

## INVESTIGATING WORK ENGAGEMENT AT THE WORKPLACE



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### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords

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In order to be happy at the workplace, employees need to feel engaged with the work environment. Work engagement refers to a work-related mental state that is positive and fulfilling, characterized by vigor (high levels of energy while working), dedication (sense of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge) and absorption (the individual's complete concentration at work, which makes time fly quickly without his noticing). Besides that, the personal energy that individuals bring to their work is associated with work engagement. This study is done to investigate the factors that allow work engagement at the workplace emphasizing in assisting and addressing experience gaps in the strictest sense of the word by assigning values for the lasting connections actions to the relevant individuals, causing the person or the team to simply focus on producing outcomes in a healthy workplace and collaborative nature. 115 participants responded to a survey given online. Findings reveal several factors that can lead to a positive culture at the workplace.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study documents several factors that contributed in identifying elements that shape a positive work environment. It is vital for employers to recognize the valuable lesson of cultivating a lively work environment that stimulates people to take satisfaction in their work may result in massive benefits for all relevant parties.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Study

There is a wide engagement of individuals at work depending on their personal resources, as demonstrated by conventional studies, which are affected by environmental influences, especially when it comes from the workplace and home domains. As suggested by Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) a study is conducted to determine whether the three dimensions such as vigor, dedication and absorption in their personal resources is the basis of an individual's decision making in terms of change in the work engagement. Researchers and human resource experts have hailed work engagement as a solution to improve the overall organization and individual's function within organization.

Work engagement refers to a work-related mental state that is positive and fulfilling, characterized by vigor (high levels of energy while working), dedication (sense of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge) and absorption (the individual's complete concentration at work, which makes time fly quickly without his noticing). Besides that, the personal energy that individuals bring to their work is associated with work engagement (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). More recently, engagement has been understood as a state-shaped construct, that is, over a short period of time, a transient experience that fluctuates within individuals.

However, a state has also become the definition of a construct (Demerouti, Bakker, & Halbesleben, 2015). Studies have been focused on the changes of the individuals that have occurred over days or weeks they are being assessed and they are checked whether or not some days are more engaging than others (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). The development of this construct is influenced by the work engagement that focuses on the processes in which the work demands, the work resources and the personal resources. In this sense, several investigations have been elicited and are aimed at identifying the work engagement of the main organizational and individual predictors, as well as their consequences (Bakker et al., 2014). Work demands generate physical and psychological stress and costs from the effort from employees, which is a requirement of the aspects of the job (Bakker et al., 2014). Work goals are attained by these resources that constitute functional aspects of the job context, which is why personal growth is stimulated, so is learning and development, as well as reducing the work demands and associated costs (Bakker et al., 2014).

In this sense, autonomy, variety of skills, feedback of growth and participation opportunities in decision-making (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) are predictors of engagement that are positive. Specifically, as a state, autonomy, supervisor feedback and opportunity for development proved to be the work engagement's positive weekly predictors, which were also related to job performance in a positive note. In addition, engagement in diary studies is positively influenced by social support (Christian et al., 2011). Few studies, however, have investigated the role participation in decision-making plays in work engagement and role-performance as a state.

This study's findings will be beneficial to the society's benefit, considering that work engagement plays a vital role in the era of globalization today. The greater demand for a conducive and more enhance work engagement acts as a background that justifies the need for more effective, life-changing approaches to a more positive work culture. Thus, institutions and organization that apply the recommended approach derived from the results of this study will provide an outlook for an improved engagement at the workplace. For the researchers, the investigation will uncover critical areas in the comprehending the aspects of a work engagements that many researchers could not explore.

### *1.2. Statement of Problem*

Despite the workplace advantages of high engagement of work and meaningful work levels being recognized, the statistics that actual levels and outcomes are far from ideal is still being indicated. As the overall organizational success is contributed by the work engagement, work dimensions that might be related to engagement levels must be paid attention to. In recent years, financial rewards and other benefits to elevate engagement levels have been the reliance of companies. The driver of engagement (Wells-Lepley, 2013) could employ meaningful work (rather than monetary rewards) as new arguments are surfacing to support them. It is also said that 'meaning is the new money', in which more effort can be facilitated by employees if there is meaningful work instead of a higher pay. Researchers have long argued whether generational cohorts have differences in terms of what motivates them and drives them to perform optimally. While diverse fields such as public health, education, and criminal justice journals have studies on well-being and life satisfaction that were conducted on working populations, the nature and context of work often failed to be examined in these studies, reporting simple correlational results (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). Despite the recently increasing attention, there is still a lack of empirical studies on well-being at work. The satisfaction of traditional life or studies of well-being have examined non-work populations

