

Management of Expectations and Reality for Employee Performance

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Article Info:	ABSTRACT
Submitted: 10-04-2025	Effective management of expectations between organizations and employees is crucial for enhancing both individual and organizational performance. This study explores key factors necessary for bridging the gap between employee expectations and organizational realities that impact employee performance. Rather than creating new disparities, these factors must be managed in alignment between management and individual employees. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach using literature review methods, this paper focuses on three fundamental components: organizational culture (including leadership and effective communication), employee motivation, and reward systems. The analysis reveals that mismatched expectations often lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced productivity, and increased turnover. Conversely, when expectations are clearly communicated, supported by motivating leadership and aligned reward systems, organizations are more likely to foster engaged and high-performing employees. The findings emphasize the need for strategic focus on employees as valuable assets, urging organizations to develop integrated expectation management mechanisms. This includes promoting open communication channels, enhancing leadership capabilities, and implementing transparent and fair reward systems. The implications of this study suggest that aligning organizational strategies with employee expectations is a critical factor in maintaining stability and achieving long-term goals. Future research is recommended to empirically examine how expectation-reality gaps influence organizational commitment and performance across different industries.
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Introduction

Every organization, both profit-oriented and non-profit, often proclaims that employees are the most important asset in the organization. Interestingly, employees as human resources (HR)

who are considered the most important asset are still often forgotten by organizations, even though this asset is very influential in the continuity of an organization. Not many organizations really have competitive human resources in their fields and contribute significantly to the pace of the organization both financially and non-financially (Lestari, 2019) . All problems in small organizations, local, companies to countries, all start and end with people (Sari et al., 2018) . Competition between countries, between industries and so on is basically determined by humans, in this case employees as the driving force of the system in it (Sudaryo et al., 2019) .

There is a saying that is often heard "reality is not as sweet as expectations" that is what happens in this world that what is expected does not necessarily match the reality that occurs. Likewise, in the world of work, employees are often faced with realities that are far different from expectations. The complexity of challenges, pressures, and work dynamics can make employees feel uncomfortable and may even be stressed (Asrianto et al., 2025; Saiful Anuar et al., 2024) . However, this condition must have been and must be experienced by every employee in any position or wherever they work. For this reason, these conditions must be faced, responded to and managed to manage the situation.

Differences in employee expectations are one of the things that employees often face while working (Aprilia et al., 2022) . The difference between what is expected before work and what is experienced at work can affect employee performance. The difference in expectations that employees have can negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, so that the greater the difference in employee expectations, the lower their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. So that employee performance management is one of the important components in achieving organizational goals in the increasingly complex dynamics of modern organizations. Internal factors, such as motivation and ability, and external factors, such as organizational culture, reward system, and of course organizational expectations, affect employee performance (Darmawan, 2016; Jismin et al., 2022) .

Expectation or hope according to Siagian(2003) is the strong tendency of a person to act in a certain way depending on the strength of the expectation that the action will be followed by a certain result and on the attractiveness of that result for the person concerned. Meanwhile, according to Boeree(2005) the meaning of expectation is an inconstant pleasure, which arises from the idea of something in the future or past about which problems are sometimes worried. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, expectation refers to feelings about good things that will happen in the future.

Meanwhile, according to Riggo (1990) "expectancy is the perceived relationship between the individual's effort and performance of the behavior". The point is that expectations become a relationship perceived by individuals between effort and reality that occurs. So it can be said that expectations become something of value to each individual resulting from thoughts that give rise to expectations to be achieved. The expectations found between organizations and employees are illustrated that organizations or companies generally want human resources who are competent and able to contribute to meeting the targets and goals of the organization or company. Meanwhile,

employees also have expectations of getting benefits from the company or organization where they work, such as high income or other good expectations (Nurcahyo et al., 2024) .

