

Performance Appraisal Methods That Are Effective in The Covid-19 Pandemic Using Systematic Literature Review*

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Abstract

In the context of performance management in an organization, it is important to continue to assess the performance of each employee even though during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult to make an assessment directly and was carried out with the help of internet technology media. The performance appraisal system becomes the basis for the organization for the development of human resources and systems that can provide avenues for making important decisions for the organization. The purpose of this study is to present recommendations for employee performance appraisal approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research is a Systematic Literature Review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols. The results of this study recommend that the MBO approach and 720 degrees can be used as a reference in assessing employee performance during a pandemic like this. Where employee performance is determined from the results measured by involving negotiations between managers and employees and also external communication relations can be used as a tool for innovation and organizational improvement.

Keywords: Performance, Performance Appraisal Method, Covid-19.

JEL Classification: E24, J24, L25, O15, P47

Introduction

Currently, we are in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic where many employees have to work from home / on shifts / continue to work full-time in the office with health protocols. Amid the conditions of Covid-19, many countries in the world were affected by the economic decline and recession. In business, effective results are essential for organizational survival because the increased performance is a basic criterion for individual and organizational growth (Obisi, 2011).

In the context of performance management in an organization, it is important to continue to assess the performance of each employee even though during the Covid-19 pandemic it was difficult to make an assessment directly and was carried out with the help of the internet technology media. This remains important to maintain the productivity, motivation, abilities, and competence of each employee optimally in helping the company achieve maximum performance (Kolawole, 2013). Performance appraisal is an important issue in human resource management (HRM) and is an important responsibility of managers and supervisors (Brefo-Manuh, Anlesinya, Odoi, & Owusu, 2016; Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015). If used properly, performance appraisal is an organizational tool for managing and coordinating the strengths of each employee towards achieving organizational goals and job performance (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Naji, Ben Mansour, & Leclerc, 2015). The performance appraisal system forms the basis for organizations to develop human resources and systems that can provide avenues for making important decisions such as employee training and development, promotions, demotion, and layoffs (Brefo-Manuh et al., 2016).

Empirical studies on performance appraisal have had a major impact as a managerial decision-making tool (Kolawole, 2013). When employees want to display a high level, then high-performance standards must be set (Islami, Mulolli, & Mustafa, 2018). Performance appraisal aims to identify the current skill status of employees and help employers to determine, the achievement of the organization's strategic goals (Islami et al., 2018; Naji et al., 2015).

A common problem regarding performance appraisal is because it is carried out only in the evaluative aspect so that it ignores other aspects in terms of facilitating employee growth and development through training, coaching, counseling, and feedback on assessment information that allows each employee to set goals and help them see the relationship between what they did and the results they could expect (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015; Obisi, 2011). There must be changes on the part of the organization to start paying special attention to the employee performance appraisal approach, especially during the recession due to Covid-19. The organization must design performance appraisal points that must be adapted to these conditions. If it is not adjusted, there will be bias and it will be difficult to determine whether the employee is performing well or not. Performance appraisal should be a tool to measure the overall status of any organization (Obisi, 2011).

The efficiency and effectiveness of the performance appraisal are determined by the assessment criteria chosen, the assessors selected the assessment methods are chosen, and the employee's reactions. Employee satisfaction with performance appraisals plays an important role in their long-term efficiency. Negative reactions to performance appraisals can undermine an entire performance appraisal system even if they are carefully crafted. Abdelhadi noted that a performance appraisal system that is considered fair can increase employee organizational commitment and employee job satisfaction (Denisi & Murphy, 2017; Katerina, Andrea, & Gabriella, 2013; Naji et al., 2015).

