

OFFICIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE POLICE

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Abstract: The article discusses the issue of the official assessment of the police. It covers the theoretical aspects of periodic appraisal of employees and presents the study results on the official assessment of police officers. The first part of the article deals with the essence of the employee appraisal and its impact on the subfunctions of human resource management system. It demonstrates the classification of criteria and assessment methods and describes the employee review-related risks. Methodological assumptions, the result analysis and conclusions from the conducted studies have been contained in the further part of the article. The aim of the studies was to diagnose the assessment system of police forces. The studies were conducted at one of Municipal Police Stations in Wielkopolskie voivodeship. They were carried out within the research project on the management of uniform services. The performed studies were of a pilot character and will encompass a greater number of respondents. The main method of the conducted studies was a diagnostic survey. As a result of the studies performed, it was found that the system of official assessment required fundamental changes. The existing assessment system proved not to have performed one of its basic functions, namely it does not provide reliable information on the quality of work performed by police officers.

Keywords: official assessment. period appraisal, uniformed services.

1. Introduction

The main objective of reasonable personnel selection is the filling of vacancies. The periodic appraisal of employees plays a fundamental role in the system. It provides the information on the quality of work performed and constitutes the basis for the decision regarding redeployment of staff, redundancies and promotions. The purpose of this article was to diagnose the system of official assessment of police non-commissioned officers in one of district police stations in Wielkopolskie voivodeship. The studies were of a pilot character and were performed and were conducted within the research project on the management of distribution groups.

2. Periodic appraisal

The assessments of traits, conducts and achievements of both individuals and teams fulfill a significant role in every organisation. People evaluate themselves and others, systematically or not, and they follow their assessments in their conduct. The superiors constantly face the issue of assessment. The formal rating system, which includes the collection of performance data arranged in the periodically regulated or controlled form, places high challenges on the management staff. It is essential for the assessment body to understand the basis and objectives of the system, as well as to acquire competences for its practical implementation.

One of the most important elements of the assessment system is the manner the employee appraisals are used (Kopeć, 2006). In general it may be said that the obtained assessments may be applied to implement almost all task areas of human resources function in an organisation. The periodically conducted appraisal process unites the employee development (Antczak, 2000). The assessment is related to the improvement, redeployment, integration, motivation and it has a special role in the development plan.

According to A. Suchodolski, the employee appraisal is believed to be the key tool for the effective and efficient management of human resources (Suchodolski, 2006). The aim of the performance assessment is:

- to analyse and diagnose the leadership potential, which is the basis of the company strategy assignment,
- to design the personnel scheduling,
- to control the human resources function,
- to create the required conducts and behaviours,
- to motivate employees,
- to determine the training needs,
- to diagnose the development potential of individual employees,
- to make decisions on employee transfers (redeployments, promotions, downgradings),
- to control the course of an employee professional development,
- to provide the superiors with the information on the work quality of employees,
- to ensure the superior-subordinate communication.

The same belief is shared by A. Wajda it is presented in Figure 1.