such as students, patients, children, and/or adolescents as adults spend much of their time working. Thus, we believe that the work engagement of the employees and the lack of attention paid to them in the management field is a critical research gap. Despite investigative advances in this area, a broader scope is still needed on the construct of this research, especially within its intrapersonal variations. In addition, research evidence has shown that daily changes occurring work, that are often related to demands, is the effect of fluctuations in work engagement.

When many resources are accessible to individuals, they are better able to cope with the demands of work, so that resources can act as motivators in search of positive outcomes at work. Hence, this study acts as a medium to explore dimensions related to work engagement at the workplace.

#### Objective and Research Questions

- How is vigor represented at the workplace?
- How is dedication represented at the workplace?
- How is absorption represented at the workplace?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Engagement at Work

The working place could be a nice place to be if there is work engagement. Communication at one level affects communication at other levels as good communication is important to give a positive workplace environment (Rahmat, Razali, & Awang, 2019). Knowledge and information are easily conveyed if there is good communication. Good communication leads to a positive environment. With reference to Figure 1, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) reported three dimensions to work engagement; (a) Vigor refers to the sense of personal energy for work that the employee has. Next (b) dedication is when the employees experience a sense of pride in his/her work and challenges from it. Finally, the third dimension is (c) absorption and this refers to the capacity of the employee to be engrossed in work and experience a sense of flow in what he/she does at work.

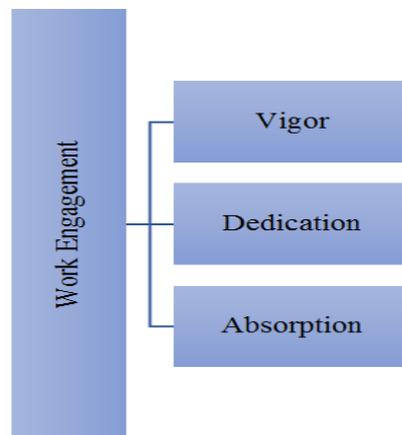


Figure-1. Work Engagement.  
Source: Schaufeli and Bakker (2010).

### 2.2. Workplace Culture

Work culture can have both negative and positive impact at the workplace. Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017) found that a good work environment creates a positive work culture and vice versa. Robbins and Judge (2013) regarded culture as a sense of identity for organization members. It is like a common value in an organization which people show a similar workplace culture even though they come from a different background. The value is believed occurs at a workplace when an employee engages with one another in an organization. On the other hand, the way employees think and make decisions based on own cognitive system also related to such value in the organization. Awaludin, Ode, Adam, and Mahrani (2016) felt that the actions of the employees have a great impact of creating a

good work culture. Overall, the value in the organization will somehow bring a strong affection to a culture which it is learned and shared continuously at a workplace. There is a view from cultural sociologists who observed 'culture' as all socially located forms (Ritzer & Ryan, 2011). This can be referred to a process where people socialize to create or construct meaning when they are in an organization. The process can be identified easily when an employee is in a meaning-making process specifically in a meeting or having a group discussion with other employees. The process of building the meaning, however, maybe interrupted or delayed if there is any argument or disagreement from other employees. Abdullah, Hassan, Lyndon, Yusoff, and Muhamad (2019) viewed culture as thoughts, beliefs, customs, traditions and human behaviors. This is aligned with Kotter and Heskett (1992, as cited in Shahzad, Luqman, Khan, and Shabbir (2012)) who viewed culture as an established set of beliefs, behaviors and values of society. In a reference to the authors' views specifically in the context of workplace culture, it can be considered as a glue that sticks its employees together by using the same values, thoughts, beliefs, customs, traditions and behaviors. It is a pattern that is rooted in an organization yet produce both conscious and unconscious actions when they are engaging with each other. Overall, it has been understood that workplace culture is a common culture among employees in an organization.

