

Performance Evaluation System in Public Organization: A Case Study of the Regional Election Commission Office Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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Abstract

Performance evaluation plays an important role in maintaining the competitive workforce by improving the performance of the employees and keeps them motivated to perform well but this is somehow not focused in public sector of Pakistan. At present ACR (annual confidential report) is used in public sector of Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to explore the evaluation system in the Election Commission of Pakistan. Qualitative research technique has been adopted which consist of in depth face-to-face interviews in order to get the primary data. Findings have shown that most of the employees are not satisfied with the current evaluation system due to evaluation done is based on liking and disliking. Favoritism and nepotism is seen in the evaluation process. Various suggestive solutions have been provided by the researcher after discussing the potential concerns of the employees about the said factors. The study will be beneficial for highlighting the issues and problems with the current evaluation system and solutions to improve it. Moreover, the study will contribute to performance management research.

Keywords: performance evaluation, Election commission, public sector, Annual confidential report, evaluation system.

Introduction

Almost every organization in the today's world requires a performance evaluation system to assess the performance of its employees whether it is public and private. Several important administrative and developmental decisions like pay, promotion, and training and for the purpose of legal documentation work setting performance evaluation systems are used (Thomas & Bretz, 1994). Most significant element of performance management is performance evaluation. To provide feedback decide promotions or terminations, determine compensation, identify strengths and weaknesses or areas where change is required are identified and identify the developmental needs so that can help in career planning of the employees (Shafique & Anwar, 2012).

As in this world of competition, the performance evaluation is playing an important role in keeping the more competitive workforce and for this purpose the evaluation system should

match the requirements and organizational structure. However, if the system is not according to the organizational structure, the employees will be de-motivated and that would affect the performance of the employees. There is a need to study and analyze the performance evaluation system in the public organization. Sometimes Interest of the employee can be lost from negative feedbacks, bad comments, and bad remarks. By treating all the employees equally and with justice the commitment of the employees can be gained (Bergman, 1994). So the organization should use such evaluation system that could improve employees performance without de-motivating them and if they know that they are evaluated fairly their trust on the organization would be increased, their performance would be increased that would increase the overall performance of the organization.

Background of the Organization

Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent federal institution that is established constitutionally that is responsible for administrating the general electoral process in the country. It was formed on 23 March 1956. It's headquarter is situated in Islamabad. The commission supervises and overseas the general election process to be fair and impartial all over the country. The commission is ruled under the specific laws that are defined by the constitution of Pakistan. Electoral rolls for the election to the national assembly and provincial assembly are prepared and these rolls are revised annually. Senate elections are organized and conducted by the commission.

Significance of the Research

The research identifies the weaknesses of the evaluation system used in the organization and suggesting the better and more comprehensive evaluation system that is more effective and efficient in improving the performance of the employees in public organizations.

Limitations of Research

As Election Commission was busy in the preparations of local government elections so it was difficult to get time for the interviews. The employees feel hesitated to talk as they had less information and awareness about the evaluation purpose, even the employees were afraid about that information could be misused and that could affect their promotion.

Literature Review

All the activities of an organization to achieve the goals set by that organization are synchronizes by a system called Human Resource Management (HRM). Employees are considered as an asset for an organization and through the Performance of the employees that the organizations achieve its goals. For plane and smooth working within all sections of an organization performance management system work as a tool in HRM (Zia, Khan, TahirKheli, Ali & Ahmad, n.d). The process of encouraging employees to meet the organization's requirements t to increase the competence and efficacy in working environment is called as traditional performance management. (Lin & Lee, 2011)

According to Armstrong (2008) By developing the capability of the team and its members through a strategic and integrated system the organization members performance can be improved which can encourage organizations to operate successfully through performance management.

To check and enhance the abilities of the employees for working in an environment where there are challenges performance management is a systematic approach and the level of skills is improved by performance management system which enables the employees to face challenges. Gaps, problems, deficiencies are highlighted and opportunity is provided to overcome these gaps and problems in time (Zia, Khan, TahirKheli, Ali & Ahmad, n.d). Performance management system provides many benefits as explained by many researchers'. According to Mcdonald &

Smith (1995). Performance management improves organizational performance. Employee performance is improved (Longenecker & Fink, 1999). Organizational processes are improved (Rummler & Brache, 1995). Team performance is improved (Lawler, 1994). Quality of supervision is improved through PMS (Bilgin, 2007).