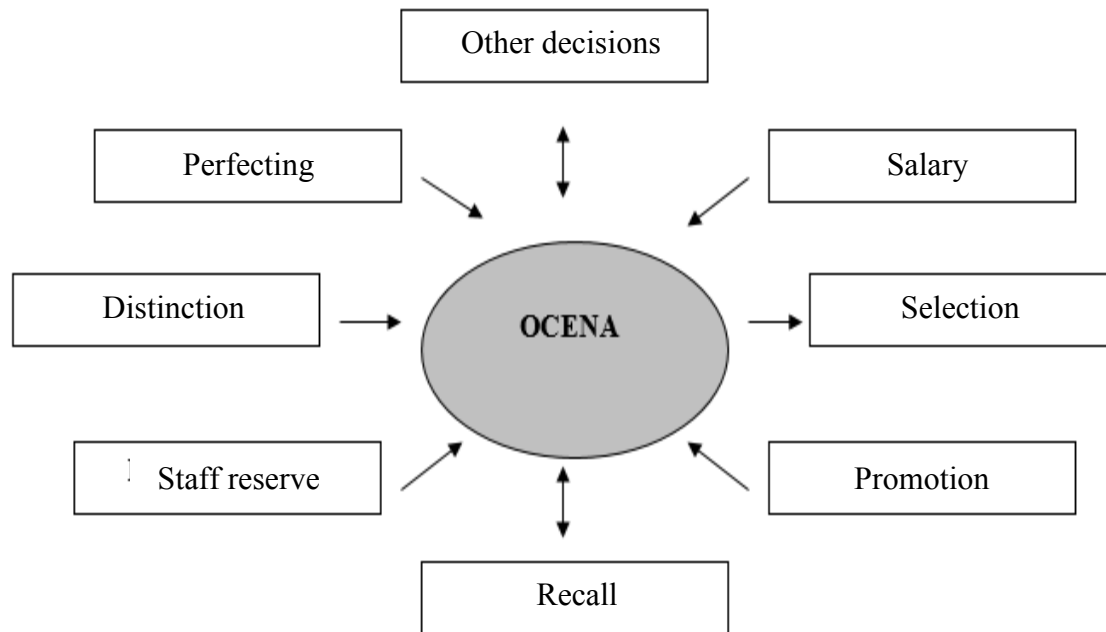


Figure 1. The relationship between the employee appraisals and other areas of human resource management. Adapted from: „Organizacja i zarządzanie” by A. Wajda. Copyright 2003 by PWE.

According to him, the system of employee appraisals is an open system, which is related to the elements of human resource management as well as to the strategy of a company, its organisational culture and its structure. The effects of employee assessments affect the development of processes related to the function of human resources in an organisation.

It is worth noting that the tools to be used should not be overlooked during the creation of assessment systems. These will be the forms and regulations. The former are the documents that evidence that the assessment has been conducted. The regulations will help to understand the assessment criteria better and to solve the difficult cases related to it. At its simplest, a form is to be understood as a document template with gaps to be filled (Jędrzejczak, 2016). The assessment sheet must be characterised by the adequacy principle in relation to the workplace and workstation.

The appropriate selection of criteria is the key to make whole assessment system effective. The criteria must be closely related to its aims. They address the essential question: what do we intend to evaluate? Providing employees with the information on the assessment criteria, we present and concurrently enhance the patterns of behaviours, norms and values to be focused on in relation to their great significance in an organisation. The new links are thus added to the organisational culture and the old elements are strengthened in it. It may be concluded that the criteria selection is of fundamental importance. It is extremely essential that the criteria have a clearly defined meaning. They are to be the base on which the work regarding the subsequent creation of the assessment system will be performed at a later time. The evaluation criteria may basically be subdivided into the following groups (Ludwiczynski, 2014):

- qualification-related,
- efficiency-related,
- behaviour-related,
- personality-related.

Literature of the assessment-associated issue considers also three basic concepts of evaluation. They are the views expressed by Steinmann and Schreyogg. They believe it is possible to distinguish (Steinmann and Schreyogg, 2001):

- trait-based concept of assessment, in which the traits and characteristics of an employee are the assessment subjects,
- activity-based concept of assessment, in which the manner of activity performance of an employee, as well as their behaviour are evaluated,
- performance-based concept of assessment, in which the result (effect) of the employee-performed activities is under evaluation.

The question on the manner the employee appraisal is performed could be asked. The assessment methods are the answer to it. They should be understood as an approach including selected rules, criteria and finally the aims of the assessment, which are the reference system, without which the real and reasonable selection of assessment methods would not be possible. This manner must be fully systemised, conscious and consistently applied (Ludwiczynski, 2014).

Employee performance appraisal methods are subdivided into: relative and absolute. In order to demonstrate the difference between the methods, the most relevant would be to quote M. Kostera “the absolute assessment involves the comparison of employee performance with the established standards. The relative assessment is made by comparing employees” (Kostera, 2010).

There are a number of significant risks, which may affect mainly employee's perception of the assessment fairness (Szczygielska, and Kurek, 2015). Such pathologies may be of different origins. The sources of error of the employee appraisal most frequently result from the lack of knowledge of psychological foundations and mechanisms. Mere negligence in procedures and criteria selection as well as principle of assessment also constitute significant errors. If the assessment system, which has been introduced in an organisation, company or an institution is conducted unreliably, it will bring more losses than benefits.

