Factors Influencing the Expected Advantages and Disadvantages of Continuous Feedback-Based Performance Appraisal Systems

Alicja Balcerak [1,*], Jacek Wozniak [2]

[1] Faculty of Management, Wroclaw University of Science and Technology, Wroclaw, 50-370, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0002-4507-0497
e-mail: alicja.balcerak@pwr.edu.pl

[2] VIZJA University, Warsaw, 01-043, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0003-4610-2822
e-mail: j.wozniak@vizja.pl

[*] Corresponding author: Alicja Balcerak, alicja.balcerak@pwr.edu.pl

Abstract

The objective of this text is to facilitate a discourse on conventional performance appraisal systems and new solutions within these systems, grounded in continuous feedback. Additionally, the text aims to test selected factors that influence the favourable reception of such systems by employees. A survey of 137 Polish current employees revealed that their perceptions of traditional employee appraisal systems were more favourable than anticipated from American research. Despite acknowledging deficiencies in the operational effectiveness of these systems, the employees expressed a positive evaluation of their perceived effectiveness. The expected advantages of a continuous feedback-based performance appraisal system were also given a high rating, and its potential disadvantages a low rating. However, no correlation was found between the ratings of traditional and continuous feedback-based systems. The study demonstrated that anger towards an organisation exerts an influence on perceived advantages of continuous feedback-based systems, which is moderated by the presumed outcome of periodic assessment. Furthermore, younger respondents assigned significantly lower ratings to the anticipated disadvantages of this performance appraisal system in comparison to their older counterparts.

Key words

performance appraisal systems, periodic assessment, continuous feedback, new performance appraisal.

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Introduction

Performance appraisal systems are an important tool for managing work efficiency, and can be beneficial for employees, teams, organisations and even broader groups of stakeholders, because by influencing the performance of the organisation's operations, they also affect its environment. Since the beginning of the 21st century, critical voices have intensified, primarily in American literature, but also Polish literature (Zieliński, 2013; Bohdziewicz & Urbaniak, 2013; Czajka, 2013; Fudala-Barańska, 2016), whether showing that the functioning of traditional performance appraisal systems (TPAS) are inconsistent with the principles of good practice (Zieliński, 2013; Bohdziewicz & Urbaniak, 2013; Czajka, 2013; Fudala-Barańska, 2016), or calling for a radical change in these systems by basing them on continuous feedback (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Lawler et al., 2016; Ledford et al., 2016b; Ledford & Schneider, 2018; Tanjung et al., 2024). The topic is all the more important because innovations in the area of human resource management affect not only the organisations that adopt them, but also economic growth at the national level (Danova et al., 2021). However, there has been little research to date on the determinants of success in implementing these continuous feedback-based new solutions, and in particular on employees' reactions to them. This is especially so in the case of Polish scientific literature, as we do not know of any Polish studies in this area. Hence, our goal is to start a discussion on the validity of implementing new performance appraisal systems in Polish companies, and more precisely to indicate the arguments behind the need to modify traditional performance appraisal systems, and to analyse selected factors that may influence the perception of new solutions, i.e. the continuous feedback-based performance appraisal system (CFBPAS). Based on the opinions of 137 employees, some determinants of opinions about traditional and new solutions in the field of performance appraisal were checked, in particular whether opinions about TPAS affect opinions about CFBPAS. It was found that – contrary to expectations resulting from American research – Polish employees positively assessed the perceived efficacy of TPAS, although they noticed several inappropriate actions during its implementation in the company. The respondents also rated the expected advantages of CFBPAS as high, and their potential disadvantages low, but no correlation was found between the ratings of traditional and continuous feedback-based systems. The results supported the premise that anger towards an organisation – moderated by the presumed results of periodic assessment – has an impact on the perceived advantages of CFBPAS, and that younger respondents rated the expected disadvantages of CFBPAS significantly lower than older respondents. However, no impact of attitude to manager and to job was observed.

The article is organized as follows. The first part briefly presents discussions about performance appraisal systems. Special attention is directed to the difficulties identified in the literature concerning traditional appraisal systems, which have become the basis of new solutions based on continuous feedback. New solutions and the current state of knowledge on their effectiveness as performance appraisal tools are briefly outlined. Part 2 presents the methodology of the empirical study, and the third – its preliminary results and a discussion. The last part includes conclusions drawn from the studies presented and indicates the needs for further research.

1. Literature review

Performance appraisal system (PA for short) is a management tool that has been used for over 100 years in companies to increase work efficiency (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). In its traditional form, it is based on periodic evaluation of the work of subordinates by their direct superiors. These systems became popular in the USA in the 1960s, when companies were looking for tools that would allow them to unquestionably recognize which employees achieve above-standard work results (Capelli & Tavis, 2016; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2019). This was necessary to substantively justify above-standard wage increases for these employees, in the face of trade unions' pressure for increases based on seniority.

In Poland, these systems do not have a legal definition (Górnicz-Mulcahy, 2020) and are implemented in companies as an individually created management tool, focused on the goals adopted in the company. It is commonly accepted to divide these goals into several groups, such as administrative goals, informational goals, and motivational goals (Pocztowski, 2018), or administrative goals, developmental goals, role-definition goals and strategic goals (Lameque et al., 2023), but there are often many more specific goals (Ludwiczyński, 2007; Pocztowski, 2018). It is usually indicated that PA performs two basic functions – evaluative (verification of how an employee performs his or her duties) and developmental. Capelli and Tavis (2016) stated that the changing emphasis on the current importance of these functions changed the opinion about how such systems should be constructed in companies, due to the different requirements of a PA for the correct implementation of these two functions. For the evaluative function, the precision and irrefutability of the assessment result is important in order to be able to base on it personnel actions that have wider consequences (dismissal or promotion of an employee), while in the developmental function, the collected information is only a starting point for developing an improvement action plan, hence in these cases the novelty of the information or the credibility of its source becomes more important than precision.

Capelli and Tavis (2016), who analysed the history of the development of periodic performance appraisal methodologies through the changing emphasis on these two functions, note that the period starting in the 1980s, in which the primary aim was to recognize outstanding and poor employees in the company, and therefore the pressure on the accuracy of performance evaluation for these employees, has already passed. Currently, in the second decade of the 21st century, the demands for the developmental utility of PA are becoming stronger.

Since the beginning of the XXI century, there has been an intensifying discussion on social factors that undermined the ability of a manager to objectively and fully adequately evaluate the work of his subordinates. It is argued that the role of the manager is not only to carry out the company's instructions and represent the company to the team, but primarily to fulfil the role of the team leader (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Murphy, 2020; Schrøder-Hansen & Hansen, 2023). As a team leader, the manager primarily influences team members, providing reliable feedback to some and undeserved praise or blame to others, in order to realize his/hers plans on how to achieve the best performance of the team, but also how to pursue some of his/her personal interests. These social determinants of the leader’s evaluation of team members mean that neither modifications of evaluation scales, nor even special training for managers, can eliminate the consequences of the fact that managers implement, including during PA, their own policy towards employees (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Levy & Williams, 2004; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Murphy, 2020). Nonetheless, TPAS imposes the role of an objective and precise "measurement tool" on managers during the assessment.

TPAS in a company is based on commonly known and relatively objective assessment criteria, which managers are obligate to use to assess their subordinates. As part of this organizational procedure, a process of evaluating subordinates by their immediate supervisors and setting goals for the next year occurs periodically (usually once a year). In TPAS, setting goals for the next year also involves identifying the subordinate's developmental needs related to the company's priorities in the next period and the individual expectations of employees within these priorities.

Analysing potentially possible assessment systems, Pocztowski (2018, p. 275) proposes to classify performance appraisal systems according to several independent criteria: assessment purposes, assessment principles, assessment criteria, assessment entities, assessment subject, assessment techniques, assessment frequency and assessment procedures. Leaving aside for a moment the purposes of assessment, which – as we indicated above, change while remaining related to assess the staff actual competences, and/or development of these competences – TPAS is the specific type according to this typology. In TPAS the subordinate is assessed by his direct manager in terms of his work in the past period – usually a year – at one predetermined point in time. Traditionally, work is assessed in all its dimensions, as defined by the employee's role and understood by his or her superior, although in practice, wherever possible, the assessment concerns the achievement of the goals set in the previous interview. These goals and objectives are often measurable (typically in Management by Objectives or through a set of KPIs for the area of responsibility), but the evaluation of how to achieve them is usually more difficult to measure. In TPAS, the subject of the evaluation is the employee's work, so for those jobs where it is difficult to set KPIs, the evaluation must necessarily involve differently defined measures of performance in order to provide a fair basis for personnel actions based on the results of the evaluation, such as pay increases, bonuses, or transfers between positions (promotions or demotions).