To select the most suitable valuation method, several aspects such as company size, business activities, type of job position, personnel, and organizational goals must be considered. Employee performance appraisal includes assessing various areas of work performance, such as employee characteristics, behavior assessment, and performance results. Other criteria include the time factor which makes it possible to select a set of methods that are oriented to the future, present, or past (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014). The purpose of this study is to present recommendations for employee performance appraisal approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Performance appraisal is defined as a formal employee appraisal by managers in the form of evaluating, comparing, and providing feedback on employee performance (Islami et al., 2018; Katerina et al., 2013; Kolawole, 2013). Organizations that wish to achieve their goals effectively and efficiently, they must build a perfect system for management performance appraisal (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014). Employee performance appraisals take two forms - formal and informal assessments. Informal appraisal means continuous evaluation of an employee by his supervisor during the work process. Formal employee appraisal is a formal organizational process that is carried out systematically to allow comparisons between expected individuals (groups) and actual performance. The formal assessment consists of several stages and methods selected according to the field of assessment (Katerina et al., 2013).

Performance appraisal can be carried out by various methods. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, so management must carefully evaluate which method of valuation they choose to achieve the goals set by the business. In business practice, it is a common phenomenon to combine various methods of performance appraisal. The combination of various methods can eliminate some of the disadvantages posed by individual assessment methods. However, their number should be kept to a minimum as the number of methods increases the bureaucracy and the time and resources required for the overall performance appraisal process. (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014).

Performance appraisal methods are divided into two, namely traditional methods and modern methods for performance appraisal. In creating and implementing an assessment system, management must determine the performance appraisal system to be used and then decide on the process of implementing the system (Islami et al., 2018).

Traditional Method

The traditional method is a relatively older method of performance appraisal. This method is a past-oriented approach that concentrates only on past performance (Shaout & Yousif, 2014). It is a method that takes care of the work that has been done and meets quantification specifications. This method can thus be measured and considered an advantage in performance appraisal. Employees can be given feedback, informed about the results of their efforts. This can increase efficiency (Majid, 2016). The weakness of this method is that the work results cannot be changed (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014).

1. (Rating method), used to compare the performance of two or more individuals. Bosses rank their employees based on merit from best to worst. But the best ways and why are the best are not described in this method (Jindal, Laveena, & Navneet, 2015; Obisi, 2011; Shaout & Yousif, 2014). The purpose of this method is to create a competitive and motivating environment for employees. However, it is impossible to compare the performance of different groups of employees. Therefore, it is impossible to judge whether the best employees from one group are better or worse than the best employees from another group. The method is also useless for remuneration purposes (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014). The advantages of this method are easy to use, low cost, each type of work can be evaluated, no formal training required (Khanna & Sharma, 2014).
2. (Graphical rating scale) in which the rater assesses the individual based on factors such as initiative, dependability, cooperation, attitude, and quantity of work. A graphic rating scale is a scale that lists several performance traits and ranges. The employee is then assessed with a score that best determines his level of performance for each trait using categories such as excellent, average, and bad (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Obisi, 2011; Shaout & Yousif, 2014). Graphical rating scales require evaluators to indicate on the scale the degree to which employees exhibit certain traits, behaviors, or performance results (Khanna & Sharma, 2014). These methods are inexpensive and relatively easy to develop and manage, the results are quantifiable, take less time, and allow for analysis (Majid, 2016). Several limitations are caused by the graphic rating scale. First, the standard nature of the scale ignores the aspect of trait relevance. Additionally, the rating scale cannot achieve results that reflect the full value of the employee (Idowu, 2017).