According to M. Sidor-Rządkowska it is the clearly identified rules that should be regarded as the assessment system basis. Their systematic, methodical and consistent adherence reduces the number of occurring errors. The most crucial principles of assessment have been presented below (Sidor-Rządkowska, 2013):

1. Purposefulness – the strategic objectives of the company must be reflected in the system of assessment, to constitute their support.
2. Usefulness – the performance appraisal system should be a tool of human resources policy of an organisation. The results provided by the assessment system must be used as a basis to make decisions on, e.g. promotions or remunerations. The system should be applied and made use of.
3. Universality – the structure of the assessment system should include all employees. If the system is to actually fulfill its role in the future the employees in all positions should be assessed. It is a bad idea to apply the performance appraisal system to only selected departments or segments.
4. Regularity – the right approach is to conduct the assessment on a consistent, regular and permanent basis. Performing unexpected and one-off evaluating controls affects the internal relations and the culture of an organisation in a negative way.
5. Continuity – employee appraisal should be inseparable from the analysis of the achievements of the previous period and should involve them being discussed.
6. Adequacy – the specificity of the company and all its positions should follow the criteria and periodic assessment procedures tailored to their nature.
7. Uniformity – unification should characterise the evaluation system. It should be designed in such a way as to allow the comparison of the assessment outcomes in the employee groups and at the time of their issuance.
8. Simplicity – only clear and plain system of evaluation will be understandable to assessed employees and simple procedures will help to prevent the evaluators from making errors.
9. Transparency – all the involved parties should be acquainted with the assessment system elements such as: the criteria, the results, the review procedure, the use of the results.
10. Flexibility – if required it is also necessary to take the additional circumstances and unexpected events into consideration when conducting the assessment.

Evaluators must scrupulously follow the appraisal principles to avoid assessment errors. This is particularly important since the outcome of the final assessment frequently depends on it. Evaluators must be know all possible pathologies to avoid the consciously.

3. Methodological studies

The main method of the conducted studies was a diagnostic survey. This method is based on statistical gathering of facts and data on a given issue. The grouped facts and data on the object of study enabled to diagnose the causes and effects and made it possible to create new solutions. Surveying was the technique, that was chosen during the studies. Surveys were

conducted in the months of March-April 2017 on of the police stations in Wielkopolskie voivodeship. The police commissioner did not agree to disclose the data of the institution. The survey was anonymous. The questions in the survey were reliable and tackled the problems, which had not been answered before. In addition, questions were deliberately chosen and formed an integrated whole. The survey consisted of three parts. Its first part included the address of the assessed institution, the title of the survey, its aim and testing instructions. Its second part is the main part, which included all the questions to the respondents. The questions covered the course of issuing an official assessment and the impact of the periodic appraisal on the operation in the police. It contained both the closed and semi-open questions. The third part of the survey contained the particulars.

Studies were conducted in one of the district police stations in Wielkopolskie voivodeship. 60 police officers participated in the study. The group included 50 men and 10 women. The latter accounted for 17% of the total respondents. The percentage distribution of male and female police officers taking part in the study has been shown in Figure 2.

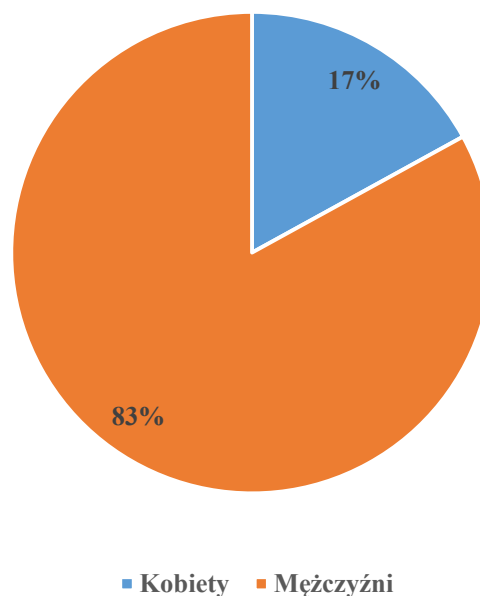


Figure 2. The percentage distribution of male and female police officers participating in the study. Own elaboration.

Out of 96.586 employed police officers 13.280 are women. They account for 14% of the total police officers (“Kobiety w policji”). The studies conducted for the purposes of this article have demonstrated the overall tendency of female employment in the police.

The vast majority of officers served in the police force from 6 to 10 years. This group accounted for 43% of all respondents. The second group in terms of police service were the officers with the years of service between 11 and 15 years (27%). Officers with 16-20 years of service accounted for 13% of respondents. Officers of up to 5 years of service represented 10% of respondents. 7% of police officers participating in the study presented over 30 years of

service. The study did not encompass the police officers with 20-30 years of service. Length of service of police officers has been shown in Figure 3.

It was mainly non-commissioned officers and aspirants who performed service in the District Police Station in Wieluń. Structure of the rank-related study group has been shown in Figure 4.

Aspirants were the largest group among the law enforcement officers under study. They accounted for 17% of the respondents. The most frequent rank was the one of aspirant, which accounted for 36% of the respondents. The second most abundant rank was the one of senior aspirant. They represented 27% of all police officers. Another group were sergeants (17% of the respondents).