The part of the assessment that concerns the way of cooperation in the organization is currently usually based on several corporate competencies that define the principles of cooperation. These competencies have a nomenclature specific to a given organization, related to its culture and principles, but they usually concern typical principles of interpersonal cooperation in the organization (communication skills, attitudes toward cooperation), as expressed in the language used to define the company's mission and culture. (Woźniak, 2011). They are described through behaviourally anchored scales to help objectify the assessment of "things that are hard to measure."

The versions of the TPAS that have been in use since the late 20th century basically only use behavioural scales to assess the way of acting and precisely defined goals and responsibilities in the area of performance outcomes. TPAS assumes a number of principles intended to facilitate the creation of a sense of fair classification of employees, such as the knowledge of the evaluation criteria in advance, the confidentiality of the assessment, the possibility of presenting and discussing the employee's arguments, and even the requirement to discuss the sources of the employee's problems and needs, the non-satisfaction of which hinders their work (Ciekanowski & Ostrowska, 2013; Pocztowski, 2018). The procedure of the periodic performance appraisal system not only establishes a schedule of activities and the basic principles of their implementation, but usually assumes that a cascade of meetings (called periodic performance appraisal interviews) will take place – from the top managers down –, a conversation (face-to-face rather than through technologically mediated communication) between a direct superior and a subordinate, during which goals are communicated and company priorities are presented.

The objective of these appraisal interviews, in addition to determining the assessment, is to demonstrate the strategic priorities that the company adopts for the subsequent period. Therefore, in the course of these meetings, which are held from the highest-ranking managers down to the rank-and-file employees, the aforementioned priorities are communicated, in concretization to each of the jobs or roles an employee holds.

From the vantage point of an organization's future, the strategic and role-definition functions assume paramount importance. Conversely, from the individual employee's perspective, the elements of the meeting that demonstrate how their superior evaluates their work may hold greater significance. This evaluation, which includes an analysis of the employee's strengths and weaknesses as they relate to their work performance, serves as a fundamental basis for various personnel decisions. It also facilitates the determination of development opportunities that align with the company's strategic priorities and the employee's career aspirations. In practice, the substantive part of the appraisal interview comprises three elements. The first is to determine the assessment of the employee's performance through a discussion concerning the adopted priorities for their work during the preceding appraisal interview. It is based on generalized feedback, in which the manager presents his assessment and arguments for it, and the employee presents his/her opinion and explains any ambiguities, which may change the manager's opinion. The second element of the appraisal interview is setting priorities or goals for the next period, and the third element is the employee's career development plan. The latter element is based on discussing the developmental needs of the subordinate and establishing (taking into account the company's strategy and available resources) a development action plan to be implemented in support of the achievement of the established goals. These three, partially related elements are usually – as many as 89% of companies combine periodic performance appraisals with raises (Mercer, 2013) – additionally complemented by a discussion about financial expectations and determining salary raises or proposals for the pay increases submitted by the manager.

It is understandable and included in the rules of this procedure that data from appraisal interviews are transferred to HR as the basis for a number of further personnel actions. This is because the results of these interviews are the outcome of an internal audit of the human resources they have, their development plans and their expectations regarding the training and working tools that would help them to implement the company's plans in the following year.

Thus, it can be said that – if the periodic interview actually measures the quality of an employee's work – the TPAS serves two management purposes well: it provides data to justify the distribution of raises and promotions, and it indicates to management who is talent worthy of attention

(Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Cappelli & Conyon, 2018). The second purpose of these interviews - corrective and developmental actions and conveying to the employee how his or her supervisor sees his or her work – is of less immediate importance from a management perspective, but has a long-term impact on talent development and how the company will operate in the future (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). To achieve the latter goal, more important than the accuracy of the assessment is the ability to motivate the employee to work on himself/herself and enable development activities, because even feedback that is not necessarily accurate can be a good basis for development activities. However, it is difficult to achieve this goal through a conversation held once a year, so the schedule of periodic evaluations is not conducive to success in achieving development goals, unless these conversations are only a supplement and summary of continuous feedback and development work.

As already mentioned, constructive criticism of TPAS has a history of over a hundred years, but one of the shortcomings of TPAS, which McGregor pointed out already in 1957 (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017), still characterizes these systems. Namely, the assumed implementation of the 3 goals, administrative, informational and motivational, during employee evaluation is impossible, because combining a conversation about raises with a conversation about the problems a subordinate has at work limits honesty and mutual trust. Nevertheless, under the influence of scientific criticism, but also due to changing business conditions, TPAS has undergone refinement changes over the years, a good example of which was the introduction of behavioural scales. Another example of such changes was the introduction of training for evaluators (and often also for those being assessed). Contemporary attempts at radical modifications in the TPAS, however, resulted not so much from scientific criticism showing the complexity of the social context of implementing the annual assessment (Levy & Williams, 2004; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Murphy, 2020), but from revealing the effects of using forced distribution of grades. The forced distribution evaluations assumed that the manager had to identify a given number of the weakest and of the best member of the team and its use as part of evaluation systems became a fashion in the 1990s – attributed to the successes of J. Welch at GE (Capelli & Tavis, 2016) – in American companies to imitate GE solutions. This fashion expired rapidly at the beginning of the 21st century, and in the second decade of the 21st century, their harmfulness to organizations (Google, Microsoft) is emphasized (rather than their advantages), such as the potential identification of talents.

An additional factor – in addition to the proliferation of team-based project work, i.e., the kind where individual contributions become difficult to measure and harmful to emphasize – has been the emphasis on effective employee development actions within the company that is prevalent in the second decade of the 21st century.

Historically, this shift to the new types of performance appraisal systems has occurred gradually. According to Ledford et al. (2016a), the beginning of the modification of TPAS was the simplification of rating scales, which began around 1995. That's when companies began to move away from multi-point (typically 5 points, but even 7 points) Likert scales on multiple (10) dimensions. The reason for reducing the dimensions and simplifying the scales was (in addition to evidence of the unreliability of multidimensional scales) no need for precise and detailed employee classification. In particular, it was due to the radical (relative to, for example, the 1970s and 1980s) reduction in the scale of raises (the average wage increase in the US was less than 3%). Thus, the administrative purpose of performance appraisal became to identify only 1–3% of the worst employees (for possible dismissal), and with regard to the remaining employees, managers made their own decisions on raises. At the same time, it has been observed in companies (which has also been confirmed by academic research – cf. the review in (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017) that feedback from multiple sources (collected in a 360-degree system) provides a good incentive to work on developing one's competencies. In addition, there has been a proliferation of coaching in companies (and again – found scientific support for its effectiveness), which has fostered criticism of the periodic interview as an ineffective development tool.

At the beginning of the 2nd decade of the 21st century, it became common in the scientific and business literature to emphasize that the performance appraisal system needs radical modification, because in a team-based project economy, in a highly volatile environment, it is not possible to set annual plans or evaluate work in such a distant perspective. In particular, large consulting companies, oriented to the internal development of their employees' competences (recruited as young university graduates), were interested in intensifying this development. Intensive feedback and coaching based on the results of work in individual projects, or even individual phases of these projects, rather than based on the establishment of annual development needs, became a basic tool in them.

A growing body of research data from diverse samples has appeared in the academic and business literature suggesting a shift away from TPAS. Capelli & Tavis (2016) show that 88% of companies surveyed plan to change their performance appraisal system. Another study found that of 430 companies surveyed, 12% had already eliminated performance appraisals, 25% planned to do so (HCI, 2015; Pulakos et al., 2019); in another study – conducted on 296 companies – 6% of companies had eliminated PA, 15% planned to do so (CEB, 2016; Pulakos et al., 2019). It has often been argued that TPAS are ill-suited to the rapid dynamics of company work, to projects and teamwork, to the dependence of work performance on context, and that linking TPAS results to compensation decisions demotivates and hinders corrective action.

Alternatives to TPAS have been emerging in many companies (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Lawler et al., 2016; Ledford et al., 2016b; Ledford & Schneider, 2018; Lievens et al., 2020), hence there is no single standard that can be called a new way of performance appraisal of employees. However, it is common for them to use continuous feedback, i.e., collecting information from multiple people with different roles in projects about an employee's performance on an ongoing (rather than periodic) basis. Companies like Deloitte, Gap, Microsoft, Adobe, and PwC are considered forerunners of this trend (Lievens et al., 2020, p. 9).