According to Wellins & Schultz Murphy (1995) change in the organizational culture is easily implemented with the help of PMS. Business strategy is implemented that is facilitated by performance management in which it is indicated that what is to be measured and what appropriate measuring means are to be determined in performance, organizations set targets and these targets are linked with the organizational performance (Schein, Shaw & Beatty, 1991).

Giving continuous feedback is involved in performance management rather than giving an average review. Employees are assets for an organization and the work and working style of the employees decides the progress of an organization. Doing work as well as to achieve results is referred as performance (Otley, 1999). According to Aguinis (2007) employee's performance is identified by the organization and then the performance in an organization is measured by using different tools and then steps are taken to improve them. Appreciation of the employees, provision of the regular and continuous feedback, achievements of the employees, and offering career development facilities are the different practices that are included in the performance management process.

Performance management mainly focuses on the development of the employees capabilities and it is important for the organization. PM helps managers in not only building capacity of the employees but it provides timely, continuous predictions about the performance and actions are taken rapidly to the uncertain and continuous changes (Cokin, 2004). Five roles of performance management system given by Santos, M., F et al (2007) are:

Performance measurement: it includes evaluation of the performance and monitoring the progress. **Strategy management:** it includes planning, strategy formulation, and strategy implementation and provides focus attention. **Communication:** it includes internal and external communication, performance benchmarking and fulfillment with regulations. **Influence behavior:** it includes behavior compensation or rewarding, managing relationship and control. **Learning and improvement:** it includes performance feedback, learning and improvement of performance.

An effective performance evaluation technique contains evaluation and feedback system. Performance gap is identified in evaluation system. This shortfall in performance occurs when employees are unable to meet the performance standards set by the organization and the quality of the employee performance is informed by the feedback system (Khan & Anwar, 2012). According to Fajana (2002) performance evaluation is a degree to which assigned duties are fulfilled by the employees and degree to which they are focused, the supervisors observe variance between set standards, actual performance and the subordinate are managed, and joint actions are taken. Organizational activities and actions that improve the particular design, development and the implementation of technologies regarding performance are dealt with the process of performance management in an organization.

In many developing countries, public sector organizations because of poverty they doesn't perform good they perform poorly, crises in the economy of the country, corruption like bribery, dishonest and instability of the political condition. Key organizational characteristics include an increased attention to the organizational values, culture of the organization and positivity of the HR management, which enable optimal performance in an organization (Osborne, 2002). It is

predictable for the successful working of public sector organization with the values of the organization and positivity of the HR management. For the cross site variation in performance there are some possible reasons in which the characteristics that are included are the needs of the people that are being served, local site management quality, policy direction clarity, local environment factors, coordination throughout system wide, performance. It is important to know that for the attainment of better performance of the system which factors matter most (Laurence E. Lynn Jr. et. al 2000).

Safdar (2012) concerns responsibilities of public sector towards society. New public management trend have been initiated through government reinventing movements around the world since 1980s. Performance of the public organizations and the quality of public services is improved through various theories, definitions and methods based on performance management. Private sector management culture incorporated in public organization through reinvention in public organizations. Human resource management practices of the private sector adopted in public enterprises instead of conventional personnel managerial practices (Naveed & Jadoon, n.d).

It is a major challenge to adopt private sector HRM practices in public sector (Stephen, 2007). World Public Sector Report (UN/DESA, 2005) identifies that in public sector measures are provided for reforming HRM practices. Appointment that should be merit based, development of human resource that are capability based, assessment and reimbursement that are performance based and effective labor management are included in the public sector reforming HRM activities (UN/DESA, 2005). Three characteristics that can be differentiated from the traditional personnel management and HRM practices that are being used in private sector are profession appointments that are tenured; seniority basis promotion and part of unified civil service reforms are included in the trajectories of public sector reforms (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004).

Watkins (2007) suggests the performance management system model that consists of seven components that could be used in public sector includes:

1. Desired performance should be identified;
2. Performance objectives should be defined that are the employee and top management joint responsibilities. The objectives should be SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, relevant, and timely).
3. Assessment of the performance should be done by knowing what is to be measured about the employees performance and how to measure their performance.
4. A solution set should be identified by identifying the problems through SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and fixing those problems so that performance goals and objectives could be achieved.
5. Designing and development of performance solution, performance management problems are identified at this stage and designing of performance management system serves as intervention of performance.
6. Formative evaluation is conducted by which intervention's deliverables to be examined are provided with multiple opportunities
7. There should be implementation and continual improvement in the performance technologies design using the available data agreed by the team members.