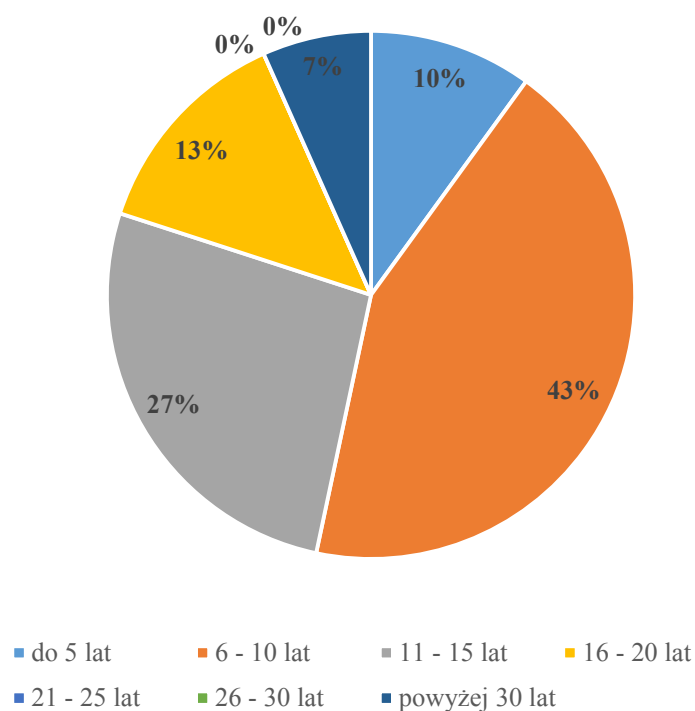


Figure 3. Length of service of police officers. Own elaboration based on empirical studies.

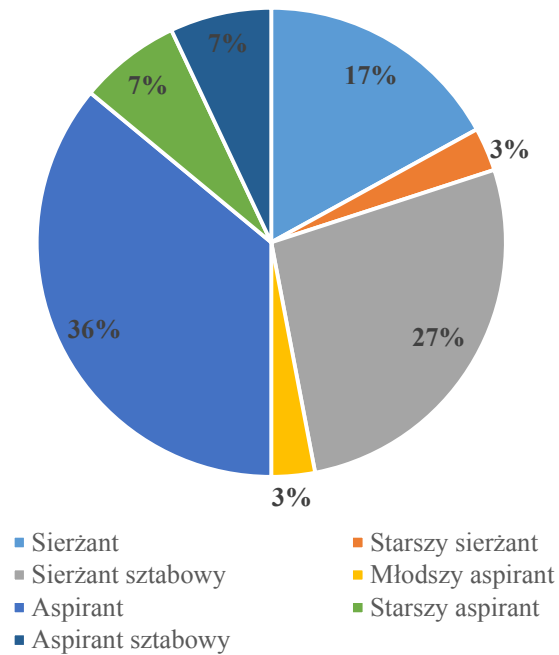


Figure 4. Structure of the rank-based study group. Own elaboration.

4. Opinions of respondents opinions on the assessment of police non-commissioned officers in the context of studies

In one of the first questions, the respondents were asked to comment on the statement that the official assessment was affected by personal relationships with the superior. Opinions of respondents have been shown in Figure 5.

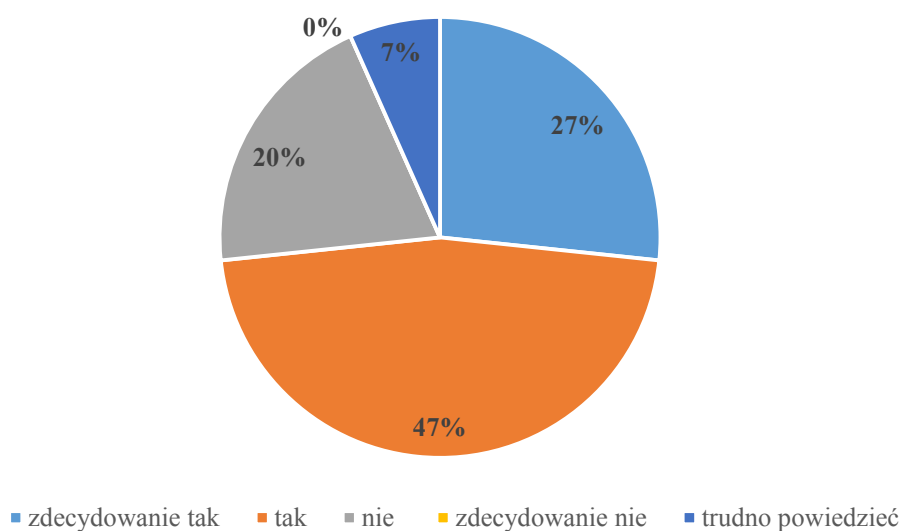


Figure 5. Opinions of respondents concerning the impact of personal relationships with the superior on the obtained assessment. Own elaboration.

