

Exploring Psychological and Self-Fulfilment Needs at the Workplace

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Abstract

Motivation at the workplace is influenced by the conditions at the workplace. Employees are reported to be more willing to commit and contribute to the company's success when they are motivated. This study investigates the factors that contribute to a positive work climate in various industries. The instrument used is a survey with 5-likert scales. Excluding the demographic profiles, the 24 items in the survey looked at were psychological and self-fulfilment needs of 88 respondents from various types of industries responded to the survey. The data was analysed quantitatively using SPSS. Findings revealed that employees preferred a work environment that allows them to have social interaction. They also liked the workplace to have an environment where they are encouraged to upgrade themselves. In addition to that, the physical and mental environment of the workplace are also important factors that motivate the workers to stay happy at work. They also value teamwork, trust, and fairness.

Keywords: Motivation, Employees, Positive Work Climate, Psychological, Self-fulfilment

Introduction

Motivation at the workplace plays an important role in ensuring the success of an organization or industry. This is supported by Solaja (2015) where employees are found to be more willing to commit and contribute to the organization's success when they are motivated. This is because motivation at the workplace is defined as having the ability to affect the intensity, manner as well as the direction of the employees' work (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawaih, 2016). This is further echoed by Varma (2017) where motivation at the

workplace is deemed as the employees' ability to help an organization to achieve its objectives through their commitment. Hence, it is of utmost importance to ensure employees are motivated at the workplace. In achieving motivation, psychological needs must be fulfilled. Psychological needs are defined by Brien et al (2012) as the fundamental need which leads to one's optimal functioning as well as growth. This is also supported by Abun and Maggalanez (2019) who posit that psychological needs at the workplace serves as the prerequisite and necessity to achieve motivation. The employees' motivation can be enhanced by fulfilling their psychological needs such as forming good relationships with colleagues and being recognised for their achievements as suggested by Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2008).

Statement of Problem

The condition of a workplace has an influence in affecting the employees' desire to stay in the organization. A positive workplace environment is responsible to increase the productivity and efficiency among the employees. According to Mohda, Shaba & Zailan (2016), one of the most fundamental elements in creating a positive work climate is through the existence of positive interpersonal relationships and consistent support from the management. This positive climate helps to develop trust at the workplace and the supportive environment encourages the employees to be adventurous with new ideas without the fear of failure. This is supported by Chakraborty and Ganguly (2019) who added more elements of a positive work environment which includes transparent and open communication, recognition, team spirit and appreciation. The workplace environment that consists of these elements can help employees to form social connection, engagement and motivation.

Despite the importance and constant emphasis on creating a positive workplace environment, positive work climate it is not always visible. According to Anjum et al. (2018), the workplace is often replaced by negative environments such as the lack of positive interaction which induces negative experiences among the employees. The lack of positive work climate is further explained by Ferris et al. (2015) where bullying, ostracism and passivity take place. The lack of positivity in the workplace environment results in low confidence levels, burnout among the employees and causes an adverse impact on the employees' motivation to work. Hence, this study is done to investigate what makes up a positive work climate.

Objective and Research Questions

Generally, this study looks at:

- The factors that influence work culture such as psychological needs and self-fulfilment needs.

Specifically, this study is conducted to answer the following questions:

- How do psychological needs (social interaction) influence work culture?
- How do self-fulfilment needs (opportunity for growth, work environment, organizational values) influence work culture?