Managerial autonomy should be adopted in the public enterprises that are the legal bodies. On the other hand, it is also true that public enterprises working under larger systems of authority are under the state control and political interferences in the public organizations are inevitable (Garner, 1983; Aharoni, 1986; Lioukas et al, 1993). According to Rondinelli (2008), management

decisions like hiring, performance management, rewarding and firing of employee's independent from the government can be taken by the public enterprises due to separate legal status. Nevertheless, in the decision making process state controls and political influences are inevitable because government is the single proprietor of the public enterprises and it has official and informal control over its affairs is possessed (Lioukas et al., 1993).

Autonomy and flexibility is required in decision making in the management of human resource which is a rare phenomenon in public organization because of centralizing tendency particularly in the Pakistan's public sector (Naveed & Jadoon, n.d). In Pakistan public organizations serious strategic position is enjoyed by them in the economy and the significant economic contribution is provided but the process of privatization has been much successful (Bokhari, 1998). For the government it has always remained an important policy concern to enhance the efficiency and performance of the public enterprise (Naveed & Jadoon, n.d).

In Pakistan annual confidential report (ACR) is being practiced in public organizations as performance evaluation system. ACR are conducted once in a year i.e. At the end of the year mostly in December and it is kept confidential from appraise (Ahmed et.al, 2010). The negative aspects of ACR system includes communication gap, personal biasness, lack of employee participation these negative aspects make the system ineffective that does not help in the learning of the employees and then the development of these employees (Stafylarakis et al., 2002). Concerns to be improved are never highlighted in ACR so it is less credible (Zia, Khan, TahirKheli, Ali & Ahmad, n.d).

Research Objectives

1. Performance evaluation system is to be analyzed and evaluation procedures used in Election Commission of Pakistan.
2. To explore the importance of feedback in evaluation of the employees.
3. To identify and elaborate the problems faced by the employees regarding performance evaluation system.
4. To find out the flaws (if any) in the evaluation system being practiced in the organization.
5. Suggest the recommendations along with their implications.

Methodology

Research Design

According to Cooper & Schindler (2006) research design is an activity, a plan that is time based and it is a guide that helps the researcher for selecting the sources where he could gather information and also provide guide that what type of information is needed. Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree (2014) define research design as a frame by which the business research could be conducted in a well organized and professional way. To solve the business research problems research design helps the researcher to collect measure and analyze the gathered information. Research design consists of selecting an appropriate type of research design that could be exploratory, descriptive or casual design. Information needed is identified, measuring and scaling of selected information is specified, appropriate data selection form is specified, sampling process and the size of the sample is designed and in the end data analysis method is specified. Research design is good or effective when there is reduced biasness, the data obtained should make the most of accuracy with few errors in it and most important the research sign should be adaptable.

As the main purpose of this research is to study and analyze the performance appraisal system in Election Commission. Therefore, the researcher adopted exploratory research method for this

purpose. The researcher through exploration develops concepts that are clearer, priorities are established and it is used when there is new investigation area, so the exploration is needed by the researcher to learn about the dilemma faced by the managers (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

According to Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree (2014) three main reasons to conduct exploratory study are that the problem situation is analyzed, alternatives are evaluated and new ideas are discovered. The objectives of the exploratory research could be obtained through many techniques but the preferred approach for studying the performance management system in Election Commission is qualitative technique. The main reason for conducting the qualitative study is that in detailed analysis of the comments and perceptions of the individuals could be done as the researcher listens to the informants and a bigger picture is build that is based on their ideas (Creswell, 1994).

Research Strategy

The total population of the organization consists of 13 employees. As the population size is small so the researcher decided to study the whole population. For this purpose structured interviews were conducted. Structured interview is the detailed interview that is similar to questionnaire but the questions asked are open ended in which questions are guided in a specific way. Direct comparability of responses is permitted through structured interview, variability of the questions has been eliminated the variability of the answers is assumed to be real (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The interviews were conducted one to one with the employees in which they were told about the purpose of the research and after that interview, questions were asked to them.