The vast majority of police officers thought that the official assessment is affected by a personal relationship with the superior. 27% of the officers replied “definitely yes” whilst 47% of respondents replied “yes”. A total of 74% police officers stated that personal relationships had the greatest impact on the assessment. Only 20% of the police officers replied “no”, and only 7% of the respondents ticked the “difficult to tell” reply. Studies have shown that the answer “definitely yes” was given by male police officers. As many as 80% of female officers checked the “yes” answer. The ranks held by the police officers did not affect the answer for this question.

The cause of the distribution may be due to a fact that one of the most common errors of assessment is the subjective approach to the employee appraisal. The errors are reflected even by the contact and halo effect. If the superior spends a lot of time with the subordinate and socialises with him outside of work, it is highly possible to commit such error in the assessment process. The personality of each man somehow forces them to assess others and the surrounding reality through the prism of their own experiences, achievements or expectations. If someone likes another person they will assess him/her better.

The next question examined the opinions of police officers on the question concerning the issuance of “secure assessment” – a good one by the superiors. The distribution of responses has been presented in Figure 6.

The vast majority of police officers believed that superiors usually gave a “secure” good evaluation. That was the opinion of 53 of police officers, who replied “definitely yes” or “yes”. Only 17% law enforcement officers disagreed. They believed the assessment to be objective. As many as 30% of officers had no opinion on this subject. The vast majority of female officers (60%) claimed that their appraisal was “secure”, which meant good. About 40% of female officers considered themselves to have been objectively assessed. The length of service did not have a significant impact on the replies.

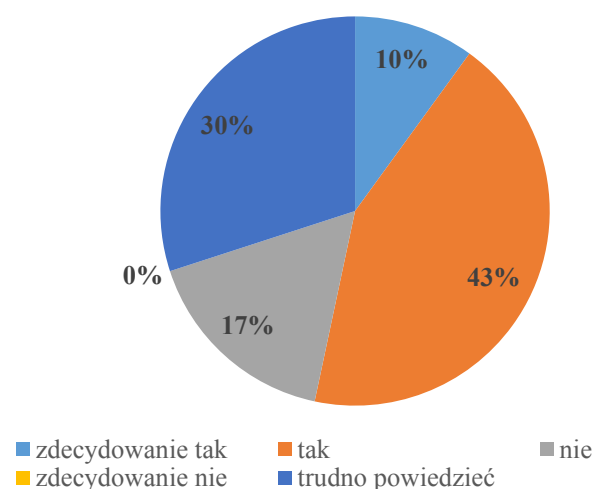


Figure 6. The opinions of respondents on a “secure assessment” – the good one being given by the superiors. Own elaboration.

One of the most common errors made by the management is a lack of objectivity in the course of evaluation. Issuance of an assessment referred to as “good” gives a sense of security both for the person evaluating and the one that is being evaluated. It usually guarantees that the person evaluated will not appeal against the assessment. On the other hand, the superior will be regarded as a demanding manager by his immediate supervisors. In such circumstances, the assessment criteria may not be appropriately suited to a given position. The superior is not able to conduct an objective appraisal and issue either a “very good” or a “satisfactory” assessment.

The study also determined how frequently the police officers had been assessed. Opinions of respondents have been shown in Figure 7.

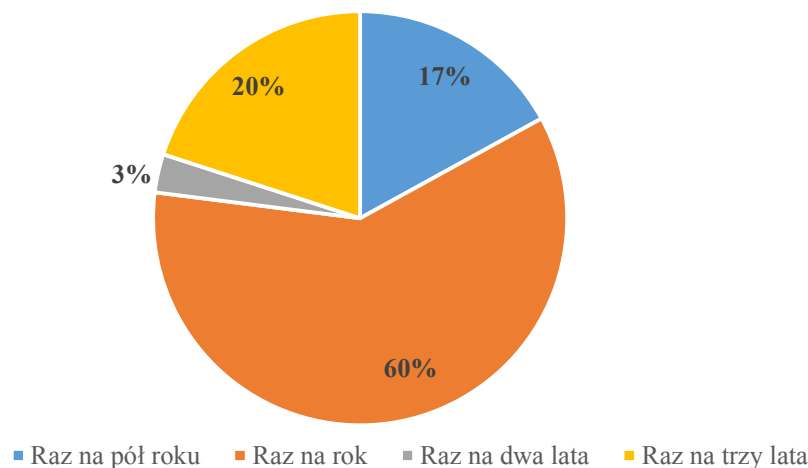


Figure 7. Opinions on the frequency of assessment. Own elaboration.