3. (Checklist method), the manager simply ranks the employee on a continuum that ranges from bad to very good depending on the aspects being evaluated (Idowu, 2017). The rater does not evaluate performance but only records it on a series of questions about employee behavior, and to check which objectives have been completed. The assessor checks the yes or no answer (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Obisi, 2011). Here the assessor only performs reporting or checks and the HR department does the actual evaluation (Khanna & Sharma, 2014).
4. (Critical incident) where the assessor is asked to keep a written record of the incident that describes the positive and negative behaviors of the individual being assessed and is then discussed with the employee (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Khanna & Sharma, 2014; Obisi, 2011). Assessors maintain written records that are updated regularly to assess employee performance. Thus, this method is time-consuming and tedious. The understanding of critical cases is unclear and can be understood differently. The fact that the boss keeps writing notes in front of employees can generate negative emotions between them, leading to tension and contention (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014). This technique is perfect for performance review interviews, it has the disadvantage that the supervisor must record every critical incident. It may not be practical, and can delay feedback to employees (Khanna & Sharma, 2014).
5. (Assessment essay), which simply requires the rater to write a series of statements about the individual's strengths, weaknesses, past performance, and promotional potential. This method mainly tries to concentrate on behavior. Some of the evaluation criteria are as follows: overall performance impression, existing abilities & qualifications, previous performance, and suggestions by others (Gaba, 2017; Obisi, 2011; Shaout & Yousif, 2014). The essay evaluation method is a non-quantitative technique. It is often mixed with the graphic rating scale method. The essay method involves written reports to assess employee performance, usually in terms of job behavior and/or results. To do this objectively, the assessor knows the subject well and must interact with them (Khanna & Sharma, 2014).
6. Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) compare individual performance with examples of specific behaviors associated with numerical ratings. BARS is a method that does not focus on actual work results but employee behavior (attitude to work, compliance with procedures, or benefit). It can be said that this method examines and evaluates the behaviors necessary for successful performance at work (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014; Shaout & Yousif, 2014).

The evaluator must indicate which behavior at each scale best describes the employee's performance. There are four steps in the BARS construction process (Khanna & Sharma, 2014):

- a. List all important dimensions of performance for the job or job
- b. Collection of critical behavior incidents that are effective and ineffective
- c. Classification of effective and ineffective behavior for the corresponding dimensions of performance
- d. Assigning a numerical value for each behavior in each dimension (i.e. scaling the behavior anchor)

The BARS method takes the form of a modified checklist or rating scale. The scale displays work tasks that are being performed in a particular workplace. Work behavior during the performance of a particular task is ranked from a scale. The scale is divided into five or seven numerical degrees, each displaying a verbal characteristic. The rater then marks the most appropriate verbal characteristics for each task. The final assessment is expressed as the sum, average, or combination of values. The main advantage of the BARS method is feedback. Its biggest disadvantage is the time it takes and the overall complexity of the preparation stage (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014).

A. Modern Methods

Unlike the previous methods, this group of methods focuses on future performance or can be used to assign future tasks (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014). This method emphasizes future performance by analyzing the potential achievement of the employee and by setting targets for short and long term performance (Majid, 2016).

1. Organization by objectives (MBO), an approach or performance evaluation, which is based on the conversion of individual goals and organizational goals to individuals. MBO is a performance appraisal method in which a manager or entrepreneur sets a list of goals and makes regular assessments of their performance, eventually creating rewards based on the results achieved. (Gaba, 2017; Khanna & Sharma, 2014).

The MBO process runs as below (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014; Idowu, 2017; Khanna & Sharma, 2014; Majid, 2016; Obisi, 2011).

- a. Setting goals and desired results for each subordinate
- b. Setting performance standards
- c. Comparison of actual goals with goals achieved by employees

- d. Setting new goals and new strategies for goals not achieved in the previous year.

The weakness of the MBO system is that performance tends to be defined in terms of measurable results. However, the setting of goals and objectives is highly subjective, involving negotiations between managers and employees. If a high-performing employee fails to achieve his goals, it is not uncommon for managers to renegotiate goals so that managers can be sure that the well-performing person will get what is seen as good performance. The MBO process consists of three stages of management: planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Islami et al., 2018; Obisi, 2011).

The MBO approach has the advantage that conventional assessments only focus on personality traits. On the contrary, in this approach, subordinates also define short-term performance which is discussed with superiors. In terms of effectiveness, the MBO approach has been shown to provide significant benefits to the organization and employees. In particular, the MBO approach promotes objectivity, allows for two-way feedback, and encourages improved employee performance through motivation. One of the major drawbacks of this approach has to do with the fact that the assessor does not allow to see how the employee handled every eventuality during a given work period. Because it places more emphasis on results than on process (Idowu, 2017).