Data collection and Analysis

The population of the study consists of the 13 employees of Election Commission. As the population size was small so the interviews are conducted from the appraisals and the appraisers. Face to face, interviews were conducted and interview were recorded as well as noted down, interview questions were mailed to the appraisers who were not present in the city. Interaction was made with them through emails. Content analysis technique was used for the analysis of the data collected through interviews.

Question 1: Do you think evaluation system is beneficial for improving the individual and organization performance? If so, how?

Answer: 62% employee agreed with the statement that evaluation system is beneficial for improving the individual and organizational performance as if the employees perform good there ACR will be written good. Moreover, promotions are given if employees ACR is good. Employees have fear that if adverse ACR is written they will not be given promotions so due to this fear employees try to perform well. While 38% employees disagreed with the statement. According to them evaluation system is beneficial only if after doing performance evaluation rewards should be given to the employees who performed well.

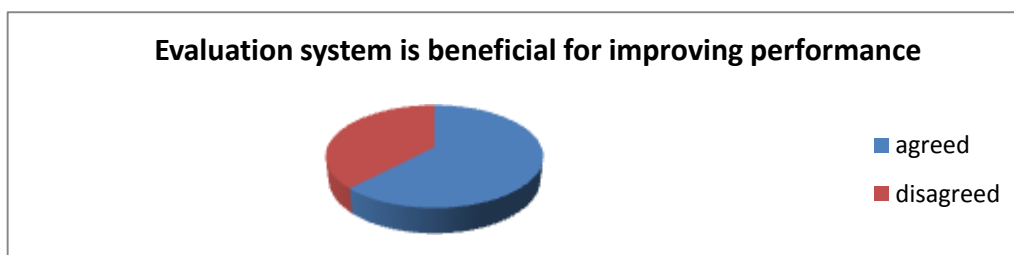


Figure 1

Question 2: do you think individuals in government organizations have the required human capacity to implement the evaluation system?

Answer: 54% employees agreed with the statement. According to them individuals in the government organization have the required human capacity to implement the evaluation system. While 46% Employees said that individuals do not have the capacity to implement the performance evaluation system. Training is required to enhance the human capacity. If somehow they have the human capacity then because of centralization management system they do not have enough resources to implement it



Figure 2

Question 3: At the moment the evaluation system is not linked to any salary, increment. Despite of this do you think employees are motivated enough to implement it?

Answer: 64% employees agreed with the statement. Instead of that the evaluation is not linked to salary or increment they are still motivated enough to implement ACR. While 36% employees' say that the employees are not motivated enough if evaluation system is not linked to salary. One of the interviewee discussed that an officer grade employee having salary range from 30 to 40 thousand, in these circumstances an employee just tries to balance the equation of income and expenditure.

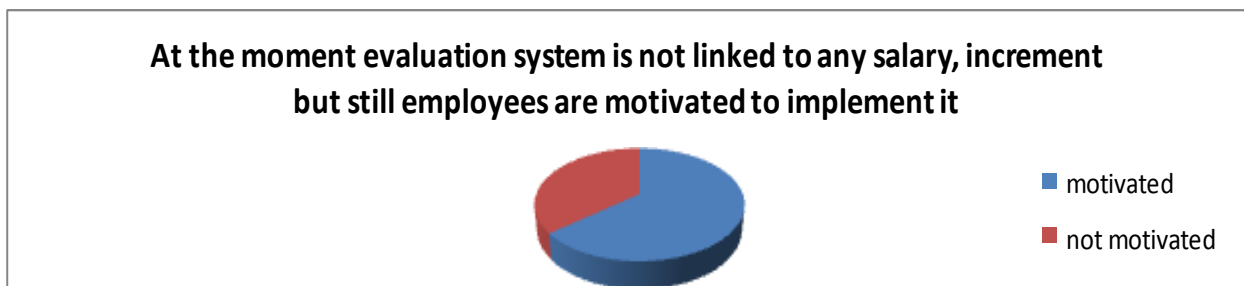


Figure 3

Question 4: How important do you think a monetary reward is to make the system effective?

Answer: 100% employees says that monetary reward is very important to make the system effective as the employees will be more motivated to perform well. If they would get the reward for their good performance

Question 5: Do you think there are any other sort of rewards other than monetary that could be given? If yes, what are they?