Literature Review

Motivation at Work

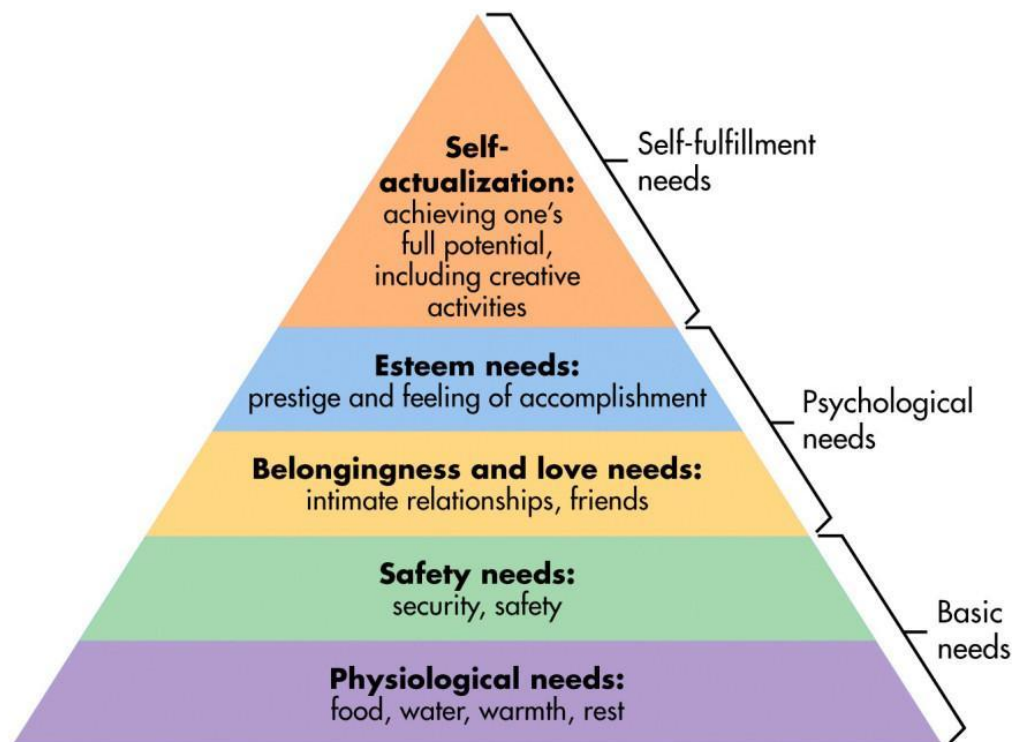


Figure 1. Hierarchy of Needs
(Source: Maslow, 1987)

According to Maslow (1987) in Figure 1, the needs of individuals are divided into different levels. The lowest level is the (a) basic needs and these needs are fulfilled in terms of physiological needs such as food, water, warmth and rest. The next level is (b) psychological needs and these needs are fulfilled in terms of (i) belongingness and love in terms of relationships and friends, and also (ii) esteem needs such as prestige and feeling of accomplishment. Finally, the highest level is the (c) self-fulfillment needs and these are fulfilled in terms of self-actualization achieving one's full potential, including creative activities.

Past Studies

The effect of social interaction on e-learning engagement has gained considerable attention from many research fields. One study from Lin, Tov and Qui (2014) is to understand how social network structure on one of the social media, Facebook influences online emotional disclosure. The result of this study showed that emotional disclosure was correlated with the solidity and the size of users' personal networks. By having 441 undergraduate students from two universities as the respondents, 230 of the respondents share their Facebook status while another 211 students share their daily diary. The results suggested that overall emotional disclosure on the social media was bigger than in the daily diary entries. Facebook users with bigger networks disclosed more emotions, and the relation between the size of the network and emotional disclosure was mediated by a stronger need for emotional expression. Another study conducted by Hu, Liu, and Qu (2019) investigates how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) participation affects the subjective well-being of

frontline employees. In this study, it proposes that psychological needs satisfaction liaises the relationship between CSR participation and the subjective well-being of frontline employees. A survey of total 17 hotels in Sanya, China, reveals that both employee' in-role and extra-role CSR participation applies an outstandingly good impact on subjective well-being. The results also validate that a mediating effect of psychological needs satisfaction in the CSR participation and subjective well are relatable.

One positive environment that workers like is that there are opportunities for growth. The study by Sharma (2017) investigates workers' satisfaction. 220 IT professionals from three Information Technology companies responded to a survey. Findings showed that workers value qualities such as fairness and growth opportunities to make them happy at work.

One of the main factors of organization values are teamwork, morality and accountability. A study conducted by Martin and Coetzee (2011) investigates the perceptions towards the factors of organization values among people with different socio-demography in South Africa. Through a quantitative survey participated by 988 employees in a South Africa manufacturing company, it is found that organization values are indeed perceived differently among different gender and race. Compared to the men and white participants, the women and native African participants tend to view teamwork as a more important aspect. However, morality and accountability are more valued by men and the non-native African participants. The finding of this study helps to contribute to the accurate mapping of the organization values based on the socio-demography needs. Apart from that, flexibility and discretion are found to be another important factor of organization value. Pedersen et al. (2018) conducted a study on organization values in the Swedish fashion industry along with the innovation of model, sustainability of corporate and profits. Through the interview session conducted with 492 managers in the Swedish fashion industry, it is found that organization values have positive impacts on the three aspects mentioned above. The managers who abide to the principles of flexibility and discretion in making decisions and handling business matters can perform well financially compared to those who only emphasize on stability of an organization. Hence, this study helps to highlight the organization values that need to be developed among managers or in the industry.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

