The Impact of Work Environment Features on Employee Performance at Dhofar University (DU)

Bakheet Tabook[1], Ayman Al-Ghassani[2], Abu Bakar Al-Ibrahim[3], Abdullah M. Al-Ansi[4*]

[1,2,3,4] College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Oman

***Corresponding author:** Abdullah M. Al-Ansi

College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Oman

Abstract

A professional work environment is crucial for the success and productivity of any organization. Work environment features in this research encompasses the physical setting, university culture, leadership, and expectations within a workplace. This research aims to examine the impact of these features on employee performance. The sample of this research includes 101 of Dhofar university academic and staff using random sampling method categorized under quantitative approach. To test the hypotheses, regression analysis was conduct in addition to descriptive analysis and correlation among variables. Results showed that physical workplace, university culture and leadership have high level in Dhofar university where the mean was 4 out of 5. The results of research also revealed that physical workplace, organizational culture and leadership have positive and significant impact on Dhofar university employee performance. Researchers provided some recommendation to Dhofar university including sustain the culture and leadership level of university, development and training of employees and use of technologies as crucial factor for future development.

Key Words: *Work Environment, Leadership, Organizational Culture, Physical Workplace, Employee Performance.*

Introduction

The strength of an organization depends on how much commitment and performance the workforce dedicates to the organization. However, a small increment in the employees' performance and behavior changes a lot about an organization. Thus, one should always strive to ensure that a better working environment is established as humans are social beings. The working environment includes physical setting, for example, the office setting's color and setting and office amenities set-up and the cultural setting includes the company's cultural part. Research shows that a better working environment fosters optimal employee

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behavior and their performance to an organization's expectations (Garad et al., 2021). Currently, technology has become a big social issue aspect as a determinant of what an organizational working environment should look like due to fierce completion brought by technological change (Wong & Radcliffe, 2018). Although incentives and physical infrastructure are essential aspects of the employment environment, there are other intangible aspects that are essential for any organization's development and performance. These intangibles include, among others, policies, incentives, rules, and cultural policies. For instance, other examples that can be cited are work culture and relationships, the accessibility and friendliness of the supervisor, and compatibility with the workers, among others. These intangible aspects are not quantifiable but have a significant impact on success and can be measured because of the outcomes they produce (del Brío et al., 2007). The work environment has a critical influence on job effectiveness. The work environment is a critical element working as a vital element in the employees' achievements and performance. The motivation and outcomes of employees are dependent on the workplace. There is a positive correlation between the job performance of the employees and provision and job satisfaction with colleagues. Employees' workload productivity is also reliant on their work relationships (Ilmakunnas, 2012). High job satisfaction is associated with high employee performance, success, and productivity. Thus, successful workers are often happy, even in tough and long-term employment.

A conducive work environment, characterized by factors such as supportive leadership, clear communication, adequate resources, and a positive organizational culture positively influence employee performance, leading to increased productivity, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in job roles (Schneider et al., 2013). This study aims to delve into the multifaceted relationship between the work environment and employee performance within Dhofar University. By conducting a comprehensive analysis, we seek to uncover the various dimensions of the work environment that impact employee performance, identify potential areas for improvement, and propose strategies to cultivate a more conducive workplace culture. The influence of unhealthy work environment that can be damaged for workers who exist in toxic environment that will make more stresses and concern, some workplace is good, in other hands its bad, it depends on the structure of each company (Al-Ansi et al., 2019).

Organizational culture is the heartbeat of any workplace, representing the collective personality, values, and behaviors that define its identity. It's not just about the physical environment or the structure of the organization; rather, it's the intangible essence that shapes how individuals interact, make decisions, and approach their work (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture influences everything from employee morale and engagement to productivity and innovation. It's the invisible force that guides behavior and sets the tone for the entire organization. Understanding and nurturing a positive organizational culture is crucial for fostering a cohesive and thriving workplace where employees feel valued, motivated, and connected to the mission and goals of the organization. In this paper, we will delve into the intricacies of organizational culture, exploring its components, functions, and impact on organizational success, while also discussing strategies for cultivating a culture that aligns with strategic objectives and promotes sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

Leadership styles play a pivotal role in shaping organizational dynamics and influencing employee performance and satisfaction

(Northouse, 2018). How a leader seeks to lead, motivate and control their team can have a big impact on productivity, innovation, and job satisfaction. Leadership styles span from autocratic or transactional styles focused on maximizing control and ensuring tasks are comprehensively done to transformational or servant leadership styles which are more focused on empowerment, collaboration, and engagement (Al-Ansi et al., 2015). While the differences may be subtle, it is critical for leaders to understand the difference, as it can help them in assessing and measuring their effectiveness and determine how to increase the odds of their organizational objectives and workforce culture are achieved. This paper therefore explores various types of leadership styles, their definition, features, applications, and implications, as well as measures in place to understand this phenomenon.