Answer: 100% employees agreed with the statement that other rewards could be given to the employees other than monetary rewards to motivate them and enhance their performance. These rewards could be certificates, appreciation, cooperative attitudes of higher authorities.

Question 6: Do you have the option of seeing the evaluation score?

Answer: 70% employees says that they can't see the evaluation scores. ACR is kept confidential but in case of adverse ACR, it is conveyed to the employees that performance is need to be approved. While 30% Employees say that it can be showed on relation basis, if employees have good relation with the reporting officer (officer that write ACR of the employees) he might show it to him.

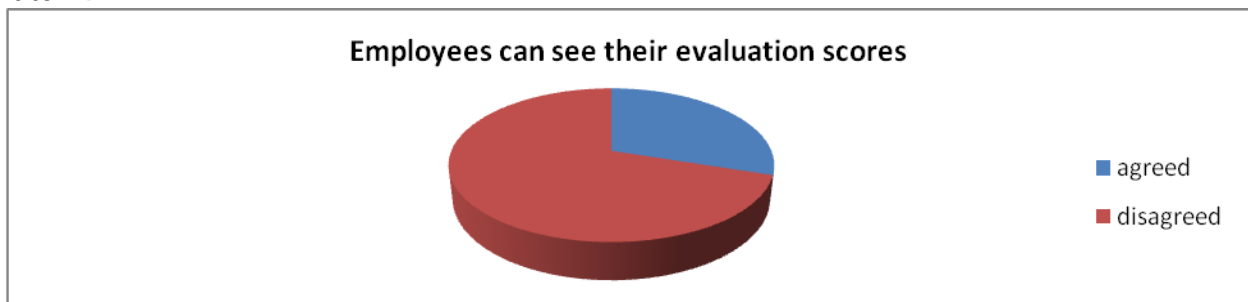


Figure 4

Question 7: does the system tie all objective, incidents, and quantity data to specific performance factors?

Answers: 62% percent employees agreed with the statement that the system tie all objectives incidents and quantity data to specific performance factors while 38% employees disagreed with the statement. According to them, the system is not perfect it does not tie all objectives, incidents and quantity data.

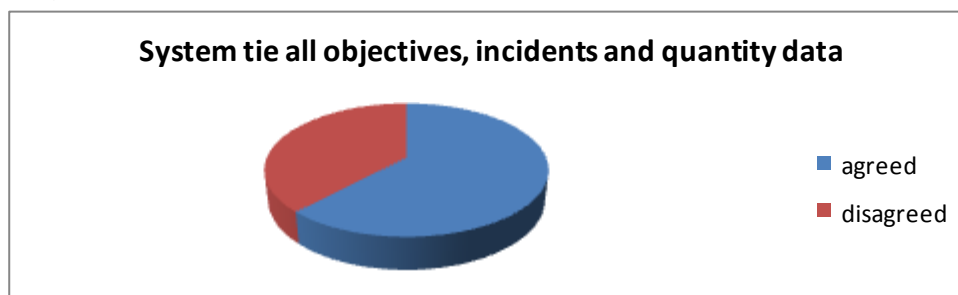


Figure 5

Question 8: Can employees work in more than one job category and have different job evaluation?

Answer: 31% employees agreed that they can work in more than one job category and have different job evaluation but 69% employees say that they can work in more than one job category but they don't have different job evaluation. Management is centralized the employees are bound to follow the orders and directions issued by the higher authorities, but the evaluation is same in all processes. So if an employee performs other tasks and duties other than their job

category it is just a burden and fatigue to an employee for which he is neither paid nor rewarded nor he is evaluated.