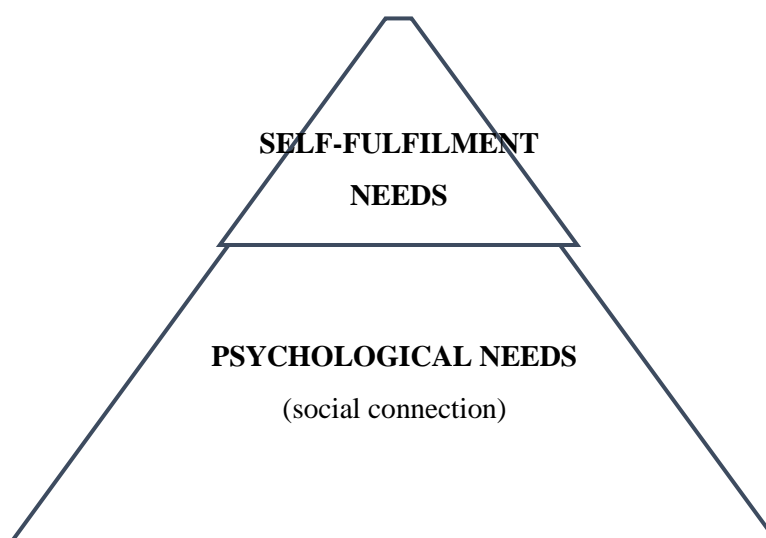


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

(Source: Maslow, 1987 and Parent & Lovelace, 2015)

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework of the study. This study is rooted from Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs and branches with the study by Parent & Lovelace (2015) to reveal the needs of employees at the workplace. Maslow (2015) reports that people require (a) psychological needs in the form of social connection (Parent & Lovelace, 2015), as well as (b) self-fulfilment needs in terms of opportunities for growth, work environment and organizational values (Parent & Lovelace, 2015).

Methodology

Research Design

This study is carried out in a quantitative manner, where the data collected through survey questionnaires. Quantitative study can be defined as a systematic method to investigations during which numerical data is collected and/or the researcher converts what is collected or observed into numerical data. Quantitative research is described by Lisa (2008) as the systematic empirical analysis of measurable phenomena using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. This is in line with Matthews and Ross (2010) as they noted in their paper that quantitative analysis techniques are primarily used to gather organised data that can be interpreted numerically. Applying this method to this study is believed to help the researchers to get a clearer understanding of exploring psychological and self-fulfilment needs at the workplace.

Population and Sample

The sample employed in the current study comprised of 88 employees from various types of industry. The sample consisted of 53 females and 35 males from various age groups. In terms of qualifications, the sample held different certifications as their highest academic level. As this study is focused on exploring psychological and self-fulfilment needs at the workplace, it is very important that the samples are coming from various types of industry. Hence, the sample of this study was taken from 18 different fields of employment.

Instrument

The study adopted one research instrument: questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey is used to measure and understand the dynamic of work culture in various industries. Most importantly, the researchers would like to connect with people from the industry. The questionnaire survey technique is a very effective quantitative technique as it allows large scale numerical data to be obtained over a short period of time. In this study, the researchers aimed to gain numerical data to indicate the employees' perception of work culture.

The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms and it had 28 questions. 24 questions, however, were on 5-point Likert-type scale items. The items were divided into five sections, Section A, Section B, Section C, Section D, and Section E. The first section, Section A examined the demographic profile of the sample. Section B to Section E (Question 5 to 28) used the scale ranging from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree" to observe fractions in completing this study. The sections were Section B: Foster Social Connection, Section C: Opportunities for Growth, Section D: Work Environment and Section E: Organisational Values.

Table 1

Cronbach Alpha for the Study

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.913	24

This questionnaire had also gone through Cronbach' Alpha (Table 1) to measure its stability. This questionnaire had an internal consistency $\alpha = 0.913$. This shows that the questionnaire was valid and very reliable to be employed in this current study as the items had excellent internal consistency.