Collecting information through "360-degree feedback" usually is leveraged by the potential of social media and the willingness of today's employees to use social media tools to provide feedback to one another following projects or collaboration incidents. In properly designed feedback presentation formats, anyone who has come into contact with an employee has the opportunity to type in praise or remarks, pointing to a specific incident and his or her action in it, and can express his/her opinion on the perceived strengths of the person being assessed. Feedback gathering ICT bases built in this way can form the basis for a conversation between the supervisor and the subordinate, usually more frequent and shorter than in TPAS – for example, at Delloitte once a week for 15 minutes (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). The frequent use of crowdsourcing feedback methodology (Mosley, 2012), in which, like in 360-degree feedback, feedback is collected from many, but - as in crowdsourcing (Woźniak, 2013) – undefined in advance individuals, creates a broad information base for the person being assessed and for management who want to better understand what type of employee they are dealing with. As a result, opinions about the employee are collected all year (and not at a specific moment in the calendar), the number of people providing feedback increases, and for HR it is possible to build a graph showing who shows appreciation to whom, recognizing people who are actually key to the operation of various teams.

Usually, this continuous feedback is technologically mediated (implemented as entries in enterprise social media (Gupta & Sharma, 2023)), hence it is necessary to supplement this information with traditionally implemented coaching and/or frequent meetings with the manager (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Ledford & Schneider, 2018). However, it should be borne in mind that, just like in social media, typical problems arise in such systems, related to careless expression of opinions. Hence, the possibility of negative entries is usually limited and short positive entries dominate, such as "Good job!" or "Pros!" rather, than more extensive and precise information ("You don't use extensive face-to-face interactions enough"). From the perspective of company managers who want to base important personnel decisions on this data, the real problem is the credibility of these entries, and only AI-powered analyses may deal with this, for now to a limited extent (MIW, 2023).

It should be noted that the use of PA belongs to the so-called good management practices supported by business schools and American standards of management education (Ghoshal, 2005; Arnaboldi et al., 2015), and thus, as these practices become more popular in other parts of the world, they are becoming widely used in the form of TPAS. In fact, their popularization in a specific country is influenced by 3 mechanisms: the adoption of Anglo-Saxon business standards in management education, and –adopting them at a different speed – in the practice of companies, and - independently - the popularization of New Public Management. Hence, in different countries of Eastern Europe, these practices have a different degree of use and history of implementation.

TPAS as a tool for managing work efficiency in the New Public Management (NPM) model (Arnaboldi et al., 2015), an ideology of transferring business practices to public administration, was introduced at different time in public and local government administration in European and non-European countries. For example, in Poland, the use of TPAS has been mandatory in public administration since 2008, but in local government administration in the Czech Republic, research showed the initial stages of the dissemination of these practices in 2016 (Špalková et al., 2015), while in Ukraine the implementation of these practices began only in 2016 (OECD, 2024). These differences can be seen today – for example, Ukrainian universities are starting to implement periodic assessment systems (Shaulska et al., 2021), while in Polish countries it has been a standard required by law since 2018 (Woźniak, 2023).

Treating TPAS as a tool of good business practice suggests that in private organizations – at least in the initial periods of absorption of Western models – a higher level of implementation of these practices should be expected than in administration, where their popularization requires a legal change. It is therefore not surprising that comparative studies using the Cranet database, which periodically collects data from 32 countries around the world, show that on average in Eastern European countries the dissemination of performance appraisal is still lower than in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries (70% and over 90%, respectively), but the differences between the scale of use in business and public organizations are radically decreasing in the following years (Poór et al., 2021).

In business, in addition to the absorption channel resulting from the content taught in business schools, the most important channel for the dissemination of traditional model of performance appraisal is the use of this practice in international companies. Research shows that the probability of using PA is greater in companies with international than domestic capital (Buchelt, 2015; Varma et al., 2023), but even this adaptation channel – separate from the adoption of NPM patterns by the administration – does not erase cultural differences in the reception of PA (Varma et al., 2023), which was found, among others, by comparing their reception in individualistic and collectivist cultures (Varma et al., 2023), but also by subsidiaries of international companies operating in Eastern European countries (Zając, 2011).

It is also known that the type of international company is important for the scale of TPAS application, i.e. companies with Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian origins are more likely to apply Anglo-Saxon management practices. It is therefore not surprising that differences between Eastern European countries in the scope of adaptation of Anglo-Saxon management practices patterns are significant (Poutsma et al., 2015), and in particular that the prevalence of PA in Czech and Slovak organizations – according to a number of studies on different samples – is significantly lower than the above-mentioned 70% (Urbancová et al., 2017; Špalková et al., 2015), which can be explained by the lower share of companies with Anglo-Saxon origins among international companies operating in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Poutsma et al., 2015).

From this perspective, the conclusions from American studies on the attitudes of employees and managers towards PA can be considered not fully adequate to the opinions of Polish employees, but – assuming a relatively early adaptation of Anglo-Saxon management practices in Polish companies – one can expect similar tendencies to those in the US. The following facts support this view: the relatively early adaptation of these management tools in Polish companies and administration, the strong orientation towards admiring of American examples, which typical Polish society, and the significant share of foreign capital investments of global or American origin. On the other hand, the practice of Polish periodic assessment systems is relatively short, so their operation may be closer to the original assumptions and more consistent with the rules that were expected for these systems than in American systems with a 100-year history, which have undergone multiple changes in their objectives. One can also expect differences resulting from cultural differences between Polish and American society – despite a similar level of individualism, a low level of tolerance for uncertainty may promote more negative reactions of Poles towards actions inconsistent with TPAS rules. The purpose of the empirical study described here was to collect and compare the opinions of Polish employees about TPAS and a continuous feedback-based appraisal system, understood as described above. The rationale for conducting this study was the absence of pertinent research in the scientific literature. To the best of our knowledge, there is a dearth of studies that demonstrate how the reception of TPAS influences the evaluation of new systems. The findings of this nature appear to be imperative for the implementation of novel performance appraisal systems. In preparing the study – in view of the very scanty research on the functioning of performance appraisal systems in Polish companies – we had to make a number of assumptions. First and foremost, we assumed that, as in the US, where studies have shown low TPAS ratings for years (Aguinis et al., 2011), this system would also be negatively evaluated in Poland. After all, it has long been believed that "the performance appraisal process is hated by managers and employees alike" (Lee, 1996, p. 1) and studies show that employees are dissatisfied with the results of employee evaluations –according to (Chun et al., 2018) this applies to 66%. Similarly, negative attitudes toward TPAS are expected given the results of a Gallup survey, which showed that 71% of employees in the U.S. believe that their periodic performance evaluations were not entirely fair (Wigert & Man, 2017). Therefore, a generally negative assessment of the traditional system was to be expected, although it is possible that there were varied assessments of possible sub-dimensions of the perception of this system.

Based on these general indications from the U.S. literature about attitudes toward PA, we expected a negative assessment of the perceived efficacy of TPAS, namely the belief that it does not provide valuable developmental or differential information about how people perform. It should be noted, however, that a number of specific studies (Achara et al., 2024; Azzahrunisa et al., 2024; Battur & Trieveni, 2023), conducted in various developing countries (i.e., those where appraisal systems have a relatively short tradition of existence as a tool of modern management), show a positive impact of the periodic performance appraisal system on declared work efficiency. A number of studies also show that employees expect performance appraisal system to be effective (Adler et al., 2016; Czajka, 2013; Fudala-Barańska, 2016; Pulakos et al., 2019). Hence, it can be expected that only strong inadequacies in the functioning of such systems would cause them to be recognized as failing to achieve their main goals, which suggests that our hypothesis about Polish employees' negative opinion of the TPAS is not obvious.

