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EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS REGARDING EMPLOYEE APPRAISAL: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mateusz NARAMSKI^{1*}, Mateusz TRZECIAK²

¹ Silesian University of Technology, Faculty of Organization and Management; mateusz.naramski@polsl.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-7288-1298

* Correspondence author

Purpose: The aim of this article was to develop principles that should characterize the employee evaluation process to ensure it is effective, fair, and acceptable to employees. Design/methodology/approach: In the paper the following methods were applied: desk

research, literature analysis, targeted survey, expert interviews.

Findings: Effective employee evaluation requires a holistic approach that considers employee needs and expectations, fosters transparent and fair criteria, supports professional development, and emphasizes open communication, healthy relationships, and two-way constructive feedback.

Originality/value: The development of eight news principles that should characterize the process of employee appraisal.

Keywords: Employee Appraisal, Performance Evaluation, Human Resource Management.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations operate in a dynamically changing environment (Nudurupati et al., 2021; Wybrańczyk et al., 2018) where efficiency and adaptability are key success factors (Naveed et al., 2022). In this context, employee evaluation systems must be appropriately designed to not only measure performance but also support the development of competencies and adapt to the individual needs of employees (Stofkova, Sukalova, 2020).

The traditional approach to employee evaluation often focuses primarily on employee performance results (Meijerink et al., 2022; Murphy, 2020). However, in recent years, there has been a shift towards more holistic and diverse evaluation methods that consider various aspects of employee activity. Currently, there is an increasing emphasis on assessing soft skills, such as communication (Kotamena et al., 2020), teamwork (Trzeciak, Banasik, 2022),

² Silesian University of Technology, Faculty of Organization and Management; mateusz.trzeciak@polsl.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-7381-3649

leadership (Rohmatunnisa, 2021), adaptability (Van Dam, Meulders, 2020), and innovation (Thneibat, Sweis, 2023). This approach stems from a growing awareness that organizational success depends not only on hard results but also on organizational culture and employees' interpersonal skills.

Employee evaluation also holds significant importance from the perspective of motivation and engagement. Regular and constructive feedback helps employees understand their strengths and areas for improvement (Murphy, 2020), which in turn influences their professional development and job satisfaction. Properly conducted evaluations can act as a motivator, encouraging employees to achieve higher performance and engage in organizational activities. On the other hand, an improper approach to evaluation can lead to frustration, decreased morale, and employee turnover.

Contemporary research indicates several key elements that are crucial for effective employee evaluation. As noted by Jiang and Shen (2023), transparency in the evaluation process is one of the most important aspects, influencing the perception of fairness and trust in the system. Employees need to have clarity regarding the evaluation criteria, methodology, and the goals set by the organization (Baird et al., 2020). The regularity and frequency of evaluations also play a significant role. Murphy (2020) points out that annual evaluations are often insufficient for effectively managing employee performance and development. Increasingly, it is recommended to use more frequent, less formal feedback sessions that allow for continuous action adjustments and support employee development (Dangol, 2021).

Another important aspect is the bidirectional nature of the evaluation process. Employees should have the opportunity to actively participate in the process, sharing their insights, expectations, and needs. Such interaction enhances engagement and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for personal development. Including employees in the evaluation process also contributes to building a more open and transparent organizational culture, where feedback is regarded as a developmental tool rather than a control mechanism.

Employee evaluation methods are constantly evolving, reflecting organizational and technological development as well as the evolution of approaches to human resource management. Traditional evaluations, such as annual or quarterly reviews, have been the standard for decades (DeNisi, Murphy, 2017). Regular performance reviews focusing on achieving operational and financial goals facilitate strategic planning and are relatively simple to implement. However, critics point to their limited adaptability in dynamic work environments and the risk of delayed responses to employee issues (Gruman, Saks, 2011; Trzeciak, 2020). Research indicates that infrequent evaluations can lead to reduced employee satisfaction and demotivation, as they fail to address the organization's current needs (Shuck et al., 2018).