To explore the psychological and self-fulfilment needs at the workplace, this study was heavily influenced by research findings by Maslow (1987) and Parent & Lovelace (2015). Parent & Lovelace (2015) in their paper affirmed that organizations with a positive culture would help the employees to engage more in their job and organizational roles.

Method of Data collection and Analysis

In analysing the data obtained from this study, the data collected will be studied through descriptive statistics, specifically the mean scores. The data will be extracted from all 88 responses the questionnaire had obtained from the sample.

Findings

This chapter provides the overall analysis of the study. The researchers conducted quantitative, descriptive research to investigate employees' perception of work culture. The findings of this study are also hoped to be able to shed some light on the understanding of the dynamic of work culture in various industries.

Findings for Demographic Profile

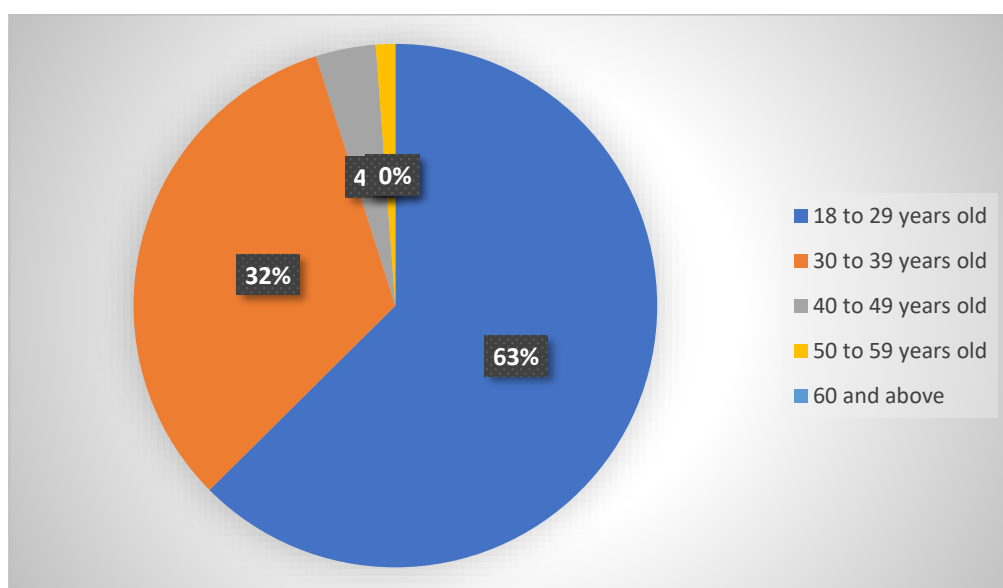


Figure 3. Percentage for Age Group

According to Figure 3, the sample consisted of 53 females and 35 males with most of them coming from the age group of 18 to 29 years old (62.5%) and 30 to 39 years old (33%). The remaining age groups (40 to 49 years old and 50 to 59 years old) made up 4.5% of the employees age group. None of the respondents of this study was coming from the age group of 60 and above.