### 2.3. Past Studies

There are a few studies addressed on employees' work environment. The study by Sharma (2017) looked at the impact of organizational culture on job satisfaction of three Information Technology employees. 220 IT professional participated in this quantitative study. The survey was analyzed and revealed interesting findings about organizational culture. The findings reveal that organizational cultural values such as fairness, growth opportunities and reputation of organization have a positive effect on the job satisfaction while on the other hand, organizational traits like aggressiveness have a bad influence on the level of work satisfaction.

Hafeez, Yingjun, Hafeez, Mansoor, and Rehman (2019) conducted a quantitative study on the impact of the workplace environment on employee performance. Their research adapted questionnaire survey method and 250 employees working in software houses in Pakistan were the respondents for this study. The data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. There are two main factors of the working environment found from this study which are the physical environment and behavioral factor. Cleanliness, surroundings of office building, light, noise and the sitting arrangement are the examples for the physical environment (Hafeez et al., 2019). While having a friendly environment during lunch and tea time is one of the examples of behavioral factors. This study provides guidelines in helping employees to maintain their health and at the same time improving their working environment. Other than that, the researchers also stated that the organizations should play their role by maintaining a better physical environment for their employees. Healthy employees can be produced by improving the physical and behavioral factors of the working environment. Hence, they are able to be more productive by performing their task efficiently and improving their performance at the workplace.

On the other hand, in a different study by Brenner, Fairris, and Ruser (2004) conducted an index survey that investigated the workers' necessity and the factors that can impact workers in a positive way. The researchers from this study found that better lighting, more elbow room, creative methods for assessing space, personalization, more immediate meetings and involvement of the workers in decision making affect their day-to-day work. The environment of a workplace needs to be calm and relaxed, inspiring, attractive, and motivating to the workers in order for them to have an appropriate work environment at the same time feel a great pleasure to perform their responsibilities (Vimalanathan & Babu, 2013).

When it comes to organizational values, quality is being one of the common factors. This is stated in a study conducted by Gorenak, Edelman, and Brumen (2020). The aim of the study was to identify the job satisfaction from the organizational values based on the response from 388 employees from a selected sector. The researchers used a quantitative approach specifically a survey as their instrument which seeks the respondents to evaluate what kind of

organizational values that their organization promotes. The findings showed that quality is the most common factor in organizational values. This shows that the employees prioritize the quality of work produced by the organization that they work for. Besides that, another factor of organizational value found from this study is innovativeness (Gorenak et al., 2020). The respondents expect there should be innovative ideas from the employees being heard frequently in the organization they are working rather than being shy and reserved. All in all, it could be said that the higher up should focus their energy on working with organizational values leading to positive influences on job satisfaction of employees. Generally, it is very important for all the organizations to have some knowledge on organizational values at the workplace.

The study by Awaludin et al. (2016) investigated the effect of job satisfaction, integrity and motivation on work performance. The respondents to the questionnaire is 84 health workers in a government hospital in the City of Kendari. Findings revealed that; (a) job satisfaction, integrity and motivation of health workers has significant effect on performance of health workers. Next, findings also revealed that (b) job satisfaction has positive and significant impact on the performance of health workers in the government Hospital in the City of Kendari. In addition to that, it was also found that (c) Integrity has positive and significant impact on the performance of health workers and (b) motivation has positive and significant impact on the performance of health workers.

Another study was conducted by Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017) to look into the influence of work environment job performance. 85 employees responded to a cross-sectional survey. The dimension investigated were temperature, air light and color, space and employers' satisfaction. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Findings showed that the situational constrains gave negative impact on employee' performance. It is suggested that employers should take initiatives to motivate employees by improving their work environment. As employees are motivated, their job performance will increase, and they will achieve the desired outcomes and goals of the job. Thus, increasing the employers' satisfaction.

Sometimes work situation can reduce positive workplace environment. Samma, Zhao, Rasool, Han, and Ali (2020) explored the relationship between workplace ostracism (WO), workplace incivility (WI), and innovative work behavior (IWB). Job anxiety was used as the mediating variable. Data were collected from the workers of small and medium sized enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs. The location was Pakistan. Findings confirmed that workplace ostracism and workplace incivility had a negative impact on innovative work behavior. It was also confirmed that job anxiety mediates in the relationship between workplace ostracism, workplace incivility, job anxiety, and innovative work behavior.