Multisource methods, such as the 360-degree evaluation, have gained popularity due to their comprehensiveness. Feedback is gathered from various sources: supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, and clients (Bracken, Rose, 2011). Research by Fleenor et al. (2020) demonstrates

that this method enhances employee self-awareness and promotes the development of interpersonal skills. However, its implementation can be costly and time-consuming, and the lack of anonymity may lead to biases in evaluations (Colquitt, LePine, Wesson, 2013).

Competency-based methods, such as Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS), focus on specific behaviors critical to effective job performance. These scales aid in clearly communicating expectations and standardizing evaluations (Martin-Raugh et al., 2016). However, their development and regular updates require substantial resources (Gupta, Shaw, 2014).

Quantitative methods include approaches such as employee comparisons and forced distribution. Ranking employees allows for the elimination of central tendency bias in evaluations but may lead to competition rather than collaboration (Ahmed et al., 2013). On the other hand, the forced distribution method requires assigning a specific percentage of employees to various performance categories, which can result in artificially lowered ratings and reduced team morale (Kan, Tsai, 2022).

Qualitative methods, such as the critical incident method, allow for documenting key employee behaviors that impact job performance. They provide detailed information but require systematic and accurate monitoring (Fekete, Rozenberg, 2014).

Modern technology-based methods include employee evaluation IT systems as well as data analytics and artificial intelligence. IT systems enable real-time performance monitoring and the provision of continuous feedback, enhancing the efficiency of evaluations but raising concerns about privacy and excessive monitoring (Bhave, 2014; Tomczak et al., 2018). Data analytics, on the other hand, facilitates the identification of potential talents, but its application requires caution to avoid overreliance on algorithms without considering the human context (Minbaeva, 2018).

Participatory methods, such as self-assessment and peer evaluation, foster employee engagement and support a culture of feedback (Panadero et al., 2016). However, their effectiveness depends on the level of trust within the organization and clearly defined evaluation guidelines.

Mixed methods, such as 180-degree evaluations and observational assessments, combine various approaches to enable a more comprehensive performance analysis. The 180-degree evaluation, limited to supervisors and subordinates, is easier to implement than multisource methods (Das, Rajini, 2023).

Despite significant advancements in evaluation methods, the literature still lacks a consistent approach to continuous employee assessment. Traditional evaluation systems, even those leveraging modern technologies, are often conducted at designated intervals, such as quarterly or annual reviews (DeNisi, Murphy, 2017). Continuous assessment, defined as the process of providing ongoing, real-time feedback, offers a potential solution to many challenges, such as delayed responses to issues or a lack of flexibility in dynamic work environments (Pulakos et al., 2015; Szumiec, Trzeciak, 2024).

Although IT systems and data analytics are beginning to introduce elements of continuous monitoring, there is still a lack of research evaluating the impact of such practices on employee engagement, motivation, and long-term development. There is also a gap in understanding how to adapt these systems to different organizational cultures (Jończyk, Buchelt, 2015) and how to minimize the risks of excessive monitoring (Lin, Kellough, 2019), which can lead to a loss of employee trust (Mulvaney, 2019). Advancing research in this area is crucial to fully realizing the potential of continuous assessment in modern organizations.

2. Methods

The aim of this article is to develop principles that should characterize the employee evaluation process to ensure it is effective, fair, and acceptable to employees. The study seeks to identify key elements that can enhance the efficiency and acceptance of evaluation systems in organizations.

Despite extensive research on employee evaluation, there is a lack of consistent guidelines on the principles that should govern the evaluation process in modern organizations. Existing studies primarily focus on tools or technical methods but rarely offer a holistic approach that incorporates employee perception, behavioral aspects, and practical tools to support the evaluation process, such as ready-made forms, anonymous systems, or advanced technologies.