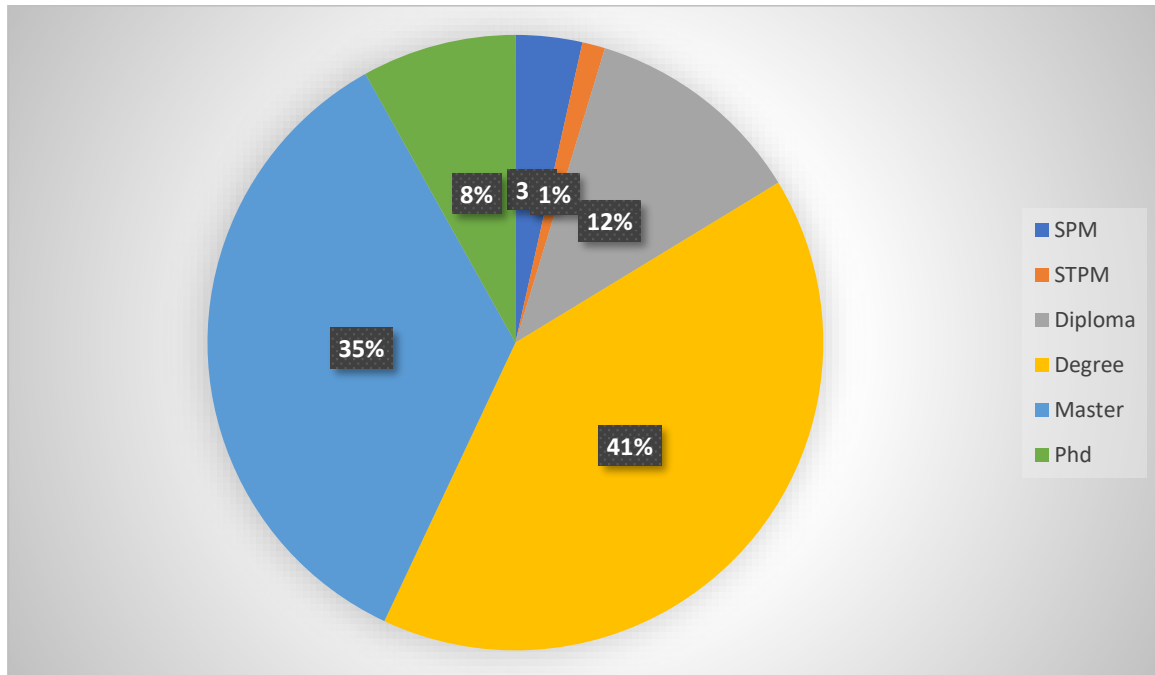


Figure 4. Percentage for Highest Academic level

Figure 4 shows the highest academic level of the employees. 39.8% participants held bachelor's degrees, 36.4% were with Master's degree; 11.4% participants had diploma, 8% participants had PhD and the remaining 4.7 percent of the participants had either SPM or STPM as their highest academic level.

Table 2

Percentage of Types of Industry

1	Education	42%
2	Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	8%
3	Information Technology	6.8%
4	Public Services & Administration	6.8%
5	Health Services	5.7%
6	Manufacturing	5.7%
7	Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing	2.3%
8	Construction	1.1%
9	Wholesale Trade	1.1%
10	Transportation & Public Utilities	1.1%
11	Telecommunication	1.1%
12	Technical Support	1.1%
13	Shared Services	1.1%
14	Retail Trade	1.1%
15	NGO	1.1%
16	Human Resources	1.1%
17	Aviation and Aerospace	1.1%
18	Auditor	8%

According to Table 2, the respondents of this study were coming from various types of industry. Most of the respondents are working in the Education field with a total percentage of 42%. Next, the second and third largest groups of respondents were coming from Insurance and Real Estate and Information Technology with the percentage of 11.4% and 8% respectively. The next groups, Public Services & Administration and Health Services (6.8%) and Manufacturing and Agricultural, Forestry & Fishing (5.7%) were placed fourth to seventh. Those who are working in the Construction field had also contributed to this study; they made up to 2.3% of the total number of respondents. The remaining 11% of the respondents were coming from various industries namely Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Public Utilities, Telecommunication, Technical Support, Shared Services, Retail Trade, NGO, Human Resources, Aviation and Aerospace and Auditor.

In total, the respondents were coming from 18 different types of industries. Having respondents from various fields could assist the researchers to ascertain the representativeness of individual experiences and views.

Findings for Psychological Needs (Foster Social Connection)