2. An appraisal center is a central location where managers can gather for work being evaluated by trained observers. The principle idea behind using an appraisal center is to evaluate managers over time (usually one or three days), by observing (and then evaluating) their behavior across a selected set of exercises or examples of work. (Majid, 2016; Shaout & Yousif, 2014). After recording their observations of the assessed person's behavior, the assessors meet to discuss those observations. The decision regarding the performance of each assessment is based on a discussion of the results of the observations. The method is relatively complex, done objectively, and independently which can be considered as an advantage. On the other hand, employee performance in artificial situations may not always be the same as real situations, which can be considered a loss (Cocuřová & Svetozarovová, 2014; Majid, 2016). Another problem with this approach is that the costs associated with accommodation, also regarding the availability of psychologists and HR specialists are very demanding (Majid, 2016).
3. 360 Degree which is a popular performance appraisal technique that includes evaluation input from several stakeholders such as direct supervisors, team members, customers, coworkers, and yourself. 360 Degrees inform people about the effect their actions have on others (Obisi, 2011; Shaout & Yousif, 2014). In other words, a 360-degree scoring system allows the gathering of information about a person from different degrees and angles. The 360-degree performance appraisal system is considered to be one that helps in overcoming disadvantages such as prejudice, subjectivity, and halo errors, which characterize traditional evaluation systems. The 360-degree grading system is perceived by employees as more accurate and more reflective of their performance. The drawback of this method relates to the interpretation of the final result because quantitative assessments do not always represent qualitative information accurately and receiving feedback from multiple sources can be intimidating, threatening, etc. (Idowu, 2017; Khanna & Sharma, 2014).
4. The 720-degree method concentrates on what matters most, namely the knowledge of the customer or investor about their work. This method is a twofold 360-degree assessment, conducting an assessment in 7 phases of pre-assessment feedback, self-assessment, peer assessment, customer assessment, subordinate assessment, managerial assessment, and post-assessment feedback (Majid, 2016). In a 720 degree assessment, feedback is drawn from external sources such as stakeholders, families, suppliers, and communities. This is a 360-degree grading method that is practiced twice (Shaout & Yousif, 2014). The 720-degree view focuses on gathering information not only from within the company but from an outside group i.e. the perceptions of customers or investors. This method focuses on development, performance, and helps in making decisions in a better way (Ail, 2016; Khanna & Sharma, 2014).

B. Methodology

This research is a systematic literature review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method which is carried out systematically by following the correct stages or research protocols. The procedure of this systematic review consists of several steps, namely 1) compile Background and Purpose (Background and objectives), 2) Research Question, 3) Searching for the literature 4) Selection Criteria 5) Data Extraction Strategy 6) Assess Quality of Primary Studies, 7) Data Synthesis (Vasconcelos et al., 2013; Wahono, 2015; Wolor, Kurnianti, Zahra, & Martono, 2020).

A. Research Question on Literature Review

Table 1: Research Questions on Literature Review

ID	Research Question	Motivation
RQ1	Which journals are the most significant related to performance appraisals?	Identify the most significant journals in the field of performance appraisals
RQ2	Who is the most active and influential researcher on performance appraisals theory?	Identification of the most active and influential researchers who contributed much to the field of performance appraisals theory research
RQ3	What research topics did researchers choose in the field of performance appraisal during the Covid-19 period?	Identification of research topics and trends in performance appraisal during the Covid-19 period
RQ4	What methods of approach are used to deal with performance appraisal during the Covid-19 period?	Identify strengths and weaknesses for effective performance appraisal methods during the Covid-19

B. Searching for the literature

This research was conducted in May-July 2020 in the city of Jakarta. Search for relevant research articles with the topic of this research conducted using keywords: Performance Appraisals, Covid-19, Systematic Literature Review. To select articles we use the following databases: Scopus, DOAJ, Proquest, Ebsco. Adjustments were made in the strategy used to find the article, the inclusion criteria were predetermined, to maintain consistency in finding the article and avoiding possible bias.