Moreover, there is a shortage of analyses in the literature regarding the impact of elements such as transparency, constructive feedback, or the absence of negative consequences on the effectiveness and acceptance of evaluation systems. This gap highlights the need to develop a comprehensive set of principles that could serve as guidelines for organizations implementing or modernizing their evaluation systems.

This study addresses this gap by providing a cohesive and practical set of principles that can contribute to improving the quality of employee evaluation processes in organizations.

In order to reach the main research goals, two series of interviews were conducted. The first series consisted of structured interviews with six experts from various fields, including: an IT Project Manager, an HR Department Director, an R&D Projects Director, a University Professor whose primary research focuses on employee evaluation processes, an Engineering Project Manager, and a Corporate Employee. The purpose of that interview was to consult the main assumptions and conclusions the authors came up with as a result of the literature review. The second interview series took the form of online surveys, that was distributed among managerial workers cooperating with the Silesian University of Technology and it's employees, as well as among part-time students who occupy various positions, and are professionally active. The main objective of the study was to identify the needs, expectations

and attitudes towards the employee evaluation process. The total number of participants in the second series was 91 respondents. At a assumed confidence level of alpha equal to 0.05, the sample error should not exceed 10%.

The first 20 questions in our survey were build by using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). To analyze the responses the selected options were converted into numerical values. The transformation process of the scale was carried out as follows:

- "Strongly agree" was converted to a value of 1.
- "Agree" was converted to a value of 0.5.
- "Neither agree nor disagree" was converted to a value of 0.
- "Disagree" was converted to a value of -0.5.
- "Strongly disagree" was converted to a value of -1.

After converting the responses into numerical values, descriptive statistic for each question were calculated. The mean values of the Likert scale responses provide an understanding of the overall attitude of the respondents towards each statement in the survey. The mean values can range from 1 (indicating strong agreement) to -1 (indicating strong disagreement), with a value of 0 indicating a neutral stance or lack of a clear opinion from the respondents.

The survey also included 6 multiple-choice questions where respondents selected the options they considered best for a given topic. For these questions, the percentage of all respondents who selected each option was calculated. Those indicate the proportion of respondents who favored each option, allowing for the identification of the most and least popular choices among the respondents.

This transformation and analysis allowed for the quantitative representation of qualitative data collected in the survey, facilitating further statistical analyses and interpretation of the research findings.

3. Results

3.1. Overall characteristics of the respondents group

The respondents group consisted mainly (37.36%) of employees who's professional position was described as an Specialist, Foreman or master of crafts. The second largest fraction were managers (28.57%) – whereby 12.09% are lower level managers, and 16.38% middle-level manager. The remaining 34.07% consisted of various and singular cases of worker occupations, with the mention worthy exception of two (2.2%) company presidents. When it comes to professional experience the majority (57.14%) of respondents has little professional experience (less than 3 years), and the second frequently (25.27%) chosen answer

was 3 to 6 years of experience. This is tightly related to the age of respondents, who in most cases (68.13%) were 30 or younger. It is worth mentioning that the size of companies in with the respondents were employed covers all organizational sizes: 30.77% work in corporations with more than 1000 workers, 16,48% in large companies (250-999 workers), 23.03% in medium sized organizations (50-249), 15,38% in small companies (10-49), and the remaining 14.29% in micro companies (less than 10 employees).

The respondents represented a wide variety of work sectors, what is visualized in Figure 1.