An obvious prerequisite for perceiving the appraisal system as effective in achieving evaluation and development goals is to recognize that its concrete implementation meet the criteria of fairness (Lyu et al., 2023; Maharvi et al., 2023; Taneja et al., 2024). This is a separate aspect from the evaluation of perceived efficacy, i.e., the judgment that, for example, periodic appraisal serves developmental purposes and accurately diagnoses the quality of work. In other words, the lack of acceptance of the employee performance appraisal system may be due to non-acceptance of its assumptions and a low assessment of the perceived efficacy of this system, but it may also be the result of bad experiences resulting from misuse or degeneration of the system (non-compliance with the rules and regulations of the performance appraisal system). Therefore, the study of opinions about the performance appraisal system should be multidimensional, including both perceived efficacy, and– the perception that it does not function according to the principles that are declared. Studies show that the grade an employee receives in a traditional periodic appraisal system depends primarily on the appraiser (in a survey of a sample of 4 500 (Scullen et al., 2000) 62% of the variance in appraisal was explained by the "appraiser" variable, and only 21% by "appraised"). We expect that Polish respondents may question the efficacy of the entire periodic performance appraisal procedure, but most importantly - they will perceive incompatible actions of the manager, such as politicking (Drory & Vigoda-Gadot, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot & Vashdi, 2012) and other behaviours that contradict TPAS rules and principles.

The influence of age is a factor that can be expected to play a role in the evaluation of TPAS. Research on Generation Z shows that its representatives expect truthfulness, transparency, and organizational ethics from organizations (Francis & Hoefel, 2020). Generation Z differs from Generation Y in that Generation Z displayed more anger than Generation Y when they see corporate social irresponsibility (Abbasi et al., 2024). Therefore, we assume that younger respondents (who belong to Generation Z) will be more sensitive to the action inconsistent with TPAS rules.

Familiarity with the rules of the TPAS (knowledge of the system) will be a factor independent of the other evaluations, as awareness of the rules should not be related to an opinion on the inconsistency of system implementation with its rules and letters, nor its efficacy. It is worth noting that Polish research (Budziak & Figurski, 2017) shows widespread (declared by 100% of respondents) knowledge of the principles of the performance appraisal system and much lower satisfaction with its fairness – only 59% felt they were fairly appraised. Similar results -– high knowledge of the system but poorer evaluation of the practice of its operation – were obtained in Jordan (Alabbas et al., 2024), India (Battur & Trieveni, 2023), or Nigeria (Achara et al., 2024).

H.1.1. At least two factors can be identified in the opinion of TPAS, among which the opinion of the implementation of the performance appraisal system (inconsistency of system implementation with its rules) will be distinct from the degree to which its efficacy is evaluated.

H.1.2. These evaluations will be, on average, negative, with younger employees (belonging to Generation Z) evaluating the inconsistency of system implementation with its rules of TPAS more harshly than older employees.

In our search for variables that influence perceptions of TPAS we chose attitude toward the company, or more precisely, anger toward the organization, opinions about cooperation with the manager and general attitude toward work (amotivation). The selection of these variables was determined by their distinct roles in influencing the perception of the various dimensions of the periodic performance evaluations implemented within the organization. Additionally, these variables are associated with the respondents' attitudes toward distinct areas of their organization, such as their general attitude toward work, their attitude toward the company, and their perception of the manager's behavior. A number of studies have shown that fairness perceptions regarding the conduct and results of appraisals affect the overall evaluation of this system and its consequences for performance (Taneja et al., 2024; Al Muniri & Hashim, 2024; Alabbas et al., 2024). Thus, we assume that perceived inconsistency of system implementation with its rules of TPAS will negatively affect the evaluation of system efficacy and correlate with amotivation and anger toward an organization. It can also be expected that individuals with longer working experiences will be more likely to question the efficacy of TPAS in their organizations as a result of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with its rules of this system, as a longer history of employment increases the likelihood of exposure to organizational flaws or unethical behaviours during performance appraisal process. This is consistent with research on an organizational cynicism (Reichers et al., 1997; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), which indicates that employees with longer tenure may exhibit higher levels of organizational cynicism due to accumulated experiences of disappointment, unmet expectations, and perceived organizational injustice.

In the study of Taneja et al. (2024), negative evaluation of cooperation with a manager (operationalized as low Leader-Member Exchange LMX) – correlated negatively with TPAS fairness ratings. Hence – despite the fact that the opinion of a manager's inappropriate actions from the perspective of the performance appraisal procedures applies only to the PA and not to the manager's work as a whole – it can be expected that the overall opinion of a manager's poor cooperation correlates with the opinion of his/her inappropriate (inconsistency of system implementation with its rules) actions in the performance appraisal activities. The manager is usually regarded as a representative of the company to employees (Mintzberg, 2009), and this is the assumed role for him/her in TPAS (Evans & Tourish, 2017; Hill & Plimmer, 2024), hence a positive correlation of cooperation with the manager with perceived efficacy of TPAS can be expected. On the other hand, since contact with the manager is often very close in modern organizations, this hypothesis is not obvious.

The following hypotheses regarding the factors influencing opinions about TPAS were formulated:

H.1.3. Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules negatively affect perceived efficacy of TPAS, but this is moderated by seniority in such a way that those with longer employment histories are more likely to downgrade perceived efficacy of TPAS as a result of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with its rules.

H.1.4. Amotivation and anger toward an organization correlate negatively with perceived efficacy of TPAS and positively with perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules.

H.1.5. Cooperation with the manager correlate positively with perceived efficacy of TPAS and negatively with perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules.

The primary rationale for the relationship between TPAS ratings and CFBPAS ratings comes from research on change in organizations. According to the findings of numerous studies in the late 20th century, we assume that negative evaluations of the status quo foster a favourable attitude toward change, while positive evaluations of the status quo foster a negative attitude toward change (Kotter, 2012; Majowska, 2013; Laig et al., 2021). So, we can conclude that a negative evaluation of a particular aspect of TPAS will favor a positive evaluation of CFBPAS and vice versa.

H.2.1. The evaluation of TPAS affects the evaluation of CFBPAS in such a way that perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules affect positively the expected advantages of CFBPAS and negatively the expected disadvantages of CFBPAS, while perceived efficacy of TPAS affects positively the expected disadvantages of CFBPAS and negatively the expected advantages of CFBPAS.

At the same time, it is expected that attitudes toward the company (anger toward an organization) and working there (amotivation) will negatively affect perceptions of the novas implemented by the organization. A meta-analysis by Chiaburu et al. (2013) showed that breaches in psychological contracts contribute to the development of cynicism. Assuming that anger toward an organization and amotivation will be indicators for perceived breaches in psychological contract, it can be thought that this will block the expectation of the benefits that come with change.

Research shows that individuals who perceive their outcomes as favourable are less likely to view the procedures negatively, even when they would typically find the procedures unfair (Brockner et al., 2000). So, the negative impact of anger toward an organization on expected advantages of CFBPAS can be reduced by high outcome of periodic assessment.

H.2.2. Amotivation negatively affects the expected advantages of CFBPAS.

H.2.3. Anger toward an organization negatively affects the expected advantages of CFBPAS. This influence is weakened by the presumed high (better than average) result of periodic assessment.

One of key values of generation Z is regular feedback (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). As “digital generation”, more innovative and open to change (Hechl, 2017) members of Generation Z should be especially open to CFBPAS as a) an innovation, b) an innovation based on continuous feedback. Also, we can assume that employees with shorter tenures, who have not had the opportunity to accumulate bad workplace experiences (unfair actions on the part of the company and managers), as well as unfavourable or apparent changes in organizational procedures, will approach innovations in the field of employee evaluation with more confidence. Thus, they will rate the expected advantages of CFBPAS higher and their disadvantages less critically.

H.2.4. Younger age and shorter seniority will negatively affect expected disadvantages while positively affecting expected advantages of CFBPAS.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The data was collected by a master's student in the part-time program of one of the authors, Ms. N. Pazura, who agreed to include the authors' questions in her survey. Thus, the sample has been collected with a snowball methodology, hence the demographic characteristics are specific, i.e. they correspond to the characteristics of part-time students of low age and seniority, rather than those of a typical employee. 150 people were surveyed. After removing incomplete responses, 138 remained. A summary of the respondents' demographics is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The respondents demographics.

Characteristics	N=138	Percentage
Gender		
Female	74	54.0
Male	63	46.0
Age		
Under 26	67	48.9
26 –36	37	27.0
37 –50	22	16.1
More than 50	11	9.0
Level of education		
At most secondary education	14	10.2
Student	56	40.9
Master degree	67	48.9
Total length of employment (seniority)		
Up to 4 years	60	43.8
5-14	39	28.5
15-20	18	13.1
More than 20	20	14.6
Positiion		
Entry-level employee	49	35.8
Specialist	64	46.7
First line manager	15	10.9
Middle manager	9	6.6
Company size		
Micro	24	17.5
Small	27	19.7
Medium	29	21.2
Large	57	41.6

Source: Own elaboration.

