examine causal mechanisms over time; conduct systematic cross-cultural comparisons; and investigate employee productivity in remote, hybrid, and technology-enabled work environments. Further studies should also examine nonlinear relationships, potential trade-offs between productivity and employee well-being, and the effects of artificial intelligence and digital transformation on employee behavior and performance. These directions can strengthen the empirical and theoretical understanding of how organizations achieve productive and sustainable work outcomes.

AI Disclosure

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with the preparation of this manuscript, particularly in English translation, language editing, grammar correction, improvement of academic writing, and assistance with organizing and refining manuscript sections. The AI tool was also used to support the development and refinement of the discussion and conclusion sections. All AI-assisted content was critically reviewed, evaluated, and revised by the authors to ensure its accuracy, relevance, and consistency with the research findings. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and validity of the manuscript, including its arguments, interpretations, references, and conclusions. ChatGPT was not listed as an author, and its use was in accordance with the principles of research integrity and publication ethics.

Authorship Contribution

P. Paulus contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the research framework, methodology, literature search strategy, data collection, and initial manuscript preparation. Venny Adhita Octaviani contributed to the research design, methodological review, data analysis and synthesis, interpretation of findings, critical revision, and refinement of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the discussion of the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical, legal, and privacy restrictions.

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