#### 2.4. Conceptual Framework of the Study

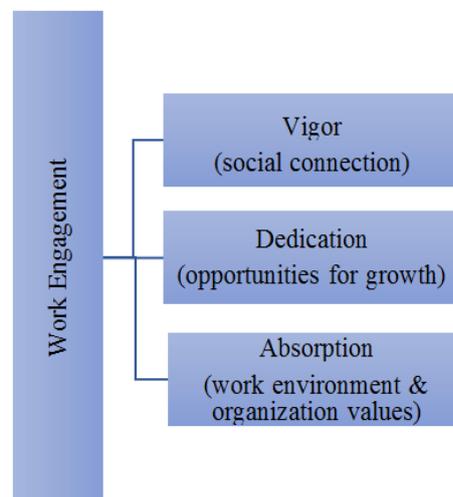


Figure-2. Conceptual Framework of the Study.  
Source: Schaufeli and Bakker (2010); Parent and Lovelace (2015).

The conceptual framework could be observed in Figure 2. This study is rooted from work engagement presented by Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) and supported by characteristics by Parent and Lovelace (2015). Employees will feel engaged at work if they can make three factors connect. The first factor is (a) Vigor and this can be achieved through social connection at work. According to Bandura (1977) people learn by modelling behavior from the social circle they are in. If a workplace has enough positive employees to model from, the positivity can be connected to the colleagues around them. The second factor is (b) dedication and this is achieved when employees are given opportunities for their growth. The third factor is (c) absorption and this is achieved through a positive work environment mirroring good organizational values.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1. Research Design

This quantitative study is done to investigate the factors that lead to a positive work culture. 115 participants participated in this study. They came from different industries. The instrument used is a survey adapted from Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) as well as, Parent and Lovelace (2015). Section A has 4 items on demographic profile. Section B has 5 items on 'foster social connection. Section C has 4 items on 'opportunities for growth. Section D has 6 items on 'work environment' and section E has 9 items on organizational values. Reliability statistics (Table 1) on the instrument revealed a Cronbach alpha of  $\alpha=0.936$  thus showing high reliability of the instrument chosen. Data is collected via google form and analyzed using SPSS version 26 to reveal frequency of responses and presented in the form of percentages and mean scores.

Table-1. Reliability statistics of instrument.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.936	24

#### 5. FINDINGS

##### 5.1. Findings for Demographic Profile

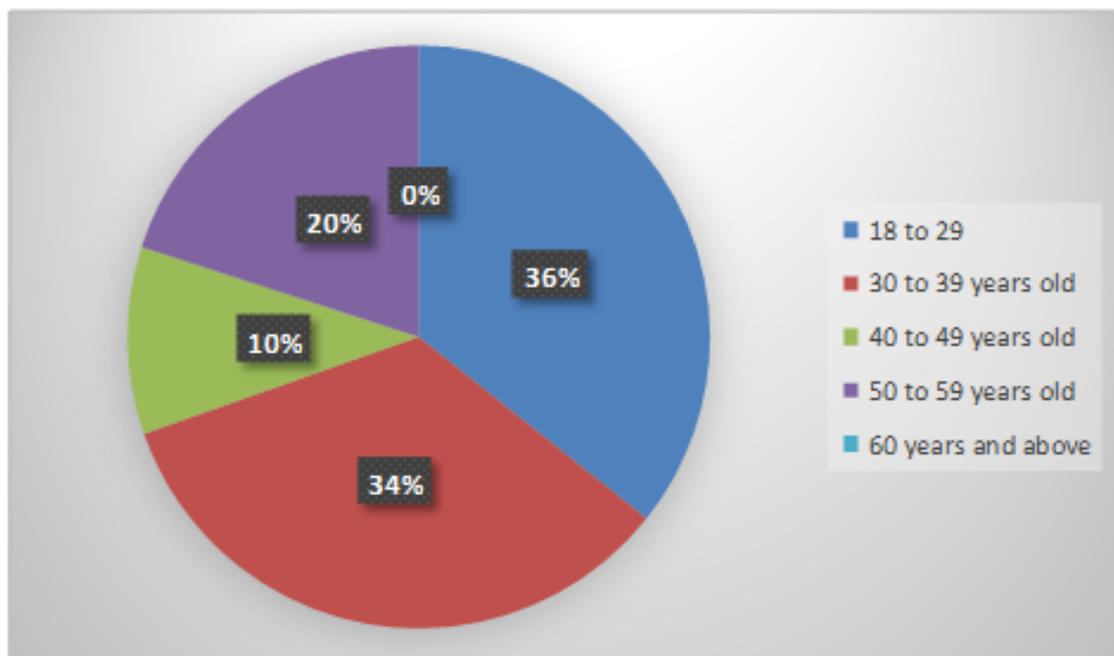


Figure-3. Percentage for age group.