2.2 Measures

Amotivation was measured using three items derived from (Guay et al., 2000): “There may be good reasons to do this activity, but personally I don’t see any,” “I do this activity but I am not sure if it is worth it,” “I don’t see what the activity brings me,” and “I do this activity, but I am not sure it is a good thing to pursue it.”. Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). The factor analysis extracted one component with no items being discarded. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (henceforth KMO) was 0. 68 and the Bartlett test of sphericity ($\chi2$ =439.10, df=6, p<0.001) proves the adequacy of the correlation matrix. 68.93% of variance were explained. Loadings ranged from 0.65 to 0.91; Cronbach’s alpha=0.84.

Anger was measured using three items adapted from (Khan et al., 2023). “Sometimes I hate the company I work for,” “My workplace is often a source of irritation for me,” and “I am often angry at the company I work for.” Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). The factor analysis extracted one component with no items being discarded. KMO=0.71; the Bartlett test of sphericity: $\chi 2$ =263.83, df=3, p<0.001; 83.15% of variance explained. Loadings ranged from 0.89 to 0.95. Cronbach's alpha=0.90.

Cooperation with the manager was measured using three items: "My manager leaves me free to act", "My manager listens to my ideas for solutions to problems', "My manager is usually good to work with" (ad hoc scale). Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). The factor analysis extracted one component with no items being discarded. KMO=0.71; the Bartlett test of sphericity: $\chi 2$ =198.59, df=3, p<0.001; 78.44% of variance explained. Loadings ranged from 0.86 to 0.92. Cronbach's alpha=0.86.

Presumed result of periodic performance appraisal was a dichotomous variable with a value of 1 if a participant presumed that they had been rated better than their colleagues (63.5%) and 0 otherwise.

Age was coded 1 for respondents older than 25 years (51.1%), 0 – otherwise.

Seniority was coded 1 for respondents whose total length of employment was more than 4 years (56.2%), 0 – otherwise.

In order to obtain opinions about the TPAS, 20 statements were formulated on various aspects affecting the overall evaluation of the system: knowledge of the procedure (the sample items: "I know the evaluation regulations," 'I am familiar with the evaluation criteria and rules'), perceived efficacy and purposefulness of the TPAS (the sample items: "Performance appraisal is a good way for us to identify training needs," "Performance appraisal is an opportunity for us to collectively set goals to be achieved"), inconsistency of system implementation with its rules. The sample items: "Periodic performance appraisal is a good opportunity in our country to report on colleagues" (rev.), "Good grades in performance appraisal are obtained mainly by people who live well with the manager". Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree).

A principal components analysis with an oblimin rotation and Kaiser normalization resulted in a three-factors solution (Table 2) accounting for 62.64% of the variance. Items with loadings <0.3 and cross-loaded ones were suppressed. KMO=0.70; the Bartlett test of sphericity: $\chi 2$ =516.73, df=55, p<0.001. The factors were labelled: 1 – Perceived efficacy of TPAS, 2 – Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules, 3 – Knowledge of the procedure.

Table 2. Traditional performance appraisal systems ratings – the rotated factor loadings.

Items	Components		
	1	2	3
Performance appraisal is a good way for a manager to find out which of his employees need help and what kind	0.844		
Performance appraisal is a good way for a manager to find out what difficulties a specific subordinate has at work	0.816		
Performance appraisal is an objective measure of the quality of my work	0.815		
Performance appraisal is a fair way for us to determine who deserves a bonus and/or raise	0.725		
Performance appraisal is a good opportunity for a manager to demonstrate his power and "show who's boss" (rev)		0.877	
Performance appraisal is a fictitious activity from which no one expects anything (rev)		0.807	
Periodic performance appraisal is a good opportunity for us to report on colleagues (rev)		0.789	
Periodic performance appraisal assessment wastes everyone's time (rev)		0.656	
I am familiar with the criteria and principles of performance appraisal assessment			0.886
During my last periodic performance appraisal, I was provided with sufficient justification for awarding this grade			0.844
I know the grading regulations			0.405
Cronbach's alpha	0.817	0.796	0.573

Note: 1 – Perceived efficacy of TPAS, 2. – Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules, 3. – Knowledge of the procedure.
Source: Own elaboration.

In order to obtain opinions about CFBPAS, 19 statements were formulated regarding the expected advantages and disadvantages of this system. After the removal of items with cross-loadings a principal components analysis with an oblimin rotation and Kaiser normalization resulted in a two-factors solution (Table 3) accounting for 62.92% of the variance. KMO=0.91; the Bartlett test of sphericity: $\chi 2$ =1381.22, df=120, p<0.001.

Table 3. Continuous feedback-based performance appraisal system's ratings – the rotated factor loadings.

Items	Components	
	Expected advantages of CFBPAS	**Expected disadvantages of CFBPAS**
Such a system would be better for employees	0.853	
Such a system would motivate me to improve my work	0.831	
I would like to introduce such a performance evaluation system in my company	0.819	
Such a system would be better than the one currently in my company	0.818	
Such a system would provide a lot of information enabling more fair bonuses allocation	0.812	
Such a system would be better for the company	0.809	
Such a system would provide a lot of information for more equitable promotion	0.802	
Such a system would motivate me to improve my skills	0.796	
Such a system would be fair	0.780	
Such a system would reduce the loss of time when conducting periodic assessments	0.759	
Such a system would reduce conflicts around periodic performance appraisal assessments	0.744	
Such a system would provide me with a lot of information to improve my work	0.674	
In such a system, there is no good way to distinguish reliable opinions from unreliable or biased ones (rev)		0.800
We could easily make a group of people who would praise each other (rev)		0.794
Opinions about my achievements from people working with me would be unbelievable (rev)		0.756
This method of collecting opinions can be easily fooled (rev)		0.751
Cronbach's alpha	0.946	0.783

Source: Own elaboration.

3. Research results

All statistical analyses were completed using IBM SPSS Statistic software (v. 29) and PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2. Statistical significance was set at the 0.05 level. Table 4 shows sample descriptive statistics.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Mean	SD	95% CI for mean		Median
			Lower bound	Upper bound	
Anger	2.93	1.33	2.70	3.14	3.00
Amotivation	2.82	1.08	2.63	3.00	2.75
Cooperation with the manager	3.48	1.13	3.29	3.67	3.67
Perceived efficacy of TPAS	3.21	0.99	3.04	3.38	3.25
Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with of TPAS rules	3.43	1.08	3.25	3.61	3.50
Expected disadvantages of CFBPAS	2.92	0.94	2,76	3.08	2.75
Expected advantages of CFBPAS	3.40	0.95	3.24	3.56	3.33
Age	0.51	0.50	0.43	0.60	1.00
Seniority	0.56	0.50	0.48	0.65	1.00
Presumed result of periodic assessment	0.64	0.48	0.55	0.72	1.00

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 5 demonstrates correlations among the variables used in this study.

Table 5. Correlations between variables.

Variable	Pearson correlations								
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
1.Anger									
2. Amotivation	0.59**								
3. Cooperation with the manager	0.28**	0.23**							
4. Perceived efficacy of TPAS	-0.08	0.04	-0.01						
5. Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules	0.01	-0.03	-0.02	-0.30**					
6. Expected disadvantages of CFBPAS	-0.01	-0.06	0.00	0.03	-0.01				
7. Expected advantages of CFBPAS	-0.33**	-0.23**	-0.08	0.12	0.03	0.055			
8. Age	0.01	-0.00	-0.12	0.07	0.08	0.172*	0.06		
9. Seniority	-0.09	0.01	-0.02	0.07	0.18*	-0.026	0.02	0.55**	
10. Presumed result of periodic assessment	0.19*	0.17	0.22**	0.01	-0.03	-0.176*	-0.14	-0.13	-0.15

Notes: **Correlation significant at the 0.01 level,* correlation significant at the 0.05 level.
Source: Own elaboration.

Hypothesis 1.1. was supported by factor analysis presented in the "Measures" section. In fact, the factor analysis yielded three factors: apart from the expected ones, also knowledge of the procedure with low internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha below the accepted norm of 0.70). Therefore, this scale was excluded from further analyses.

The descriptives of the TPAS ratings' measures (Tab. 4) show that:

- ratings of perceived efficacy of TPAS are not generally negative (lower bound of 95% CI for mean>3; Me= 3.25);
- ratings of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules are generally negative, i.e. respondents do notice cases of violation of the rules for conducting periodic assessments (lower bound of 95%CI for mean = 3.25; Me= 3.5).