Expectancy theory proposed by Victor Vroom(1964) states that a person's motivation to perform an action is determined by three main components: expectancy (the expectation that effort will result in performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will produce certain results), and valence (the value individuals place on those results). In the context of this study, this theory is used as a conceptual foundation to explain how employees form expectations of work and how organizations can manage these expectations through organizational culture strategies, motivation, and reward systems. This research emphasizes that a mismatch between expectations and reality will disrupt the balance of the components in Vroom's theory, resulting in a decrease in employee motivation and performance (Riyadi, 2022) . Therefore, organizations need to ensure that the expectations formed are realistic and supported by a work system that is able to provide the results expected by employees.

Victor Vroom(1964) said that the power to motivate someone to work hard in doing their job is dependent on the reciprocal relationship between what is needed and desired from the results of the work (in Munadar, 2006). Based on his theory, 3 (three) important concepts are proposed, namely:

1. Expectancy, which is a given opportunity that will occur due to behavior;
2. Value (valence) is as a result of certain behaviors having a certain value / dignity (power / motivational value) for each individual concerned;
3. Instrumentality is the perception of the individual that the first or best level of results.

Expectancy theory assumes that a person's desire to produce work at a certain time depends on the specific goals of the person concerned and also the person's understanding of the value of work performance as a means to achieve these goals.

There is expectation or hope, then there is reality or reality. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) reality is reality, or something that is real, actually happens and has a natural nature. Reality can involve complex concepts, as it often considers philosophical, scientific and subjective perspectives. In general, reality refers to a state or fact that exists objectively, independent of individual thoughts or perceptions. It can also be seen as a reality that exists beyond one's subjectivity and can be collectively recognized. Reality is often associated with what can be empirically observed, measured, or perceived. Along with that, reality is often seen as a social construct. This means that reality is not only shaped by objective facts, but also by people's collective interpretation and understanding of those facts. For example, what is considered a political, social or cultural reality can be influenced by the values, norms and beliefs that exist in a society.

From expectations and reality will determine performance. For this reason, it is necessary to first understand the meaning of performance. According to Veithzal (2010) performance is a real behavior and is displayed by everyone as a work achievement produced by employees in accordance with their role in the company. From this explanation, performance is the real work of employees that is visible and measurable in accordance with their duties in the organization.

Employee performance must be in line with the tasks carried out so that organizational goals can be achieved. These work tasks can be called achievements if they are able to meet the standards and targets set by the company or organization.

Performance is interpreted more broadly by Armstrong and Baron quoted by Wibowo(2010) that performance not only states the results of work but also the work process takes place. From this definition, it can be said that performance must be seen how an employee goes through various stages of the process of carrying out his work. Including challenges, overcoming problems and coordinating with parties in order to achieve organizational output.

According to Hersey and Blanchard(1993) , it is stated that performance is a function of motivation and ability. To complete a task or job a person must have a certain degree of willingness and a certain level of ability. According to him, a person's willingness and skills are not effective enough to do something without a clear understanding of what is done and how to do it. From this explanation, every employee is said to be performing if they have self-motivation and comprehensive knowledge and skills capabilities so that they are able to complete their work tasks optimally in line with their organizational goals. This is in line with what was stated by Hariman and Hilgert (2010) who stated that performance is the result of employee work which is used to assess how far an organization has achieved its goals and targets.

Dimensions or performance indicators according to Sudarmanto(2009) are aspects that become measures or benchmarks in assessing performance. Performance measurement itself is put forward by many experts from various dimensions, some of which see from the aspect of output or work results, quality dimensions and so on. According to John Miller still in Sudarmanto(2009) explains there are 4 (four) dimensions that can be used as benchmarks to assess performance, namely:

- a. Quality, i.e. error rate, damage to accuracy.
- b. Quantity is the amount of work produced
- c. Time utilization in work i.e. absenteeism, tardiness, effective working time/lost working hours.
- d. Cooperation with others in work.

Of the four dimensions above, performance related to the output aspect of work is the result in quality and quantity. While the use of time at work including the level of compliance with working hours and discipline and cooperation are aspects of individual behavior.