*Q2 Age Group*

Figure 3 above shows the age group the participants are in. The highest percentage of the age group in this study is 18 to 29 years old which is 35.7%. The second highest age group is 30 to 39 years old recorded at 33.9%. It is then followed by the age group of participants between 50 to 59 years old at 20%. It can be seen that the percentage of participants from the 50 to 59 years old is recorded at the second lowest which is 10.4 %. The lowest percentage of industry for this study are from the age group 60 years and above at 0%.

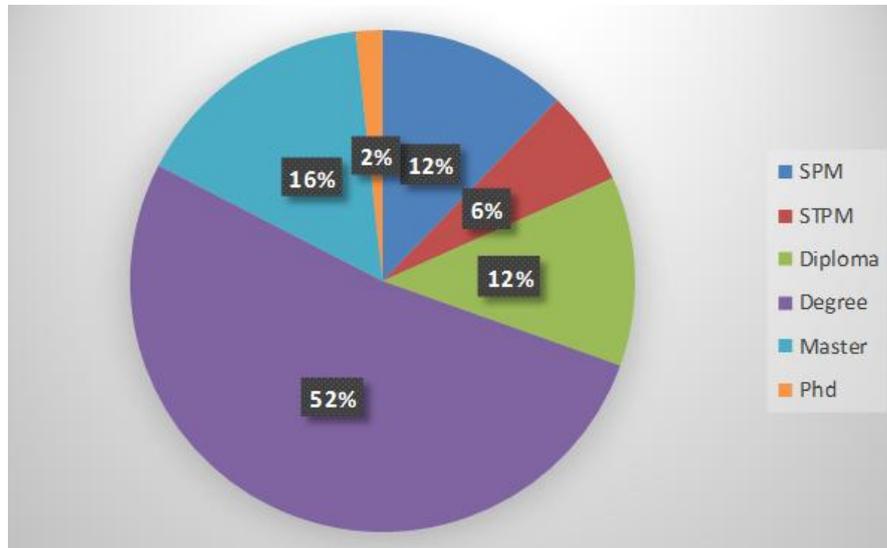


Figure-4. Percentage for academic level.

*Q3. Highest Academic Level*

Figure 4 above shows the academic level the participants are in. The highest percentage of the academic level in this study is degree which is 52.2%. The second highest academic level is Master recorded at 15.7%. It is then followed by the academic level of Diploma at 12.2%. Next, the participants with academic level of SPM could be observed at 12.2%. It can be seen that the percentage of participants from STPM is recorded at the second lowest which is 6.1 %. The lowest percentage of the participants' academic level for this study is from PhD at 1.7%.

Table-2. Percentage for Type of Industry.

1	Agricultural, Forestry and Fishing	0.8%
s2	Mining	0%
3	Construction	1.7%
4	Manufacturing	2.5%
5	Transportation & Public Utilities	3.3%
6	Wholesale Trade	0%
7	Retail Trade	1.7%
8	Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	19.8%
9	Public Services & Administration	6.6%
10	Health Services	8.7%
11	Food & Beverage	3.5%
12	Oil & Gas	0%
13	Information Technology	7%
14	Education	41.3%
15	Others (please specify)	9.1

*Q4 Type of Industry*

The Table 2 shows the type of industry the participants are in. The highest percentage of the industry in this study is education which is 41.3%. The second highest industry is finance, insurance and real estate recorded at

19.8%. It is then followed by the other industries at 9.1% which includes retail trade, travel and lodging, banking, beauty and health, performing arts, art and design, business, marketing enforcement as well as media and communication. Next, the percentage of health services is recorded at 8.3% and it is followed closely by information technology at 6.6%. Both the percentage for public services and administration as well as transportation and public utilities are 3.3%. Next, the percentage of participants in manufacturing industry is recorded at 2.5% and it is followed by retail trade and construction at 1.7%. It can be seen that the percentage of participants from the agricultural, forestry and fishing, food and beverage as well as oil and gas is recorded at the second lowest which is 0.8%. The lowest percentage of industry for this study are from the mining and wholesale trade at 0%.