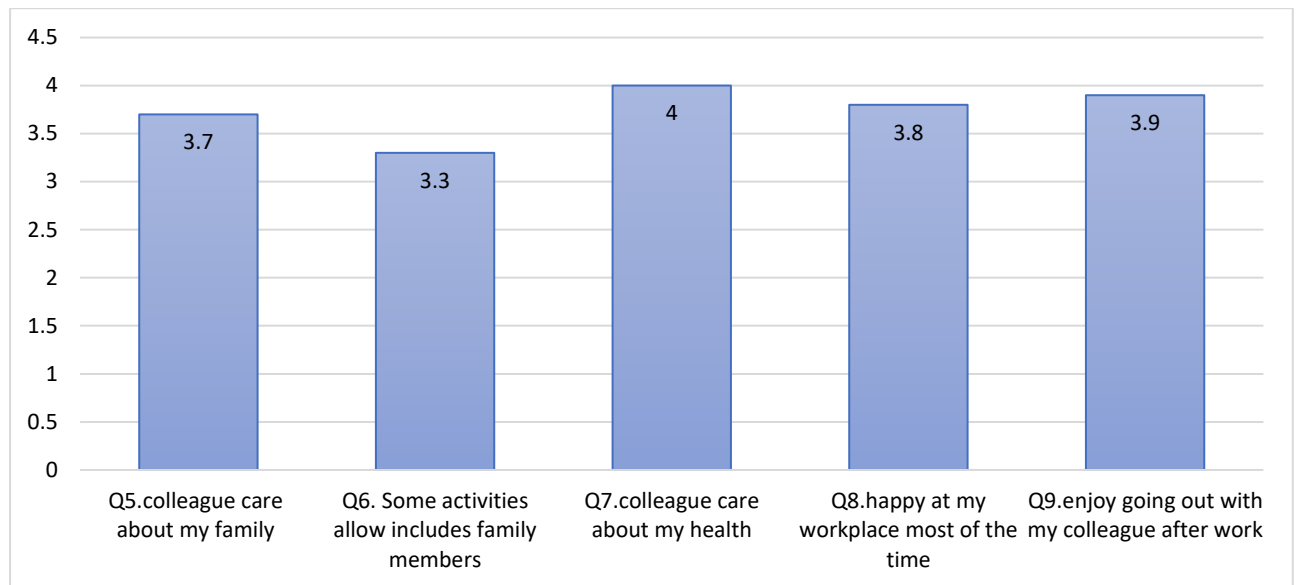


Figure 5. Mean for Foster Social Connection

From Figure 5, the mean for “colleagues caring for each other’s health” has recorded the highest value of 4 as it is found to be agreed by most employees. Documented with the lowest mean value of 3.3, co-workers largely were undecided if they can have their family members to be involved with activities at work. The survey also managed to identify that co-workers or colleagues primarily agreed and associated going out with each other after office hours, being happy at the office and being thoughtful of other colleagues’ family members as good indicators of fostered social connections at their respective working environments. It was also found that Question 8, question 9 and Question 5 had somewhat minute differences in terms of mean value between them.

Findings for Self-Fulfilment Needs

The conceptual framework of this study categorized self-fulfilment needs as (a) opportunities for growth, (b) work environment and (c) organizational values.

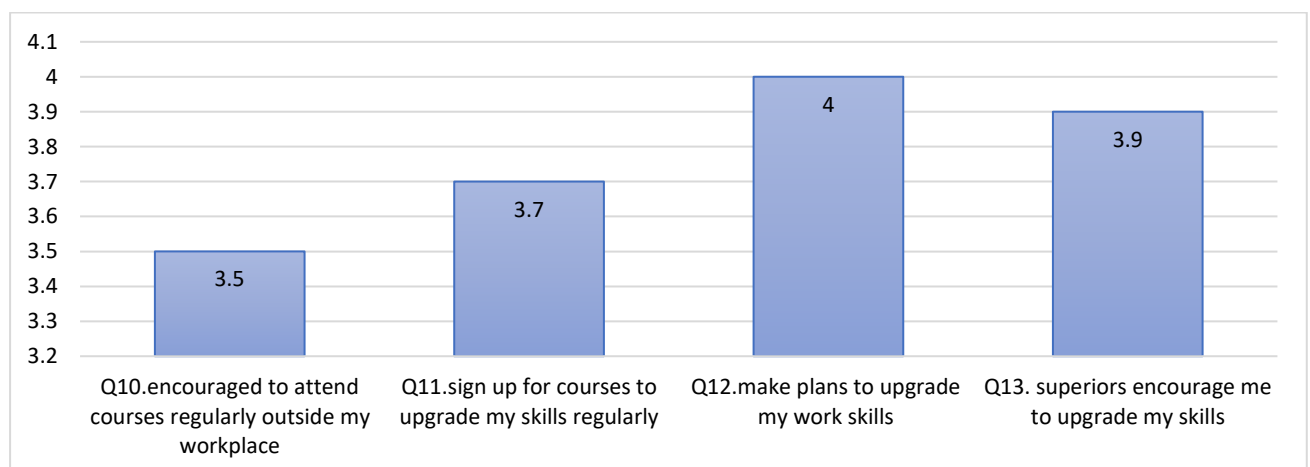


Figure 6. Mean for opportunities for growth

In Table Figure 6, which represents another section of the survey where participants were questioned regarding opportunities for growth, most of the participants admitted to having plans to upgrade themselves as it has recorded the highest mean value of 4 while Question 10 has recorded the lowest mean number at 3.5. Question 13 recorded the second highest mean value at 3.9 while Question 11 came in third with a value of 3.7. On average, the present study revealed that the participants were in an encouraging environment for professional improvement. Then, Question 12 can be seen as an intrinsic initiative while Question 13 as an extrinsic initiative for employees to upgrade themselves at the workplace.