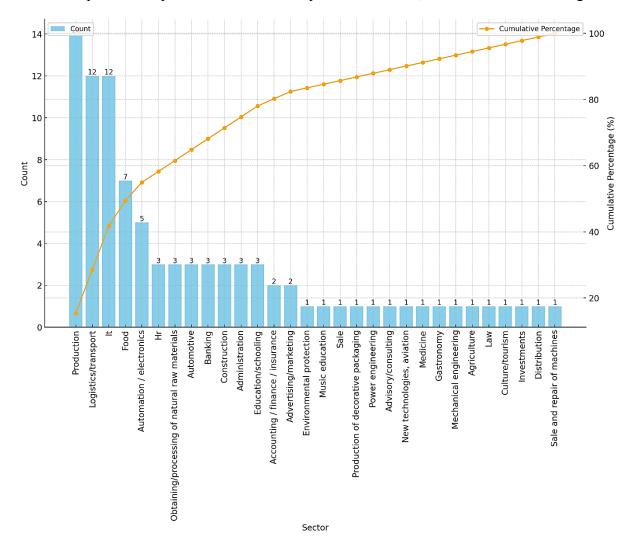


Figure 1. Count and cumulative percentage share of sectors represented by the survey respondents. Source: Own work.

The presented sample group should offer a comprehensive overview on how employees perceive the evaluation process, because it includes perspectives from various work environments, and at the same time, because the sample focuses on younger employees it should offer an insight into how todays and future workers will approach the evaluation process.

3.2. Survey results

As mentioned before, the survey contained 20 Likert scale questions related to the concept of employee assessment. The distribution of answers chosen by the respondents and the mean value for each question were shown in Figure 2.

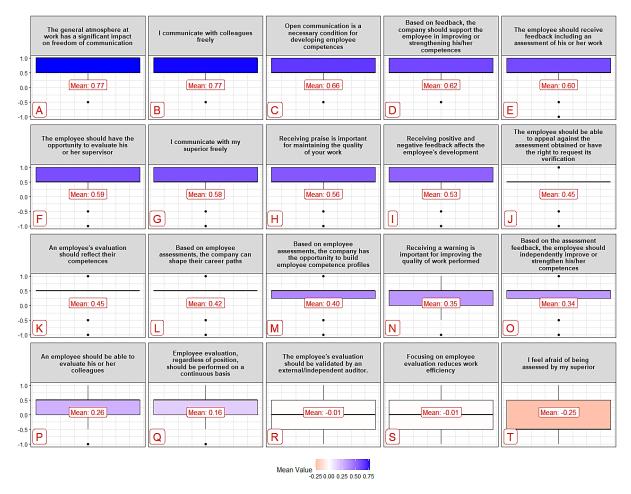


Figure 2. The distribution of answers and the mean value of responses given by the respondents to questions regarding their attitudes towards employee assessment.

Source: Own work.

As one can read, for the majority of questions the responses expressed strong or medium strong agreement with the presented statements. The only clear disagreement concerned the statement "I feel afraid of being assessed by my supervisor" ("T" panel in figure 2). The calculated mean value of answers is -0.25, and 50% of all answers were in the range of -0.5 to 0.5. This indicates that most of employees are not intimidated by the assessment process.

The respondents gave most varied responses to questions from panels "S" and "R", with mean value nearly equal to 0. Many employees are somewhat skeptical with the idea of external auditors evaluating their performance, with is understandable as it introduces uncertainty – they do not know the assessor. The second question reveals, that just as meany employees are affected negatively by focusing on their evaluation, as there are not. The reasons

for that distinction might have various sources; from personality traits (insecure, anxious, self confident, etc.) to the work environment itself (does the evaluation interfere with the ordinary work schedule, does the assessment create stressful atmosphere).

The questions from panels from "A" to "I" were all characterized by high mean values, witch translates to responding with either "I strongly agree" or "I agree". Questions "A", "B" "C" and "G" refer in general to open and not restricted communication within a company – concerning overall atmosphere, as well as the relationship with colleagues and superiors. Next, the highly positive response rate to questions "D" and "C" again highlight the importance of competence development through open communication and feedback. Furthermore, the crucial role of feedback (foremost positive) was expressed in questions "E", "H", "I". Whereby in question "F" the respondents underlined they expect that the evaluation should be mutual and should be allowed to produce feedback for the supervisors as well.