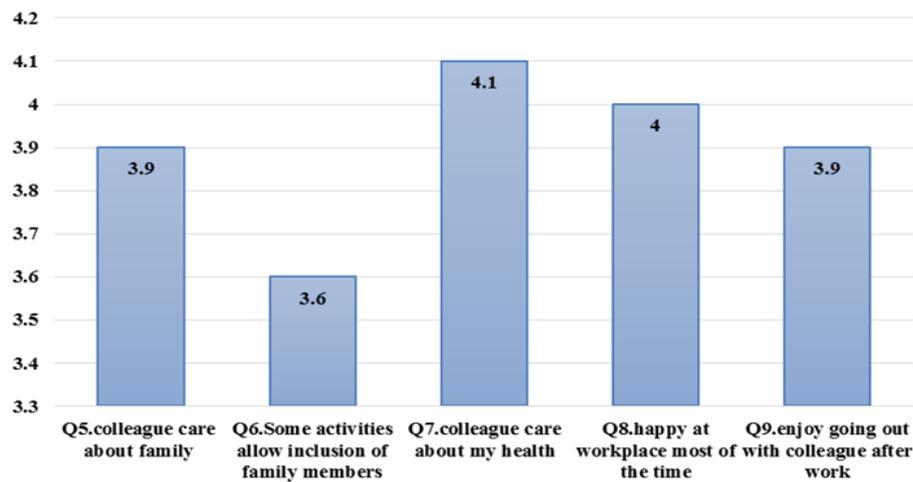


Figure-5. Mean for vigor through social connection.

5.2. Findings for Vigor through Social Connection

When it comes to foster social connection Figure 5, the highest mean value is recorded for the statement my colleague care about my health at 4.1, and it is closely followed by I am happy at my workplace most of the time at 4. Then, the mean value at 3.9 is recorded through the statements of both my colleagues care about my family as well as I enjoy going out with my colleagues after work. The lowest mean value for this category is reported at 3.6 for the statement some activities allow me to include my family members.

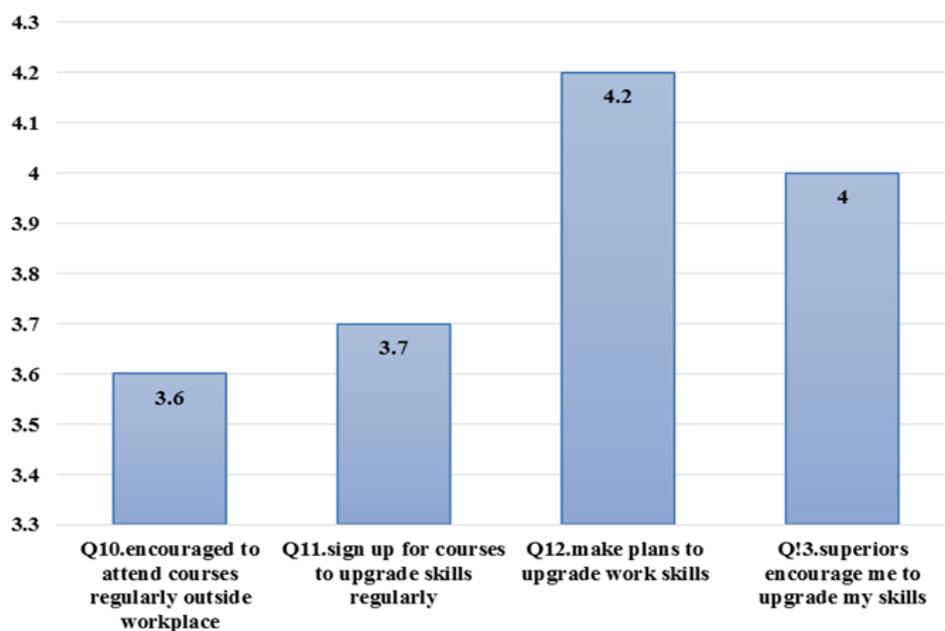


Figure-6. Mean for Dedication due to opportunities for growth.