The vast majority of police officers was assessed once a year. They accounted for 60% of all surveyed. 17% of the police officers were assessed twice a year. Very small number (3%) of officers were evaluated every two years. Every three years 20% of the respondents underwent appraisal.

The distribution of replies presented above has been impacted by the length of police service, the superior, conducting the appraisal and the Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the frequency of assessment. According to the Regulation, the police officers should be assessed (Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 30 August 2010 on official assessment of police officer. Official Journal of Laws of 2010, No.170, item 1145):

- at least once a year when in preparatory and contractual police as well as when serving as a candidate,
- no less than once every 24 months when on permanent active duty, when the length of service does not exceed 10 years,
- no less than once every 36 months when on permanent active duty when the length of service is 10 or more years.

The police officers with the length of service between 16-20 years were assessed once every two years. Therefore, appraisals were conducted more frequently than required by the Act. Police officers whose length of service was 10 years or more were evaluated once every three years. This is the absolute minimum required by the Regulation. Police officers with the length of service between 6-10 years were assessed once a year. It seems interesting to observe that annual performance appraisal was also conducted among police officers with longer service. It depended on the superior's approach to the assessment. Police officers with length of service up to 5 years as well as with the one between 6-10 years were evaluated once every six months.

The assessment performed every six months is the most desired frequency of evaluation. It allows effective monitoring of an employee performance and is not “troublesome” for superiors and subordinates. Evaluation conducted every three years (as the Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs recommends) does not fulfill the functions of assessment, namely, it does not give an employee and a superior the information both on the quality of work performed and on the possibility of continued employment of the employee. Assessment conducted on incidental basis (that is how the appraisal carried out every three years may be referred to) does not motivate police officers. Evaluation becomes a “beauty treatment” in the process of human resources management.

In the opinion of respondents obtaining high ratings in performance appraisal does not affect the remuneration. The distribution of responses has been presented in Figure 8.

The vast majority of police officers – 70% believes, that the periodic performance appraisal does not affect remuneration. 20% of police officers hold a different opinion. None of the surveyed female police officers does not believe that the assessment has effect on remuneration. The reason for such distribution of responses may be the fact that police officers do not possess knowledge on how the process would be conducted. In civil organisations, the best assessed employees are usually awarded higher salary, prizes, bonus and all kinds of extras and privileges. It is not possible to apply anything of this kind in. Police officers are classified in specific salary ranges. Resources that commanders may allocate to rewards are very limited. Therefore, the material motivation becomes highly limited. At the same time, police officers believe that remuneration should depend on employee appraisals.

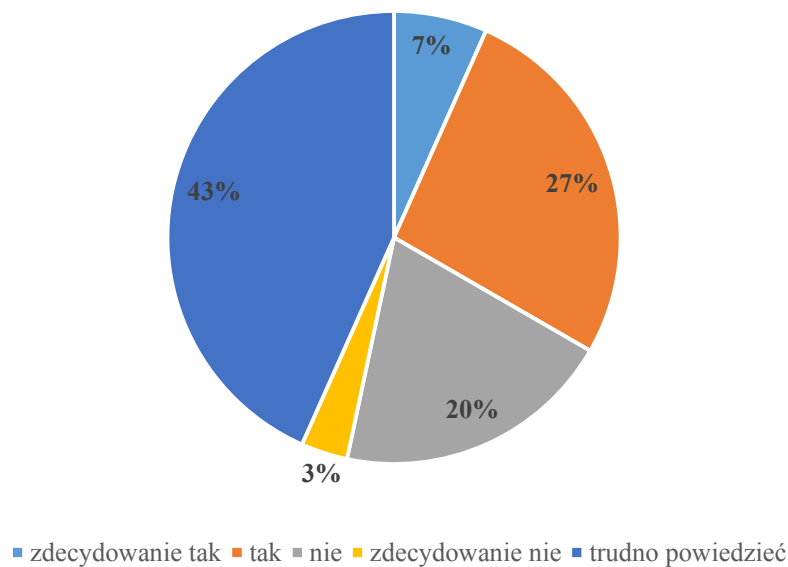


Figure 8. Opinions of respondents concerning the impact of assessment on remuneration. Own elaboration.