C. Selection Criteria

Inclusion criteria used to guide the search and selection of articles are research in English (IC1), complete articles published in national and international journals in the 2000-2020 period, indexed in the database used, focused on Performance Appraisals, Covid-19, Systematic Literature Review (IC2). (Fig1). After getting a sample, the selected article is then analyzed for the collection of relevant information. Analysis and synthesis of data extracted from the article are made descriptively to observe, describe, and classify data to gather knowledge generated on the themes explored in the meta-synthesis. Therefore, meta-analysis can produce new concepts through a synthesis of study content surveyed to transform some qualitative studies into new studies and contribute to the dissemination of scientific knowledge (Vasconcelos et al., 2013).

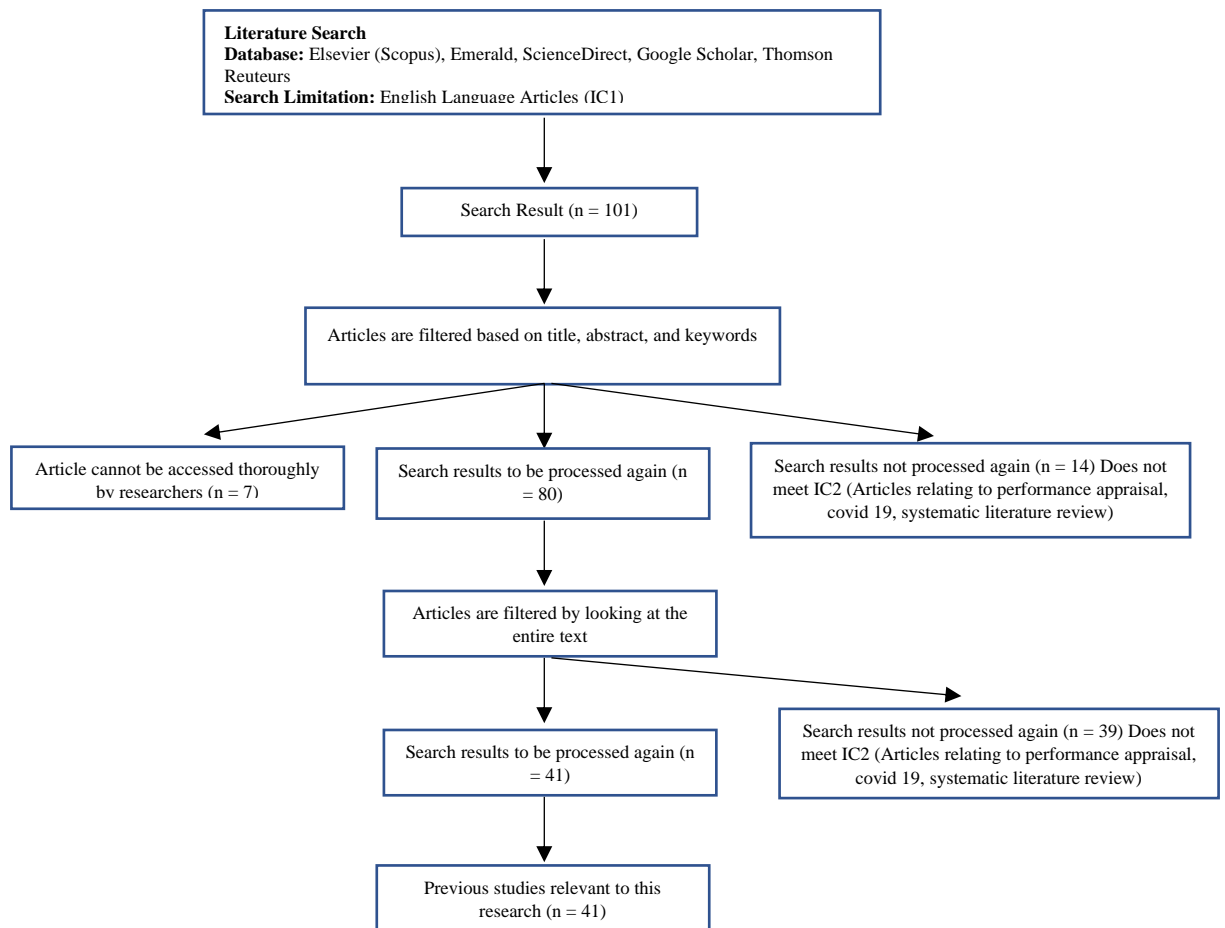


Figure 1: Prisma Flow Diagram Systematic Review

Data Extraction, Assess Quality of Primary Studies, and Data Synthesis

Data extraction is the process by which the researcher obtains the necessary information about the characteristics of the study and the findings from the included study. An assessment of study quality indicates the strength of the evidence provided by the review and can also inform the standards required for future research. Finally, the quality assessment helps answer the question of whether the study is robust enough to guide treatment, prevention, diagnostic or policy decisions. Data synthesis involves compiling, combining, and summarizing the findings of individual studies that are included in a systematic review.

The main study chosen is then extracted to collect data that contributes to answering research questions. Assessment of research quality can be used to guide the interpretation of the synthesis findings and to determine the conclusions described. The purpose of data synthesis is to gather evidence from selected studies to answer research questions.

Discussion

Performance appraisal is part of performance management. Performance appraisal is an instrument to assess whether an employee has worked well or not. In general, the process of assessing the performance of a company is different according to their respective policies. Some assess once a year, once every six months, per quarter, etc. This assessment is carried out on an ongoing basis to achieve the goals of the company and the employees themselves.