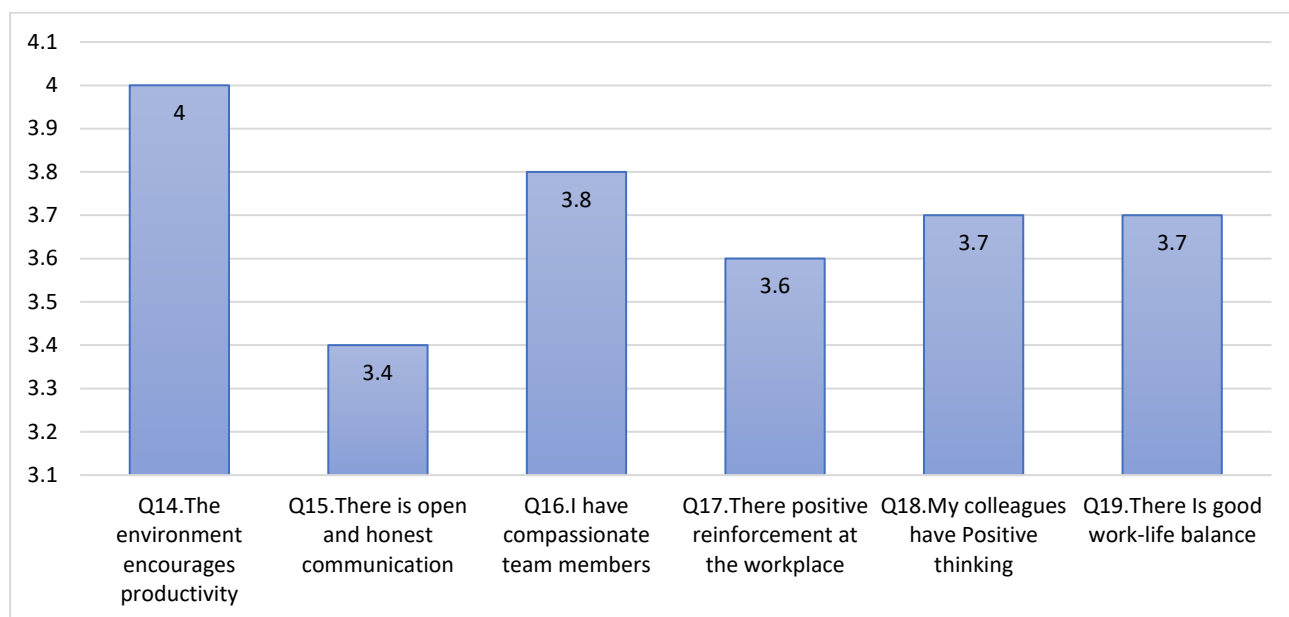


Figure 7. Mean for Work Environment

In Figure 7, above representing Section D, the environment that the participants are in were found to be encouraging of productivity as a large majority of the participants agreed with the statement. As shown above, it has the highest mean value of 4. However, most of the participants were undecided in terms of open and honest communication at their respective workplaces as it is indicated by the lowest mean value of 3.4. Having compassionate team members has recorded the second highest mean value at 3.8. Then, the participants mostly agreed that their co-workers possessed positive thinking and good work-life balance is present in their occupations with both questions documented with a similar mean value of 3.7. Lastly, with a mean value of 3.6 which is next-to-last, the participants agreed that their workplace had positive reinforcement.