Linking Management and Employee Performance, we must start with the definition of each. Management comes from the English word Management, so the definition of 'Management' can be equated with the definition of 'Management' which according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) means arrangement or management. Management and Management have the same goal, namely the achievement of organizational goals. Thus management can be interpreted as a series or stages of work or efforts carried out by a group of people or employees in carrying out a series of work to achieve certain goals. The management or management of employee performance according to Supardi in his book (2015) is basically an effort to manage the competence of employees or employees carried out by the organization systematically and continuously so that

these employees or employees have the level of performance expected by the organization, namely being able to make an optimal contribution, so as to achieve organizational goals.

Management of employee performance is an integral part of the human resource management system. According to Suparyadi(2015) human resource management system is a method to evaluate the level of employee performance, maintain and improve it in accordance with organizational needs through competency development based on copyright, taste, karsa inherent in each individual employee. Thus, there are two goals at once from employee performance management, namely organizational goals and individual employee goals. The task of this management is to synergize these two goals so that employees are able to perform in accordance with organizational needs in the midst of different expectations and existing realities.

From the description above, expectations and realities are not only owned by employees. Companies also have high expectations of employees who are recruited with such efforts to perform high according to their competence to run the organization. The same thing can also happen to organizations. Organizations or companies can find that the reality of the results of their recruitment is not necessarily in line with what is expected. So, both organizations and employees, each have their expectations and realities. Both must run in harmony so that organizational goals can be realized optimally, although in reality there will be many challenges faced. For this reason, this article will focus more on the employee side as an organizational asset who comes from a generational background and has a different character, of course, has different expectations. While the reality is not necessarily the same as what is expected, employees are still able to perform well in line with the organization, so this condition needs to be managed.

Research on the gap between expectations and work reality has been widely conducted. For example, research by Widiyanto & Handayani(2021) shows that the expectation gap negatively affects job satisfaction and employee loyalty. Meanwhile, a study by Nugraheni and Utami(2020) found that a communicative organizational culture and a fair reward system were able to mediate the effect of the expectation gap on performance. Another study by Rachmawati et al.(2022) confirms that employees who experience congruence between expectations and reality show higher work commitment and motivation. This research makes a new contribution by specifically integrating Vroom's expectancy theory(1964) into the performance management approach, and addressing strategies from two sides - organizational and individual - as an integrated approach to managing the gap. By focusing on organizational culture, individual motivation, and reward systems, this research provides a practical framework for managing employee expectations and realities more comprehensively.

The purpose of this research is to find out how the expectations and realities of employees in the world of work and to find out how to manage expectations and realities on employee performance.

Material and Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to explore how organizations manage the gap between employee expectations and work realities, and how

this impacts employee performance. The main focus of this research is to understand the phenomenon in depth in an organizational context, so a qualitative approach is considered appropriate to capture employees' subjective experiences and organizational strategies. The data population included employees and HR managers from a private organization in Jakarta who had been employed for at least one year, with an emphasis on individuals who experienced a shift between initial work expectations and current reality.

The sample in this study totaled 15 respondents who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, so that the researcher could specifically target individuals relevant to the research objectives. The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore themes around motivation, communication, organizational culture and perceived fairness. The secondary instrument was a document analysis checklist to review internal HR reports, performance evaluations, and organizational policies. To ensure credibility, the interview guide was validated through expert judgment, and reliability testing was conducted through pilot interviews with three participants to ensure clarity and consistency of questions.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted in person or via video call, each lasting 45-60 minutes. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. Document analysis was conducted as supporting data to enrich context and triangulate findings. The data analysis process followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The coding and theme extraction process was assisted by NVivo 12 software to systematically organize the qualitative data. The final analysis highlighted patterns of the expectation-reality gap, organizational responses, and implications for performance management.

Results and Discussion

Management of Expectations and Realities on Employee Performance

In the world of work, many dynamics occur. When things don't go as expected, it can lead to feelings of disappointment and discouragement. When it comes to work, everyone has expectations about the industry, position, company culture, income, responsibilities, flexibility of working hours, and more. In fact, these expectations have existed from the beginning of someone wanting to apply for a job (freshgraduate) or when already running a position in a company/organization (experience) and tend to have their own standards in their work.