The t-student test shows (t (135) =-0.948; p=0.172) that there is no significant difference in ratings of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules between younger and older subjects. This only partially supports hypothesis 1.2 that states that ratings of TPAS will be negative, i.e. the average respondent will rate the perceived effectiveness of TPAS below the neutral value (3) and the perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules above this value.

To test Hypothesis 1.3. the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was applied. The analysis revealed that the (perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules) x (seniority) interaction is not significant (p=0.939), since the simple effect of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules on perceived efficacy of TPAS is negative and significant (B=-0.306, SE=0.117, p=0.010). The model was statistically significant F (3, 133) =5.310, p=0.002. R Square =0.107. Thus, this hypothesis is partially supported. Perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules influences negatively perceived efficacy of TPAS, but this relationship is not moderated by seniority.

As can be seen in the correlation table (Tab. 5), hypotheses 1.4 and 2.1. should be rejected.

To test hypotheses 2.2 and 2.3 the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was applied. The effect of Anger towards an organization on expected advantages of CFBPAS moderated by Presumed result of periodic assessment with amotivation as a covariate was examined.

The analysis revealed that the (Anger) x (Presumed result of periodic assessment) interaction is significant (B=0.289, S.E.>=1.121, p=0.018), whereas Amotivation effect was not significant (p=0.617) which means that hypothesis H2.2 should be rejected. Conditional effects of Anger at values of presumed result of periodic assessment is presented in Table 6. The model was statistically significant F(4, 132) =5.949, p=0.0002. R Square =0.153. There is significant (F(1, 132) =5.687, p=0.019) R Square change due to the moderation effect = 0.037 which means that the interaction effect accounted for 3.7% added variation in expected advantages of CFBPAS. These results indicate that there is negative relationship between Anger and expected advantages of CFBPAS among respondents who presumed that their periodic performance assessment results are at best average, but not among those persons who presumed that their assessment result is higher or definitely higher than average. Therefore, hypothesis H2.3 is supported.

Table 6. Conditional effects of Anger on expected advantages of CFBPAS at values of presumed result of periodic assessment.

Presumed result of periodic assessment	Effect (B)	S.E.	t	p
0 (average at best)	-0.3845	0.1047	-3.6729	0.0003
1 (higher or definitely higher than average)	-0.0960	0.0842	1.1404	0.2562

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to verify hypothesis H2.4 independent samples t-tests were performed (Table 7). Younger respondents rated expected disadvantages of CFBPAS significantly lower than the older ones. Cohen's d=0.35 indicate that age has small impact on expected disadvantages of CFBPAS. There are no significant differences in ratings of expected advantages of CFBPAS. Seniority does not differentiate significantly respondents' opinions. Thus, this hypothesis is only partially confirmed.

Table 7. Comparisons of ratings of expected advantages and disadvantages of CFBPAS.

Variable	Categories	n	Expected disadvantages of CFBPAS			Expected advantages of CFBPAS		
			M	SD	t-test	M	SD	t-test
Age	18-25	67	2.75	0.86	t (135) =2.028; p=0.022 Cohen's d=0.35	3.34	1.02	t (135) =0.705; p=0.241
	More than 25	70	3.08	0.98		3.46	0.88	
Seniority	Up to 4 years	60	2.95	0.90	t (135) =-0.307; p=0.380	3.38	0.79	t (134.64) =0.225; p=0.411
	More than 4 years	77	2.90	0.97		3.42	1.07	

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Discussion

The main results of our study are negative, i.e., they undermine the assumptions made for the survey about the negative evaluation of TPAS among Polish employees and the relationship of attitudes toward CFBPAS with the evaluation of TPAS. Thus, analysing these assumptions again, we can say that Polish employees do not negate the efficacy of TPAS (lower bound of 95%CI for mean of perceived efficacy of TPAS = 3.04), even though they perceive that it does not function according to the rules (lower bound of 95%CI for mean of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules = 3.25). This suggests that our respondents are more similar to respondents from samples from countries where performance appraisal systems are a relatively new management tool than to respondents from US samples.

The relatively strong perception that TPAS are not implemented according to its main principles extends the result from Budziak and Figurski's (2017) study. They indicated that the respondents perceive a low level of fairness in the performance appraisal system, while the result obtained here shows that this is not only due to a feeling of unfairness of the evaluation result, or politicking by the manager during the evaluation process, but also to a failure to follow the principles behind the procedure and treat it as a bureaucratic obligation.

This interpretation of the falsification of hypothesis 1.2 is supported by the fact that the majority of respondents (64%) felt that their periodic evaluation scores were higher than those of other employees. This suggests that our respondents are beneficiaries of TPAS despite the fact that they perceive that in practice it functions inconsistently with the expectations and rules set for it.

This interpretation is in line with previous research results, which indicate that a sense of distributive justice (and in our case, the perception of self-benefit as a result of the system) is associated with a positive attitude toward the performance appraisal system (Taneja et al., 2024). Then, positive verification of H1.2. in terms of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules means that perceiving inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules in the operation of the performance appraisal system does not preclude a positive evaluation of the system as achieving some of its goals.

The positive verification of Hypothesis 1.3. in terms of the relationship between perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules and efficacy of TPAS should not be surprising in line with research on social justice (Colquitt et al., 2001, 2013), which indicates correlations between these different dimensions of justice. However, our result extends previous findings that were based on the concept of justice, as the measures we used are at best loosely correlated with the concepts traditionally studied in social justice theory.

Firstly, efficacy goes beyond distributive justice because it relates to the realization of the stated goals of the TPAS procedure, and only one of its 4 components (Table 2) relates directly to the recognition that each appraisee receives a grade consistent with his or her merit. Two of the other components relate to the realization of the manager's role as a person who supports the subordinate in solving problems on the job, and thus relate to his/hers managerial role per se rather than to interactional or distributive justice.

Secondly, our variable of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules goes well beyond the feeling of procedural injustice. While it relates to how TPAS is practiced, the reference of the assessment is not to ensure that the individual acts in a way that allows him or her to have their rationale heard and decisions made impartially, as in the assessment of procedural justice, but to ensure that the actions are in accordance with the company procedure's stated policies. Again, only one of the components of perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules directly relates to politicking by the manager, but the others relate more to the fact that the procedure is not taken seriously in the organization. Thus, it can be said that the positive verification of H1.3. in the part on the relationship between evaluation of the practice (perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules) and evaluation of the objectives of the procedure's implementation (perceived efficacy) indicates that our respondents expect that organizational procedures to be carried out in accordance with their letter and spirit (even when the violations of the procedure does not affects them directly) to recognize that the goals of these procedures are being met.

Hypothesis H1.4 assumed that a negative attitude towards the organization, whether measured by anger towards it or a sense of meaninglessness of work (amotivation), results in a negative perception of all procedures (including, in particular, the periodic performance appraisal system) functioning in the organization. The lack of correlation between both anger towards an organization and amotivation and opinions about the PA system suggests that the respondents differentiate between aspects of the organization's functioning. The independence of the perceived efficacy of TPAS assessment from amotivation suggests that periodic assessment is understood as a subsystem separate from everyday work. This may mean that periodic assessment is not perceived as a tool for assessing work (a person demotivated to work does not expect benefits for themselves from its assessment), but as a tool – for example for developing competences – and therefore something that can be beneficial for the employee even if they don't like their workplace. On the other hand, our study showed that anger toward an organization conditional on presumed results of periodic assessment is important in shaping opinions about expected advantages of CFBPAS. There is significant negative relationship between anger toward an organization and expected advantages of CFBPAS but only in those surveyed who presumed that their periodic performance assessment results are at best average (B=-0.3845, S.E.=0.1046, p<0.001). According to hypothesis H2.3, high scores on the periodic assessment reduce this relationship (B=-0.0960, S.E.=0.0842, p=0.256). Thus, distrust of possible new organizational procedures (CFBPAS) associated with anger toward an organization disappears if employees experience favourable outcomes from using a similar procedure (TPAS). This would imply a lower risk of resistance to the introduction of CFBPAS among ambitious employees, even those who find reasons to be critical of their workplace.