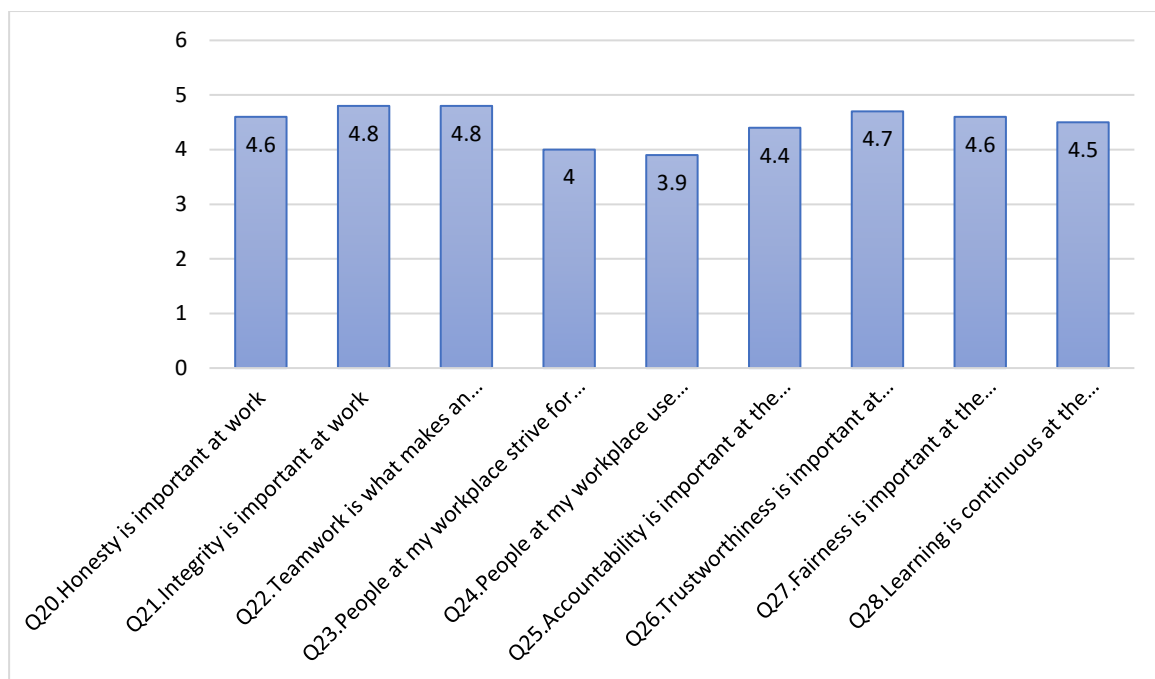


Figure 8. Mean for Organizational Values

In Figure 8, above, the present study investigated organizational values at the workplaces of the participants who came from diverse occupation and industrial backgrounds. Question 21 and Question 22 which were related to integrity and teamwork recorded the highest value of mean at 4.8. This indicates a strong affirmation towards those two qualities. However, the use of innovation to solve problems only recorded 3.9 mean value, being the lowest in the data tabulation. Other values that were enquired to the participants are as follows; trustworthiness, fairness, continuous learning, accountability and striving for excellence. These values recorded different mean numbers – in descending order ranging from 4.7 to 4 respectively.

Conclusion

This study has revealed interesting factors that can create a positive work culture at the workplace. Findings revealed that workers expect that the workplace caters to their social needs as well. They saw the workplace as a place to have fun and to take care of their health. Findings also revealed that the work environment is positive if the workers felt the desire to upgrade themselves and this desire is encouraged by their superiors. This finding is in accordance with the studies by Lin, Tov and Qui (2014) and Hu, Liu, and Qu (2019) who saw the need for social interactions and activities to make the workplace a nice place to be. Next, this study also found that workers want a workplace where the employers encourage productivity by creating a good physical environment to improve the mental environment of workers. This is also agreed by Martin and Coetzee (2011) and Pedersen et al. (2018) who found that good teamwork is built from a good interaction among workers. The good teamwork makes the environment happy and conducive for productivity.

Implications

This study bears interesting implications to both employers and employees at the workplace. Employees need to maintain good social interaction at the workplace in order to have a reason to want to go to work each day. Employers need to make sure the physical

setting is conducive for workers to work and socialize. Employers also need to ensure that the communication is positive, so workers feel welcome at work and want to give more than the minimum needed.

It is suggested that future research investigate more factors that can impact a positive work environment. Future qualitative studies could also be done to interview both workers and their employers on their perception of positive work culture.

Research Contributions

Through this study, multiple aspects of the theory building and theory contribution have been successfully addressed. The questions that have been posted in this research help to ensure a more holistic and comprehensive approach and guidelines to the future researchers to consider while exploring and developing in the related field. Hence, it is apparent that the theoretical and contextual contribution of this research will lead to the increase of research and publication in this area.

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