Another question regarded the impact type of high performance evaluation on the course of service. Opinions of police officers have been shown in Figure 9.

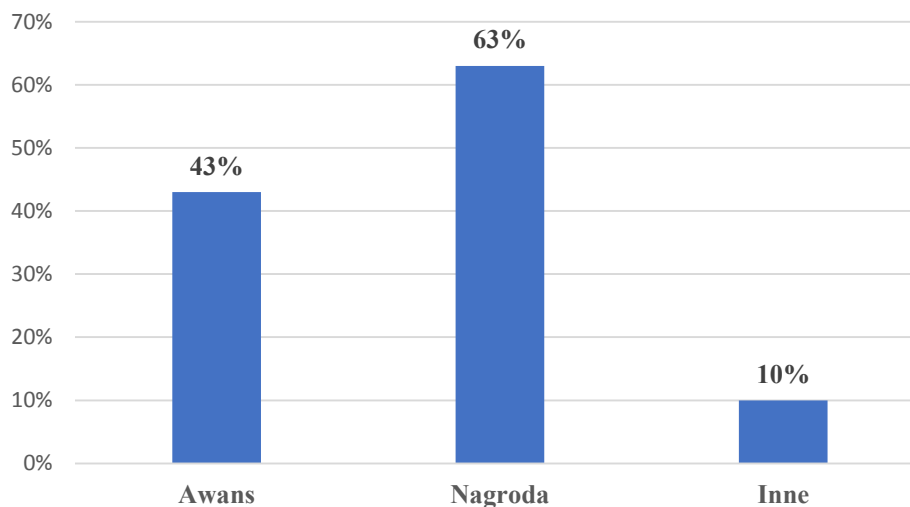


Figure 9. Impact of high performance evaluation on the course of service. Own elaboration.

The vast majority of police officers believed that high performance appraisal affected their receipt of rewards. Up to 63% of police officers were awarded a prize as a result of high performance appraisal. They were usually the non-material rewards, e.g. reward leave or the praise. A large number of police officers – 43% believe that the period appraisal affects promotion. The same opinion is shared only by 20% surveyed female officers. Therefore, most of police officers believe that periodic assessment does not affect promotion. The question to consider is what then determines promotions and employee redeployments. It may be the fact

that superiors are aware of the imperfections in the assessment process and do not take the period appraisal into consideration when assigning to higher positions.

The police officers were subsequently asked if the obtained performance appraisal motivated them to further work. The distribution of responses has been presented in Figure 10.

Half of the police officers believed that the performance appraisal issued by the superior did not affect their motivation to work in any way. Only 23% of respondents stated that the appraisal motivated them to further work. 27% of the police officers were undecided. None of the respondents replied “definitely yes” or “definitely no”. The study has shown that gender of the police officers had no impact on the answer given. Neither did the length of service. They did not have significant effect on the responses given by officers.

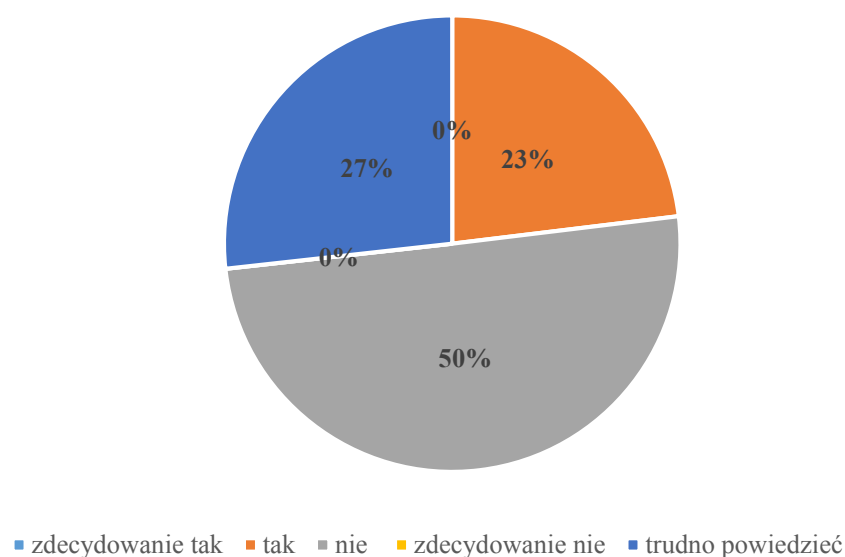


Figure 10. Opinions of respondents on the impact of the appraisal on motivation. Own elaboration.