The gap between expectations and reality needs to be managed to anticipate and respond to feelings of disappointment or demotivation when what is expected in the world of work does not match the reality at work. Starting from this problem of satisfaction or disappointment can greatly affect productivity which impacts employee performance. In order for employees as human resources to make the maximum contribution to the success of the organization in achieving its goals, managing employee performance is an important agenda for organizations. This performance is also influenced by how employees deal with expectations of the company/organization with the real conditions that are carried out during work.

Employees are indeed expected to comply with various rules that have been set by the organization. However, they are also entitled to have expectations of the organization where they work. These expectations refer to the expectations and standards that employees want or expect from the company where they work.

In general, every employee has more or less the same expectations at work, namely that a high career will lead to economic prosperity and have an impact on increasing social status in their environment. For this reason, it is necessary to comprehensively manage employees so that the imbalance that is very likely to occur between expectations and reality in the world of work can maintain the stability of employee performance.

First, an inclusive work environment. This situation is the foundation that ensures that each employee as an individual feels accepted, respected regardless of background beliefs, identity, social, economic and cultural. Each individual is accepted as a whole without exception. Of course, this ideal condition will create a safe working atmosphere and support employees to work, develop and contribute optimally. Second, there is work-life balance. This flexibility in work schedules and personal life allows employees to feel more satisfied and happy so as to increase their productivity and loyalty to the organization where they work. In other words, the employee's overall physical and mental well-being is felt by the employee. Third, every employee needs opportunities to develop skills, expand knowledge and certainty of future career advancement. This opportunity to grow and develop not only provides motivation for employees but also adds to the improvement of skills to face even greater challenges in the future. Fourth, recognition of hard work and appreciation for the contributions made are also important expectations for employees because they feel appreciated, thus fostering motivation to continue to give their best. This can also strengthen the relationship between superiors or management and employees and create a positive work culture. Fifth, transparent and effective communication can build trust between employees and management because it ensures that the vision, mission, goals and expectations of the organization are clearly conveyed and understood by all parties. In addition, open communication and providing opportunities for employees to be heard all their input so that it helps the organization in making a decision.

The description of the expectations above which is the ideal expectation of employees towards the organization where they work, in reality, not necessarily all of these expectations occur. Realities that do not match these expectations can affect employee performance. We can take the opposite example of what John Miller said in the previous sub-chapter what is the benchmark for good performance. The reality of employee performance due to non-achievement of expectations can reduce employee competence at work, for example, the quality of work decreases, the level of errors or inaccuracies in work increases, the number of quality and quantity of work results decreases, the use of working time is not effective, arriving late at the office, low attendance rates, and the inability to cooperate with others. What was originally an individual problem can develop into an organizational problem. Whereas organizations need competent human resources to run well.

For this reason, employee management is needed in managing differences in expectations and reality of employee performance. Basically, this management is an organizational effort to manage the creation, feeling, and spirit of employees systematically and continuously so that these employees have a level of performance according to organizational expectations. Employee performance is a central issue in the life of an organization or company, depending on how well the performance shown by employees. Employees will determine whether other organizational resources such as buildings, machines, work equipment and so on can contribute optimally or not to efforts to achieve organizational targets. Whatever strategy is chosen by the organization in running its business, it can be said that the employee element is the central point determining the success of the business being carried out.