It is symptomatic that in our study both anger towards an organization and amotivation are positively (though weakly) correlated with cooperation with the manager (0.28 and 0.23, respectively), which means that the managers of our respondents do not contribute to negative feelings towards the company and a decrease in their motivation. It is also worth noting that the average score for cooperation with the manager is high (lower bound of 95%CI for mean = 3.29 on a 5-point scale), which, combined with the high score for presumed results from the periodic assessment (63.5% of our participants presumed that they had been rated better than their colleagues), suggests a "common front" policy towards periodic performance appraisal procedures. This suggests that the manager is treated not so much as a representative of the company, but rather as a team member, i.e. a person with whom it is good to cooperate, even when the company as a whole is not a good place to work. Since the stronger the anger towards the company and the amotivation, the better the cooperation with the manager is assessed, then s/he is treated as a separate actor and not a faithful implementer of company procedures. This interpretation separates the assessment of cooperation with a manager not only from the assessment of the company as such, but also from the periodic performance assessment procedures and – what is not obvious – the way it is carried out. This result seems to be a specific feature of our sample of Polish young employees, as previous research has shown that the opinion about the fairness of performance appraisal is related to the relationship with the manager (LMX). This would mean that among our respondents, the sense of community with the line manager is high.

However, it should be noted that there are some other possibilities for interpretation of this positive attitude towards the manager despite the negative perception of the correctness of TPAS implementation. Our respondents presumed they had high evaluation in the periodic assessment, hence they can be considered beneficiaries of TPAS and the manager's actions, even those that are not in line with the TPAS rules. Positive feedback on their previous behaviours, which is included in a high evaluation in the periodic assessment, can be perceived as a recommendation for the future ("continue like this"), and thus have a feedforward character (Kluger & Nir, 2010; Budworth & Latham, 2025), i.e. a recommendation to continue acting in a certain way. This type of conversation dynamics leads to better relations between the manager and the subordinate (Budworth et al. 2015; Budworth & Latham 2025). In our case, this means that a positive assessment of cooperation with a line manager may result from the dynamics of the relationship created by an appraisal interview that emphasizes the positive aspects of previous behaviour at work, and not from perceiving the manager as a member of the team rather than a representative of the management of the organization.

The third possible explanation for the positive evaluation of cooperation with the manager despite the perception of his or her actions being inconsistent with the TPAS rules may be power distance or other cultural factors that shape the relationship between young employees and their (usually older) manager. This study did not measure cultural factors, so there is a need for future research to decide which explanation is the proper one.

The lack of correlation between the ratings of CFBPAS and the ratings of separated aspects of TPAS (falsification of H.2.1) seems to be the most surprising result of our study. It suggests no direct relationship between TPAS assessment and perception of new solutions. We can assume that we are dealing with a difference in opinions about CFBPAS from opinions about TPAS. Ratings of expected advantages of CFBPAS are high (lower bound of 95% CI for mean = 3.24 on a 5-point scale), there is therefore a positive attitude towards changes in the rating system. It does not result from a complete negation of TPAS (lower bound of 95% CI for mean of perceived efficacy ratings = 3.04 on a 5-point scale), but rather from the need to obtain feedback. For our respondents, TPAS was a rather harmless tool, because the presumed result of periodic performance assessment is high (Table 4). Since the old system is relatively positively perceived in terms of realizing the meaning of its operation, i.e. providing diagnostic data for the development of competences, the "driver" of the assessment of the new system is not the desire of change resulting from dissatisfaction with the old system. In other words, our main hypotheses, based on American literature stating employee reluctance to the traditional periodic performance appraisal system, were based on a false assumption that our subjects were similar to US workers. Our research clearly showed that our respondents have a relatively positive attitude towards TPAS and know the principles of this procedure, even though they notice that its implementation does not meet its assumptions (which, as expected, affects the perceived efficacy of TPAS). The fact that this does not prevent respondents from seeing the advantages of CFBPAS may also result from the fact that many of them learned about this new type of performance appraisal system from our survey (as most of them are young and on entry level employees). It is worth to mention that in order to avoid question order bias, the questions about CFBPAS followed questions about TPAS, which in turn could have caused a kind of social desirability bias, as a result of the confrontation of the old system with the new one, i.e. presumably end vogue.

Determining whether the lack of correlation between the ratings of CFBPAS and TPAS is a feature of Polish employees as such, or of a specific group of young professionals with short work experience (48.9% of our respondents are less than 26 years old, and 75.9% are less than 37; 43.8% of them have no more than 4 years of seniority, and only 14.4% have been working for more than 20 years), additionally presuming good results of their periodic assessment, or the research instrument design, requires further research, and in this respect our results are an invitation to research and indicate that full analogy in the functioning of performance appraisal systems in the USA and Poland should not be assumed.

Only partial confirmation for H.2.4. shows that variables related to the respondents' life and professional experience, i.e. age and seniority, do not differentiate their opinions on advantages of CFBPAS. Regarding disadvantages, Generation Z respondents are significantly less critical of CFBPAS, perhaps due to greater experience with social media.

Conclusions

Basing on the opinions of 137 employees collected via e-questionnaire, it was checked whether the perception of TPAS affects expectations about CFBPAS. Following the American literature (Lee, 1996; Capelli & Tavis, 2016; DeNisi & Murphy, 2017; Pulakos et al., 2019; Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Lawler et al., 2016; Ledford et al., 2016b, Ledford & Schneider, 2018), a number of assumptions regarding the negative attitude towards the functioning of TPAS in Polish companies were made, and hypotheses about influences of negative assessment for TPAS on assessment of continuous feedback-based performance appraisal system were stated. The primary result of the study presented here was to show that – contrary to expectations – the ratings for efficacy of TPAS turned out to be high. The relationship between the negative perception of certain aspects of the traditional system and the assessment of new systems was also not confirmed (H.2.1).

The result, showing that the respondents' opinions about both assessment systems are basically positive, suggests that Polish periodic performance appraisal systems are still able to achieve their main goals, or at least – that the respondents, despite noticing irregularities or violation of rules in the implementation of the periodic performance appraisal procedures, believe that these systems efficiently realize their main diagnostic and administrative goals. At the same time, the favourable assessment of new performance appraisal systems based on continuous feedback suggests the readiness of the respondents to accept CFBPAS, or at least to try such systems.

It was found that perceived inconsistency of system implementation with TPAS rules influenced negatively the perceived effectiveness of TPAS. Respondents also rate the expected advantages of CFBPAS high and their potential disadvantages low. No correlation was found between the assessments of traditional and continuous feedback-based performance appraisal systems.

The study tested whether the assessment of the traditional and new performance appraisal systems is conditioned by environmental variables, i.e. attitude towards the company measured by an anger towards the organization, opinions about cooperation with the manager and general attitude towards work (amotivation). Contrary to a number of previous studies that showed the relationship of similar contextual variables with assessments of various aspects of traditional periodic appraisal systems, which were conducted in the language of organizational justice (Taneja et al., 2024; Al Muniri & Hashim, 2024; Alabbas et al., 2024), our study did not confirm the impact of these contextual variables on the assessment of TPAS. However, the hypothesis regarding the less critical attitude of young workers towards CFBPAS was confirmed, as younger respondents rated expected disadvantages of CFBPAS significantly lower than the older ones ($t(135)=2.028$; $p=0.022$ Cohen's $d=0.35$). The positive verification of hypothesis H.2.3, which assumed the influence of anger towards an organization on expected advantages of CFBPAS moderated by presumed result of periodic performance assessment, confirms the influence of outcome favourability on the formation of opinions about procedures, as the impact of anger on the expected advantages of CFBAS was noted only among those respondents who presumed their periodic performance appraisal results are not higher than average.

This study complements scientific knowledge about the determinants of perception of new and traditional performance appraisal systems in the following respects. Firstly, it was shown that the assessment of the functioning of the periodic performance appraisal system is not one-dimensional and that perception of inconsistency with the rules and principles of TPAS do not mean negating the achievement of the system intended goals.

Secondly, it complements research on the practical functioning of periodic performance appraisal systems carried out in various countries by expanding the range of variables used to explain the relationships between assessments of various aspects of the functioning of these systems, in line with the demands recently voiced in the scientific literature (McClendon et al., 2020). Scientific research so far is conducted mainly in the language of organizational justice, which means that aspects related to the general attitude towards the company as such, beyond trust (Almutairi & Othman, 2024; Sumayya & Raziq, 2019) or identification with the organization (Lyu et al., 2023), or the assessment of cooperation with the manager as such, were not studied. Previous research has linked variables related to the functioning of an individual in the relationship with the manager (Taneja et al., 2024) or with the assessment of justice or politics (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Murphy, 2020), and did not treat it as a variable describing the context in which the employee functions.