### 5.3. Findings for Dedication Due to Opportunities for Growth

Figure 6 reveals the mean scores for the second factor, dedication (dedication for growth). Statement of Question 12 scored the highest mean- “I make plans to upgrade my work skills” (4.2). The second highest mean refers to the statement of Question 13- “My superior encourages me to upgrade my skills” (4). Next is the statement of Question 11- “I sign up for courses to upgrade my skills regularly” (3.7) followed with the last statement of Question 10- “I am encouraged to attend courses regularly outside their workplace” (3.6).

### 5.4. Findings for Absorption into the Work Environment

The conceptual framework of the study categorized absorption as (a) work environment and (b) organizational values.

#### (a) Findings for Work Environment

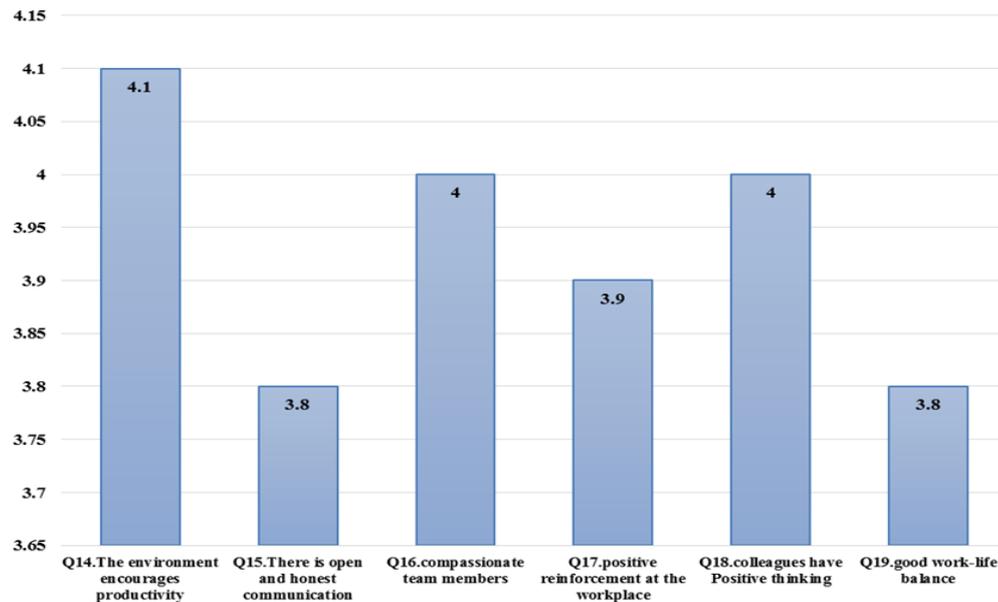


Figure-7. Mean for Work Environment.

Figure 7 shows the response of respondents about the work environment. It can be clearly seen that the majority of the respondents need their working environment which encourages productivity with the highest mean (4.1). Consequently, followed by having colleagues with positive thinking as one of the important factors that contributes to their working environment that recorded the second highest mean (4). Other than that, the least important factors that recorded similar mean (3.8) were by having good work-life balance and honest communication. In this case, it could be said that employees really need a friendly working environment and a bunch of colleagues who have positive thinking which could encourage productivity among them at the workplace.

Figure 8 shows the response of respondents on organizational values. It can be clearly seen that integrity and teamwork recorded the highest mean (4.8). Moreover, by having only a slight difference on the recorded mean (4.7), respondents do also think honesty, trustworthiness and fairness are important as well. Other than that, the least important organizational value that recorded the lowest mean (4.1) is using innovation to solve problems. In this case, it could be said that employees do not really expect their colleagues to use innovation when it comes to problem solving but they actually look upon having integrity and teamwork as the most important organizational values at the workplace.