The least versified answers were given to questions "J", "K" and "L", to with nearly all respondents replied with "I agree". They reflect the employees expectations of fair assessment and career development based on competences.

Similarly to previous cases, the responses to questions "M", "N" and "O" were mainly "I agree" but were more diversified, and some participants of the study replied to them with "Neither agree nor disagree". This indicates some level of uncertainty among employees regarding the possibility of achieving positive outcomes through negative feedback, as well as some skepticism among some employees when it comes to building competence profiles based on the outcomes of an assessment.

Finaly, the rather slightly positive character of answers given to questions "P" and "Q" indicate, that the concept of continuous and mutual among colleagues assessment process has potential to be applied, but would require employee preparation and time for accommodation.

The so far presented results indicate that the highest-rated aspects of worker evaluation primarily should focus on communication, constructive feedback, and transparency.

The last 6 questions were meant to identify what would engage employees in the process of evaluation and what would make it easier, considering tree main evaluated groups: employees (subordinates), co-workers, and superiors. The obtained results were visualized in Figures 3 and 4.

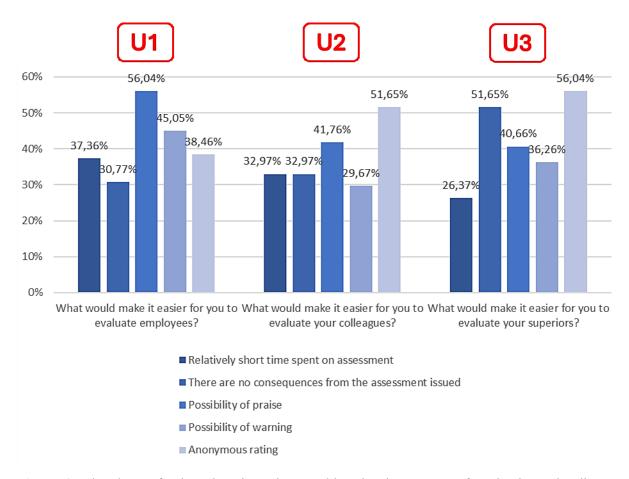


Figure 3. The share of selected options that would make the process of evaluating subordinates, co-workers, and supervisors easier in the opinion of survey respondents.

Source: Own work.

The obtained results indicate that there are differences in evaluation depending on the hierarchical relationship between the assessor and the assessed. When it comes to evaluating superiors (panel U1 in figure 3), most of the respondents (56.04%) pointed out that anonymity would make it easier for them to asses their supervisors. The second most commonly selected option (51.64%) was "there are no consequences from the assessment". Those two options suggest that in order to receive a honest grade of a supervisor's performance from employees, they require some insurance, that their opinion will not cause retaliation. Similarly, most (51.65%) of the respondents have underlined anonymity as the key aspect for assessing their coworkers (panel U2 in figure 3). Whereby the second commonly (41.73%) chosen option indicated that the possibility for giving positive feedback, would make it easier to do this. Interestingly, the same option was the most popular choice (56.04%) when the respondents were considering the assessment of subordinates (panel U3 in figure 3). At the same time, only for this relationship combination the possibility of giving a warning to a employee was the second common choice (45.05%). Overall the results indicate that employees expect the evaluation process should allow to produce constructive feedback, as well as that it is mutual and fair.

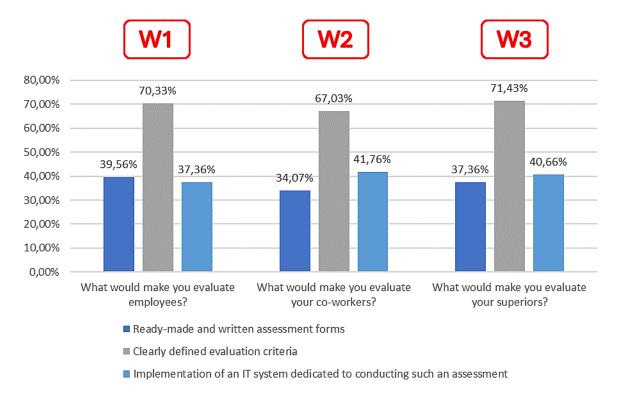


Figure 4. The share of selected options that would make workers to evaluate their subordinates, co-workers, and supervisors.