Thirdly, our study provides further confirmation that employees expect increased feedback from company's performance appraisal systems. Previous studies, conducted on large American samples (Lawler et al., 2016; Ledford et al., 2016b) and small ones, e.g. Indonesian (Azzahrunisa et al., 2024), showed a positive attitude of respondents to performance appraisal systems based on continuous feedback, but we are not aware of any studies of this type, based on the opinions of Polish employees. The advantages and disadvantages of such systems described in the text, as well as already reported solutions that are adopted in a number of international companies, suggest that such performance appraisal systems, based on continuous feedback, will also begin to appear in Polish practice, as already international companies in Poland are oriented into developmental appraisal (Zając, 2016).

Hence the importance of research on the perception of such systems by Polish employees and the search for conditions for their positive perception, which can help in planning their implementation in a way that facilitates their positive acceptance.

Further research should focus on the reasons for the most surprising result indicating high ratings for both perceived efficacy of TPAS and expected advantages of CFBPAS and the lack of correlation between the two. We can assume, in line with the results of previous research showing that the perception of distributive justice promotes a positive assessment of the periodic performance appraisal system, that it was the specificity of the group surveyed that resulted in positive assessments of both types of assessment systems, hence generalizations regarding a positive attitude towards TPAS and CFBPAS are premature. However, these outcomes may result from the specificity of the sample. Most of our respondents turned out to be beneficiaries of the traditional performance appraisal system, as they declared that their periodic grades obtained under the traditional system were higher than the grades obtained by their colleagues. In addition, as already mentioned, the results may have been influenced by the design of the questionnaire, in which, in order to avoid question order bias, the items examining TPAS evaluation preceded those directed at examining opinions about CFBPAS, with which we may have induced social desirability bias. Although the questions on CFBPAS were not suggestive and included both advantages and disadvantages of these systems, the juxtaposition of the old system with the new (modern) one may have had this effect. Further research should be conducted on a larger and better stratified sample to include employees from different age groups. It is also worth taking into account the type of organization from which the respondents come – the factor completely omitted in the current study – as one can expect a more favourable attitude towards new forms of PA based on continuous feedback from employees working in technology companies or on a project basis, and a less favourable attitude towards those from stable, more conservative organizations, such as traditional administration or heavy industry companies.

Despite the focus on Poland, it is also worth considering the potential significance of differences in the maturity of PA systems in a given country or its culture. It can be expected, as already emphasized in the discussion, that in countries with relatively recent institutionalization of PA in organizational practices, the attitude of employees towards TPAS will have a greater significance for the acceptance of new forms than in Poland. Similarly, in more collectivist societies or with a greater power distance, the acceptance of PA forms based on continuous feedback may be lower. The study did not take into account cultural factors, assuming that structural factors, such as the implementation trajectory and the history of PA systems (in country, as a proxy for the company the respondent is working), will have the main impact on the reception of new systems. However, this is worth verifying in studies that differentiate cultural factors with similar implementation histories of these systems in given countries.

To clarify and possibly minimize the impact of social desirability bias on the results, it would be beneficial to use two versions of the questionnaire: in one, questions exploring opinions about TPAS would precede those about CFBPAS, and in the other, vice versa. It should also not be forgotten that individual implementations of employee evaluation systems differ, so case studies would be particularly valuable for practice.

It should be clearly stated that the research described here has a number of limitations and should therefore be treated only as an invitation to further exploration of the topic. The most important of them is the sample, both in terms of its demographic specificity (the predominance of young and educated respondents, which results from the nature of the snowball methodology), as well as their disproportionate percentage of people convinced that they obtained a high (higher than their colleagues) periodic grade in the performance appraisal assessment. The latter feature, however, may result not (only) from the specificity of the sample, but also signal the degeneration of periodic performance appraisal systems currently used in Polish companies. Since there are no Polish studies showing distributions of grades in the periodic performance appraisals that are currently obtained in Polish companies, even similar to US data (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018), it is difficult to determine without further research which of these explanations better fits the data analysed here.

A limitation related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents (age and level of education) may have influenced the results, as younger and better educated employees have a lower identification with the organization and lower organizational commitment (Schultz & Schultz, 2002, p. 316), which fosters more critical evaluation of organizational practices, including perceived fairness of performance appraisal. Younger employees also have different expectations towards feedback than older employees, as they are more oriented toward its practical utility rather than its informational content (Wang et al., 2015). Hence, it can be expected that a more representative group in terms of age and education might be less critical of the practical implementation of TPAS, but also less enthusiastic about new solutions based on continuous feedback. On the other hand, there are studies that show no differences between age cohorts with respect to perceptions of conflict during performance appraisal (Locker & Teague, 2024), so these features of our respondents' group may be not important.

It should also be remembered that the study was based on opinions collected in a survey conducted at a random moment in relation to the periodic performance appraisal assessment schedule. This means that it is based rather on memories, and opinions about the practice of TPAS are memories already processed by memory mechanisms, as well as further experiences brought by professional life in the period since the last periodic performance evaluation. It can therefore be assumed that carrying out the study freshly after the performance evaluation, and in the face of concerns about the consequences of the performance appraisal system's operation, would yield different data, hence it is worth conducting an analogous study in connection with the date of the conducted periodic performance appraisal.

The third important limitation concerns the inability to take into account the specificity of the industry or company from which the respondents come from. It is reasonable to assume, and even Polish research shows it (Fudala-Barańska, 2016), that relatively small differences in the practice of TPAS implementation may result in significant differences in the perception of the system's operation. Therefore, research should refer to the system functioning in a specific company or industry and its typical organizational culture (e.g. among clerks – Bohdziewicz & Urbaniak, 2013; Czajka, 2013), rather than to TPAS as such, which was adopted in our study due to its pioneering nature.

To recapitulate, the obtained results suggesting the favourable attitude of Polish respondents towards performance appraisal systems based on continuous feedback require further research so that the generalizations suggested here can constitute the basis for organizational practices. Undoubtedly, broader research on the Polish practice of traditional periodic performance appraisal is also needed in order to meet the expectations of younger employee groups regarding the wide dissemination of feedback and - perhaps even - basing performance appraisal on this type of data.

Despite these limitations, our research can already provide some hints and recommendations for human resource management practice.

First, even if we limit this conclusion to young employees (Generation Z), the research presented here confirms their expectation of continuous feedback, which suggests that organizations should quickly launch practices that address this expectation. There is no need to wait for the formal replacement of TPAS by CFBPAS to introduce – maybe on a small scale first – some continuous feedback practices.

Secondly, contrary to the recommendations of the theory of change, there is no reason to question the reasonableness of the goals set for TPAS, or otherwise undermine the efficacy of TPAS, because the employees' expectation of continuous feedback does not result from their rejection of TPAS, but – presumably – from their desire to develop their competences. This means that when implementing continuous feedback-based performance appraisal systems (using enterprise social media), it is enough to emphasize their functions in the area of competence development, and it is not necessary to criticize the current practice.

Thirdly, it also seems that by implementing assessment systems based on IT systems analogous to social media, one can emphasize their usefulness for developing competences even when the opinions collected in them are not entirely accurate. However this advice based on opinions of the respondents who have good relations with line managers. Maybe in different situation there could be a fear that managers would misuse the content collected in the continuous feedback system, which will create resistance to the system implementation.

There is also no need to fear that generational differences will have a significant impact on how employees of different age will respond to the introduction of systems based on collecting continuous feedback. Assuming also that the analysis of the entries will be done in a subordinate-manager diagonal, there should also be no concern that generational differences will be significant in the implementation of these systems. The previously cited research on the difference in expectations of feedback (Wang et al., 2015) suggests different perceptions of the usefulness of the data provided by feedback in older and younger employees, but the difference actually relates to the use of the data obtained, not the attitude toward collecting it.

Even if older employees treat feedback more as someone else's view of reality than a legitimate developmental recommendation, for both age groups, multi-source feedback can be useful in their – separately shaped – path to further competence improvement. In other words, it is not the new appraisal system that may cause concern for more age advanced employees, but the low coaching skills of managers. Hence, it would be advisable to precede any – even a small scale and on pilot form – CFBPAS implementations with coaching training for both groups (managers and employees), so that managers know how to take advantage of the benefits of this approach and subordinates are not afraid of it.

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