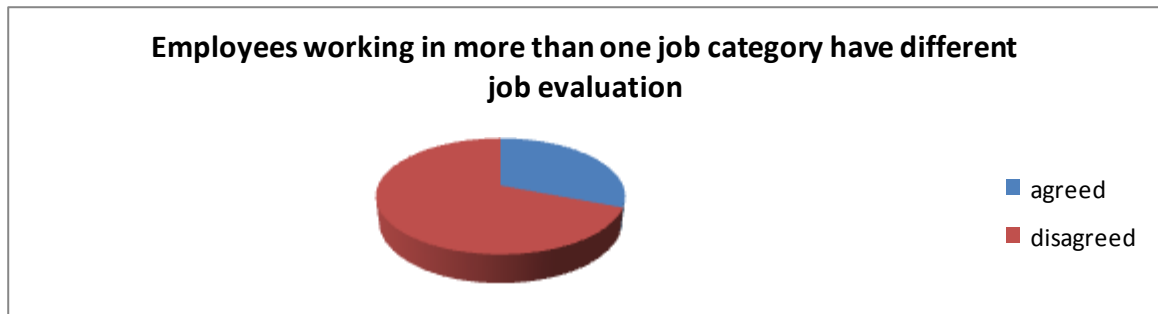


Figure 6

Question 9: Are you happy with the way your performance is evaluated?

Answer: 69%employees are happy and satisfied with the way their performance is evaluated that is through ACR while 31%employees are not happy and satisfied the way their performance is evaluated. They want a better system to evaluate their performance, which evaluates all the aspects of their performance, there is no chance of biasness, and the evaluation through such system should truly reflect their performance.

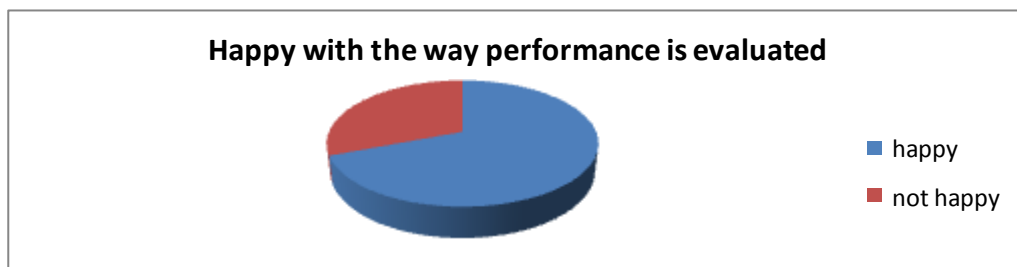


Figure 7

Question 10: do you think your last evaluation reflect you performance?

Answer: 23%employees are satisfied with their evaluation and believe that their last evaluation reflects their performance while 61% employees do not know that whether there last evaluation reflects their performance or not because they are not told about their performance because their ACR is kept confidential. But they are satisfied to some extent because they believe that if their ACR is adverse they would have been told about their poor performance. 16% employees are not satisfied with their evaluation; they think that their last evaluation doesn't reflect their actual performance. They had performed very well but their evaluation does not reflect their good performance.

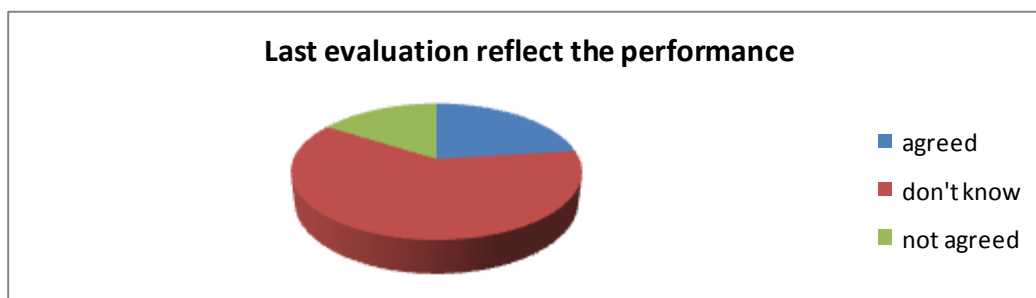


Figure 8

Question 11: what are your expectations from the current evaluation system?

Answer: 31% of the employees expected that factor of liking and disliking should be removed, 25% employees expected that nepotism should be avoided, 25% employees expected that actual performance of an employee should be portrayed while 19% want that no favoritism should be done while writing ACR.