Source: Own work.

The results shown, in figure 4 clearly show that, no matter the hierarchical relationship between the assessor and the assessed, clearly defined evaluation criteria are the most important aspects that would encourage the respondents to perform an evaluation. When it comes to other amenities, over a third of respondents (39,56%) say that ready-made forms would ease the process. The reason for this might be, that a superior needs to asses more people, than a subordinate would. On the other hand, IT systems, were selected by approximately 40% of respondents, as an option that would encourage them to asses their co-workers and supervisors. The main observation that can be made from the presented results, is that the evaluation process should be simple and practical.

4. Discussion

Based on the identified in the survey key aspects of employee evaluation on can derive from them principles that might be applied in organizations in order to encourage employees to willingly and without concerns participate in the evaluation process. The derived principles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The main principles for employee evaluation the emerged from the conducted research*

| Question symbol | The deriving principle | Explanation |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| C, D, L, M | Approach Based on Competences | The role of both praise and constructive criticism in maintaining work quality suggests a principle focused on competences. This principle ensures that employees are continually developing and improving their skills. |
| W1, W2, W3 | Practicality and Simplicity | The emphasis on making the evaluation process quick, without negative consequences, and anonymous suggests the principle of practicality and simplicity. This principle ensures that evaluations are easy to perform and encourage honest feedback. |
| A, B, G, J, P, R, T, U1, U2, U3 | Reciprocity and Fairness of Assessment | The value placed on employees' ability to evaluate their supervisors and appeal assessments reflects the need for reciprocal and fair assessment processes, ensuring that all voices are heard and assessments are just. |
| O, Q | Iterative Approach | Emphasizing a cyclical process that encourages continual reassessment and improvement based on feedback, ensuring the evaluation system evolves and adapts to changing needs. |
| C, E, H, I, N, S, U2, U3 | Constructive Feedback | The emphasis on the necessity of regular, supportive feedback for improving competences indicates the importance of constructive feedback as a principle for employee development. |
| B, E, G, J | Open and Transparent Information Flow | The importance of free communication with colleagues and superiors, and a supportive work atmosphere, highlights the need for transparent information flow within the organization. |
| L, M, O, Q | Targeted on Continuous Improvement | The focus on clearly defined criteria, ready-made forms, and the implementation of IT systems indicates a principle geared towards continuous improvement. This principle ensures that the evaluation process is structured, fair, and facilitates ongoing development. |
| D | Stable and Balanced Development | Ensures a balanced approach to employee growth, addressing both immediate performance and long-term career development needs. |

Source: Own work.

The presented principles were arranged in order to create an easy to remember acronym – APRICOTS.

An Approach Based on Competences forms the foundation of modern employee evaluation systems. The literature emphasizes that focusing on professional competences enables more effective talent management and individual employee development (DeNisi, Murphy, 2017; Liebert, Trzeciak, 2016). Both technical and interpersonal competences are critical for organizational effectiveness, as confirmed by the research of Jiang and Shen (2023). It is essential for an evaluation system to identify both the strengths of employees and areas requiring improvement. As noted by Fleenor et al. (2020), competency-based systems contribute to more personalized career development planning, thereby supporting engagement and motivation in the workplace.

The Practicality and Simplicity principle is crucial for the acceptance of the evaluation process. As noted by Gruman and Saks (2011), simple evaluation systems are more effective and more readily accepted by employees. Research findings indicate that respondents prefer straightforward tools, such as ready-made forms and anonymous evaluation systems. Similar

conclusions are presented by Fleenor, et al., 2020, who emphasize the importance of simplicity in multi-source processes.