## (b) Findings for Organizational Values

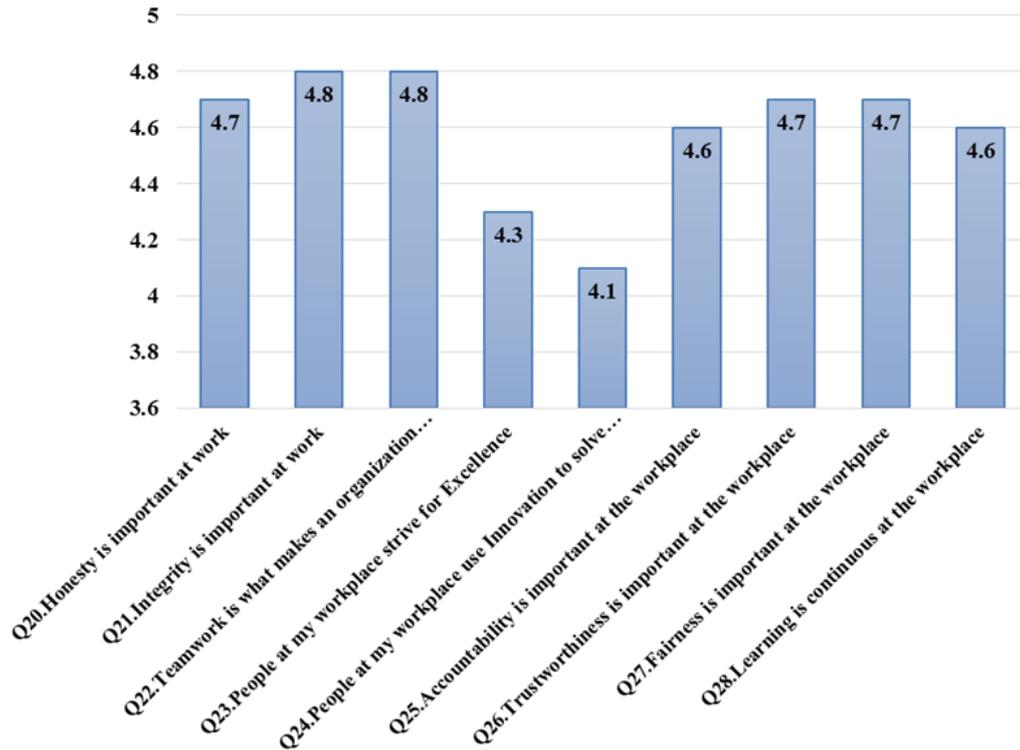


Figure-8. Mean for Organizational Values.

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings in this study show interesting factors that make up a positive work environment.

Workers can work with more vigor if they are allowed to socialize more. It is reported that connectivity and interaction bring about vigor and positive energy at work. Allowing workers to involve family member to participate activities at work is a way to improve connectivity. Workers expect the company to allow families to be a part of the work culture by involving family in some events. This is also agreed by [Schaufeli and Bakker \(2010\)](#) and [Awaludin et al. \(2016\)](#) who mentioned that in order for the workers to have vigor in their work is through social interaction.

Next, the data in this study showed that workers liked working at a place that allows them opportunities to upgrade themselves and this is encouraged by their superiors. The study by [Sharma \(2017\)](#) also agreed that a positive workplace allows workers to be given opportunities for growth. Findings also revealed that workers liked if their superior encourage them to increase their productivity. Motivated employees will try their level best to perform well at work. They should be given ample opportunities to upgrade current knowledge to stay abreast with the current trends and technology. Attendance to courses to upgrade themselves should also be made voluntary so employees stay motivated. They would strive to upgrade their work by improving their knowledge and skills. This snowball effect will then increase productivity and help to improve the company's productivity.

They value great teamwork and positive attitude by the people around them. [Vimalanathan and Babu \(2013\)](#) also found that a good work environment is one that consist of people with positive attitudes. Finally, the data also showed that workers rated trustworthiness and integrity as important at the workplace. The study by [Gorenak et al. \(2020\)](#) and also ([Gorenak et al., 2020](#)) found that a positive work environment consists of workers who work with high integrity. One "killer" for work motivation is indeed dishonesty. The work surrounding will no longer be a place where honesty is valued as much as excellence. Besides factors such as hard work and friendly environment, employees need to work around people who are honest and have high degree of integrity. Fairness at work is

considered a very important factor for work motivation too. Workers need to feel they matter and that they were treated fairly at all time and in all situations.

## 6.2. Implications

Creating a positive work culture is an effort by many parties. The employers ensure that the physical environment is conducive to allow workers to work in a positive mental surrounding. Similarly, workers need to maintain good rapport with their superiors and colleagues to facilitate communication and transfer of information. Future research could focus on investigating both positive and negative work culture. It is good to interview both the employers and employees to gain better insight of what they think as positive work culture.

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