Performance appraisal systems and a worker appraisal process are critical to the overall success of an organization. This is because employee involvement in performance appraisals, continuous feedback from superiors, and clarity of objectives can make a significant positive contribution to the achievement of overall company goals. Performance appraisal is very beneficial for the organization and employees. For organizations, it is very important to assess which employees are performing well and which are not. Performance appraisal is a consideration for organizations to make decisions on promotion, demotion, rotation, even in terms of giving rewards and punishments. For employees, it becomes a benchmark and becomes an evaluation of the performance that he has given to the company. Employees can find out where their weaknesses are and what are their strengths. Employees can have added value and bargaining

power to the company when they have performed well in terms of careers and increased income. Conversely, when an employee does not perform well, he must accept the consequences of being transferred, demoted, or receiving punishment. When superiors provide consistent feedback on their performance, it will give them insight into actual expectations and performance (Brefo-Manuh et al., 2016). Non-conformities can be managed through concerted efforts in training and development, careers, and management succession. The organization should also conduct periodic reviews or audits of all personnel policies, programs, and procedures; compensation, recruitment and staffing, job analysis, job evaluation, the grievance process, and communication channels, etc. Keep in mind that performance appraisal is a means not an end (Obisi, 2011). This in turn will improve the working relationship between superiors and subordinates and generate new and innovative ideas (Brefo-Manuh et al., 2016).

The selection of the most appropriate method is a prerequisite for designing an effective program. There are many methods designed to measure the performance of employees in an organization, but this depends on the organization's discretion regarding which method is most suitable for it, which is directly related to the effectiveness and efficiency of performance in organizational systems (Majid, 2016). Yashashwi describes the categories that differentiate between traditional and modern methods (Ail, 2016).