Ensuring the Reciprocity and Fairness of Assessment is a key element in building trust within an organization. As highlighted by Colquitt, et al., (2013), transparent criteria and the possibility of two-way feedback enhance employees' perception of fairness. Survey respondents emphasized the importance of mechanisms allowing for the evaluation of supervisors and the ability to appeal unfavorable evaluation results. Systems that support reciprocal evaluation, such as 360-degree feedback, contribute to fostering a culture of openness and promote the development of interpersonal competences across the organization (Fleenor, et al., 2020).

The Iterative Approach enables the dynamic adaptation of the assessment process to the changing needs of the organization and individual employees (Trzeciak, 2024). Pulakos et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of cyclical reviews and the updating of professional goals. In the context of this principle, it is worth referring to the PDCA cycle, which allows for systematic planning, implementation, monitoring, and improvement of processes. Survey respondents highlighted that the ability to regularly assess and update their goals contributes to increased motivation and engagement in professional development.

Constructive Feedback plays a key role in the employee evaluation process, supporting competency development and fostering employee engagement. As noted by Sedikides and Hepper (2009), feedback should be regular, specific, and improvement-oriented. Research by Murphy (2020) confirms that employees who receive constructive criticism combined with recognition of their achievements demonstrate greater commitment to fulfilling their responsibilities. Respondents in our study emphasized that positive and detailed feedback motivates them to take on new challenges and supports the development of a collaborative atmosphere within teams.

The respondents of the study emphasized the importance of the Open and Transparent Information Flow in the evaluation process. As noted by Stofkova and Sukalova (2020), open communication within an organization builds trust and supports developmental processes. Our research shows that clearly defined evaluation criteria are key to employee acceptance of the system.

A focus on the principle Targeted on Continuous Improvement plays a central role in effective employee evaluation processes. As noted by Minbaeva (2018), systems leveraging IT technologies enable ongoing performance monitoring and the identification of potential talent. Employees should be systematically supported in their development through access to training, mentoring, and feedback. Respondents in the study highlighted that regular evaluation reviews, combined with the establishment of clear career paths, enhance their engagement and job satisfaction. Implementing the principles targeted on continuous improvement allows organizations to adapt to changing market conditions and increases their competitiveness.

Ensuring a Stable and Balanced Development approach is essential for the long-term success of an organization. Venkat et al. (2023) highlight that a stable approach fosters engagement and reduces employee turnover. The research findings showed that respondents appreciate systems that consider their needs from both short-term and long-term perspectives.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to develop principles that should characterize the employee evaluation process to make it effective, fair, and acceptable to employees. The research results, based on a literature review and surveys conducted among respondents, allowed for the identification of eight key principles, including: approach based on competences, practicality and simplicity, reciprocity and fairness of assessment, iterative approach, constructive feedback, open and transparent information flow, targeted on continuous improvement, and stable and balanced development.

The most significant findings indicate that effective employee evaluation requires not only technical tools but also a holistic approach that takes into account the needs and expectations of employees. It is crucial to create a supportive environment for professional development, based on transparent and fair evaluation criteria. Respondents particularly emphasized the importance of open and unrestricted communication, healthy relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and constructive, two-way feedback — from the employee to the supervisor and vice versa.

However, the conducted research has certain limitations. Firstly, the research sample consisted of 91 respondents, which is smaller than the commonly accepted sample size in social research. Nevertheless, the results provided a basis for developing preliminary principles for the employee evaluation process. Secondly, the analysis did not consider the impact of digital technologies on employee evaluation in various cultural and organizational contexts, which could be the subject of further research.

Future studies should expand the research sample to include diverse professional experiences as well as sectoral and cultural differences. Additionally, it will be important to examine the long-term effects of implementing the proposed principles and their impact on organizational efficiency and employee satisfaction.

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