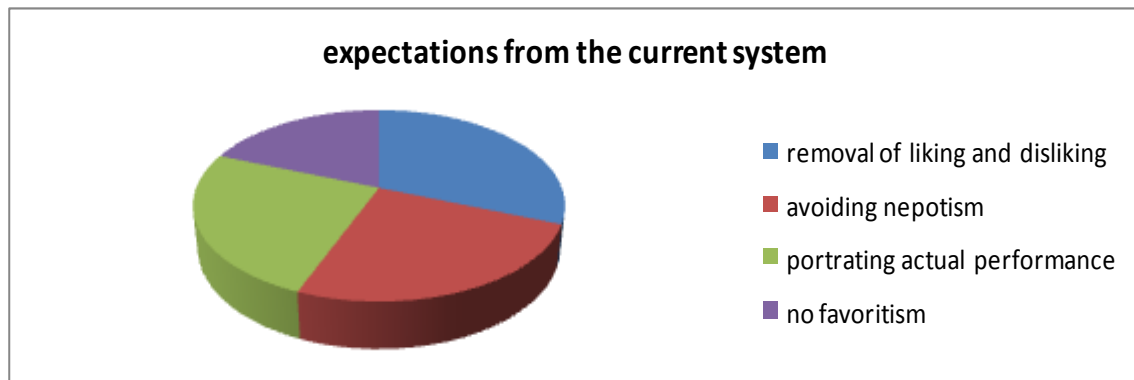


Figure 9

Question 12: Do you think there is need for training on performance management?

Answer: 100% employees emphasized on the training need they said that training is very much needed on performance management.

Conclusion

During the research in Election Commission regional office Bahawalpur various issues and deficiencies has been identified. The problem started from there that most of the employees were unaware about the total number of employees. Employees knew about the performance measurement tool used in their organization that was ACR (annual confidential report). When researcher talked to the employees most of the employees were not satisfied with the current evaluation system they said that evaluation is done on liking and disliking and relational basis. If employee has good relation with the reporting office(officer that writes ACR of the employees) he will write good ACR of the employee but if their relation is not good ACR were of that employee will be written adverse. Stereotype is found among all the employees that the evaluation is only done for the promotion of the employee if adverse ACR is written there is fear of no promotion so due to this fear employees try to perform well. One of the employee said, “I have fear that if I do any mistake my ACR will written negative I will not be promoted”. A lot of favoritism and nepotism is seen in the organization in evaluation. When the researcher raised the point that if 360-degree evaluation system is used instead of ACR the chances of favoritism and nepotism could be removed, as the customers, supervisors, will evaluate the employee subordinates, peers. But one of the employee pointed the issue that ” if we will be evaluated through customers then we will face many difficulties as Politicians are our customers, political pressure on us would be increased and there are chances of threats, chances of transfer are also increased if favorite employees of the politicians are not evaluated good. So evaluation though customers would create problems for us. When researcher talked about the ACR to the clerks of the organization they were satisfied with the evaluation system, they were unaware of the flaws of the system used. When researcher explained them about the deficiencies and flaws of the

system that if they perform well the whole year but during the month when ACR is written their relation with the reporting officer are damaged their hard work during the whole year will be wasted and their adverse ACR will be written. They quickly agreed and said that they face the same situation. While talking to some employees it was observed that, they do not bother if their ACR is written positive or negative because they knew that it would not affect their salary because salary is increased by the government and they knew that if salary would be increased it would be increased for all employees and secondly promotion is given after 15 to 20 years so who knows who live to that time. Employees are unaware about the standards of performance because performance standards are not conveyed to them and even they are unaware about their performance as ACR results are not showed to them. The employees are only informed in case of adverse ACR. So if the performance of employee is good they are unaware that their performance is good to what extent. Whether they have performed excellent, good or average. When it was asked from one of the employee about their performance he said, "I would have performed well, if my performance was not good I would have been informed, copy of my ACR would be sent back." Another flaw of ACR is that it is written by signing officer who is an immediate head but counter signed by counter signing officer that is officer in the district head quarter who doesn't know anything about the employee. Then how he would evaluate and counter sign the performance of the employee who he had never seen, don't know how he behave at work place how he performed. So evaluation should only be done by the immediate officers.

Recommendation

- Employees should be communicated about the performance expectations and how their performance will be evaluated.
- Employees should be informed if their performance falls below expectations. And action plan should be developed for improvement in employee performance.
- Employees should be encouraged and facilitated by employee development.
- Ongoing performance feedback should be given.
- Evaluation of the employee should reflect its actual performance it should not be influences by other factors like nepotism, favoritism etc.
- Immediate officer not the head office should evaluate performance.
- Training should be provided to appraisers to avoid biasness.
- Employees should be provided with training to improve their performance.
- Monetary and non-monetary rewards should be given to the employees on their good performance.

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