The reason for such distribution is the fact that the assessment conducted among police officers has low impact on the further career of officers, their development or trainings. Police officers consider performance appraisal to be additional work and the development of bureaucracy. In order to motivate to service the evaluation should be designed and implemented according to the principles described in the literature covering the area of human resources management. Unfortunately this is not the case. The periodic performance appraisal cannot motivate to more efficient work, since most of police officers feel to have been unfairly evaluated. It has been shown in Figure 11.

The vast majority, as much as 58%, of the police officers believed that they had been unfairly assessed. Only 25% of the officers claimed that they had been given an objective evaluation. Almost one-quarter of the police officers held no opinion on the subject. The police officers could have associated the appraisal with the promotion they had not granted.

The aim of the next question was to determine whether the respondents were better motivated by positive or negative assessment.

All police officers clearly expressed that the positive performance appraisal was a better work motivator. The cause for such distribution of responses may be the fact that each person prefers to be awarded than punished. This has been confirmed by the recent studies on the employee motivation and the impact of periodic appraisal.

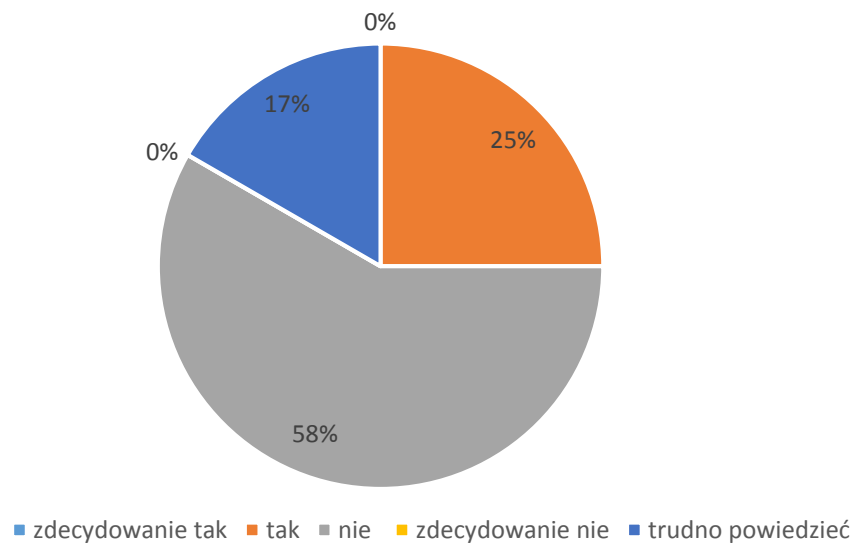


Figure 11. Opinions of respondents on the objectivity in evaluation. Own elaboration.

5. Conclusions

Assessment is one of the most significant elements of human resources management. This process must be appropriately conducted to fulfill its functions and objectives. When introducing the period employee appraisal system to the company or an organisation it should be properly designed by cooperating with experts in this field.

A number of errors may be found in the assessment system of police officers, which have been based on the conducted studies. Police officers believe that their superiors tend to give a secure assessment –referred to as good. This is caused by the error of central tendency, in which a superior does not want to either reward or hurt an employee. This has a demotivating effect on ambitious employees and affirms the conviction in the weaker that it is not worth a try.

Frequency is another error made in the process of assessment. Only 60% of the surveyed police officers undergo appraisal once a year and the others even less frequently. Literature related to the problem recommends to conduct periodic appraisal every six months for its best results. Therefore, the frequency of assessment should be increased.

More than half of the police officers expressed an opinion that they had not been fairly evaluated as compared to their colleagues. This may result, just like in the cases of the

assessment feedback, from the appraisal interviews being conducted inappropriately. The reasons for being given a certain rating have not been explained to police officers. In addition, the assessment errors, such as private relationships with a superior, have impact on the performance appraisal.

A total of 73% of police officers involved in the survey believe, that appraisals are affected by personal relationships with a superior. Subjective approach to appraisal is one of the most common pathologies in the process of evaluation.

The process of assessment does not motivate police officers to further work. Therefore, it do not fulfill one of its basic assumptions. The reason for such situation is the fact that a number of serious errors are made in the whole process. The errors diagnosed in the study have been the subject to many scientific studies. It is recommended that the errors be eliminated and the appraisal process of police officers be improved.

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