Employee management as part of performance management is an important and useful activity in boosting individual performance which will also have an impact on the organization. This urgency encourages organizations to focus more on how to manage employees to perform optimally even though there may be many realities that occur outside of employee expectations that can be provided by the organization. The strategic aspects needed in managing employees are related to the expectations and reality of employee performance, both the side that encourages employees as individuals and from the management side as an organization:

1. Aspects of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture according to Sudarmanto(2009) is the values, attitudes that employees have believed in so that they have become employee behavior in everyday life. It can be said that these attitudes and values guide employees in behaving in accordance with what is adopted by the organization in achieving goals. Organizational culture as a very basic and broad aspect, so that this organizational culture creates a unity of purpose between leaders in management and employees who are bridged by transparent and effective communication. Communication is translated through a feedback process for the flow of information availability for management to receive and manage information that can monitor employee performance regarding what is done, why it is done, when and the work is done. From this information, management can also measure whether the work done is in accordance with the instructions given or provide explanations for new instructions for the work to be done. Another important factor in managing employees is leadership. The leader is the central figure who must be able to be an exemplary example and accept various employee perspectives and be able to present solutions in every problem faced, including employee performance problems. For example, employees can accept realities that are different from their expectations if leaders in the organization can communicate why this can happen and provide the right solution so that the problems that occur can be resolved and what the organization has planned can continue to run.

2. Competency Aspect

Managing employee performance is one of them by managing competency aspects. Many studies have stated that this competency factor as an attribute of human resource quality has a significant effect on individual employee performance. Management must see the results of

feedback on performance appraisals on what is the expectation and reality received or felt by employees. Gap analysis of the feedback will lead management to provide solutions to employee problems. For example, for employee job saturation or unsuitability, it can be seen and developed competencies that are suitable for these employees. This competency is closely related to self-development where each employee as an individual has a need to show a desire to grow, learn and develop continuously. Self-development increases self-capacity to want to get better conditions than before. By providing equal opportunities for each employee to improve or develop their competence in terms of expertise or skills through training, work practice so that the increase in employee skills will have an impact individually and of course to the organization. This condition encourages increased work motivation. Emotional issues in employees' daily lives cannot be ignored. This issue can be a barrier that limits employees in improving their competence. For example, previous experiences that are not good or negative, feelings of shame or fear of doing wrong or dislike for someone or something can greatly affect the mastery of employee competence. For this reason, it is necessary to create a positive and conducive work environment with healthy competition and good conflict management. In maintaining a positive environment, it must be built from the basic competencies of each individual in the organization from the highest level to the lowest level, namely Integrity, unity of thought and action for what has been said or promised. No matter how great the organization can be destroyed in the absence of integrity in its human resources because integrity competence is a person's basic capital in improving his career and his success in leading.

3. Award Aspect

Appreciation as a form of employee management is necessary in maintaining harmony between the needs of individual employees and the achievement of organizational goals. This appreciation can encourage the achievement of the organization's mission and strategy through increased individual performance and organizational performance. Appreciation to employees will have an impact on organizational effectiveness. Although there is a disparity in expectations and reality, if employees are given appreciation for their performance, motivation will be built which reinforces their motivation to work, supporting the behavior expected by the organization for employees so that. The provision of financial and non-financial awards makes employees feel valued and encouraged to get them. Giving awards also motivates other employees to improve their competence and perform better.

From the picture above, it is explained that the alignment between employee expectations and job demands will trigger higher motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Conversely, mismatched expectations can lead to stress, decreased performance, and even the possibility of high employee turnover intensity.

Conclusion

Employees are valuable assets that play a strategic role in organizational success. However, when their expectations of the work environment are not in line with the reality faced, this can decrease motivation, loyalty, and ultimately negatively impact performance. Therefore,

organizations need to actively manage this gap through a comprehensive approach. Practical recommendations that organizations can implement include: first, establishing open and transparent two-way communication to align employee expectations with organizational policies. Second, develop an onboarding and job orientation program that is able to describe the full reality of work from the start. Third, create a work culture that is adaptive, supportive, and based on appreciation of employee contributions. Fourth, organizations need to periodically conduct job expectation and satisfaction surveys to evaluate areas that require policy adjustments. Fifth, strengthen the managerial role in providing feedback and psychological support to employees. With structured and data-driven management of expectations and realities, organizations can create a more harmonious and productive work environment, thereby driving sustainable performance improvement.

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