Table 1: Comparison of Traditional and Modern Methods

Category	Traditional	Modern
Orientasi	Individualistic, Control Oriented, Documentary	Systematic, Developmental, Problem Solving
Leadership	Directional, Evaluative	Facilitative, Coaching
Frequency	Occasionally	Often
Formality	High	Low
Rewards	Individualistic	Organizational

In the table above, it can be said that the traditional approach is more oriented towards individual employees and less focused on employee development which will actually improve the performance of the organization itself. Indeed, from the aspect of speed, the performance appraisal which tends to be central can be done quickly, but objectively it is doubtful and seems subjective and authoritarian by the superiors. In contrast to modern approaches that are oriented towards organizations and see that employee development is essential, especially in improving the performance of the organization itself. From the aspect of time required for performance appraisal it is indeed longer than traditional, but objectively it is better and more constructive.

In connection with the current covid-19 pandemic where something new has happened that has changed the way of life of the world, many companies have lost money and there has been a recession in several countries. Organizations need fast and responsive action to find effective solutions in solving performance-related problems. It is important to note that several previous studies have suggested that companies are interested in modern systems that are sustainability-oriented and go forward in comparison to traditional ones.

The problems that arise regarding what performance assessment is effective during Covid-19 must be looked at comprehensively. This is because the performance appraisal is related to the feedback that the company can give to employees. Meanwhile, during a pandemic, it is difficult for companies to be able to provide this feedback. Companies must also think that performance appraisal during a pandemic aims to build communication, empathy, and encourage employee motivation amid differences in working conditions that are different from normal conditions. Several studies have stated that organizations are comfortable with performance appraisal using the MBO method and 720 degrees as the most effective method of performance appraisal. This is conveyed in the context of the objectives to be achieved and the context of external orientation (investors and customers) (Cocuľová & Svetozarovová, 2014; Majid, 2016).

In this day and age, companies are competing to create products/services that can digitally appeal to customers without direct interaction, minimizing costs, and requires intensive online communication. This of course requires the organization to think creatively. If we look at the current needs, it is adjusted to some previous studies. The MBO approach and 720 degrees can be used as a reference in assessing employee performance during a pandemic like this. Where employee performance is determined from measured results by involving negotiations between managers and employees and also communication relationships with external parties can be used as a tool for innovation and organizational improvement (Ail, 2016; Cintrón & Flaniken, 2011; Islami et al., 2018; Khanna & Sharma, 2014; Obisi, 2011). Managers can communicate intensively to convey the plans and goals of the organization to deal with the current covid-19 outbreak. The plans and goals are then communicated to each employee so that they can be realized immediately. Certainly, the plans or goals made will be revised and adjusted to the current conditions because it is impossible to set the same standards as the events before the pandemic. This is following the concept of MBO.

Second, managers can provide an assessment by involving people outside of the organization with the 720-degree method. With this method, organizations can get input that can provide solutions to problems that occur within the organization. It is recommended that employee performance reviews be carried out three to four times a year so that corrective action can be taken if the employee's performance deviates (Obisi, 2011). Also, organizations must adopt a more personal approach through informal counseling, and attention to rewards and incentives for employees. This can significantly contribute to increasing employee motivation (Idowu, 2017; Obisi, 2011). An empathetic and emotional approach to employees is essential. Moreover, crises will usually put great pressure on certain employees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, performance appraisal is one of the most important processes in human resource management because its effective implementation impacts company-wide policies. It can make a significant contribution to advancing the achievement of the goals or objectives of the entire organization. Judging from the Covid-19 pandemic period, based on the existing literature review, it can be concluded that the MBO method and 720 degrees can be used as alternative solutions for organizations in assessing employee performance.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is only based on a literature review selected by the authors from various available literature sources to help provide recommendations for companies to continue to assess employee performance even during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was taken because the author is currently undergoing a policy from the Indonesian government to isolate himself and work from home. Subsequent research requires a broader method through direct interviews or quantitative methods to increase knowledge.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Christian Wiradendi Wolor: Conceptualization, Supervision, Wrote the paper
 I Ketut R Sudiarditha: Resources, Review, and Editing, Wrote the paper
 Ahmad Nurkhin: Materials, Analysis tools, Interpret Data, Wrote the paper
 Yudin Citriadin: Resources, Review, and Editing, Wrote the paper

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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