Problem Statement

A study of how the work environment at DU University impacts several factors is of essence. The work environment, in this case, encompasses cultural, physical, and leadership factors. While DU University is known for its exceptional academic performance, certain indices may suggest that the challenges of the work environment may influence organizational performance and employment. Thus, the purpose of this research is to establish the influence of the work environment at DU University on employee performance. This will be achieved by looking at various issues affecting the same including the organizational culture, physical environment within which employees operate, and the differences in leadership styles.

Objectives of the Research

- To determine the relationship between the workplace environment and employees' performance.
- To identify key factors contributing to both positive and negative impacts of work environment.
- Exploring novel solutions, recommendations, suggestions, and ideas for enhancing employee performance through changes in the work environment.

Literature Review

Physical Workplace Design

The physical workplace, an integral component of the organizational environment, encompasses the tangible aspects of the work setting, including office layout, amenities, and safety features. According to Parker and Bealing (2007), the physical workplace significantly influences employee satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. A well-designed physical environment can foster collaboration, creativity, and a sense of belonging among employees (Vischer, 2008). Additionally, the physical workplace plays a crucial role in supporting organizational culture by serving as a visible representation of its values and priorities (Parker & Bealing, 2007). For instance, an open office layout may signify transparency and accessibility, while amenities such as breakout areas or recreational spaces may promote employee engagement and work-life balance (Hasan & Salman, 2014). Therefore, organizations must carefully consider the design and features of the physical workplace to create an environment conducive to employee satisfaction and organizational success.

Another important contributor to the workplace environment and one of the factors that fairly impressed me was the layout of office space. On one hand, "traditional office designs included closed,

private offices" in which more than half of the employees worked. Modern open-plan offices have no floor-to-ceiling walls or internal boundaries. Supporters such as Brennan et al. (2002) argue that open-space rooms are more flexible, not only do they take less time to set up and renovate, but also allow businesses to accommodate more employees in less square footage, i.e., reducing the amount of office space necessary overall and, thereby, saving on air conditioning, maintenance, and building costs. Furthermore, proponents assert that open-plan layouts enhance communication, foster increased interaction among employees, and subsequently boost employee satisfaction, morale, and productivity (Al-Ansi et al., 2021). Some evidence supports these claims, revealing heightened communication, improved aesthetic judgments, and increased group sociability in open-plan office settings compared to conventional designs.

Hypothesis (H₁): The physical workplace exerts a positive influence on employee performance.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture represents the collective values, beliefs, and norms shared among members of an organization, shaping their behaviors, decisions, and interactions. As defined by Schein (2010), it serves as a social glue that binds individuals together and provides a sense of identity and purpose within the organization. Organizational culture influences various aspects of organizational life, including communication patterns, decision-making processes, and employee engagement (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). It is often manifested through rituals, symbols, and stories that reflect the organization's history, values, and traditions (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). Additionally, organizational culture can have a profound impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, and organizational performance (Schein, 2010).

The organizational culture namesake, among the many possible values, different cultures can have, for instance an orientation toward collectivism/individualism or a tendency toward uncertainty avoidance which may influence employee motivation and job satisfaction. As an example of this, a culture that appreciates teamwork and cooperation can build a relationship of solidarity among workers, making the working procedures more cooperative and productive at the workplace (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). However, the cultivation of the competition and the justice among the members/employees is likely to create problems in alignment, which would affect teamwork, and it also would have detrimental effects on productivity (Hofstede, 1980). The learning of an institutional climate means that the authorities and all stakeholders should come to terms with a reality right where each finds his place at work and their rights are duly recognized and equitably shared.

Hypothesis (H₂): Organizational culture positively affects employee performance.

Leadership Style

The leadership qualities and drive exhibited by a leader can significantly impact and motivate their subordinates, as noted by Ghazali, Syed Jaaffar, et al. (2019) and Ibrahim and Daniel (2019). Handoko (2011) emphasizes that for companies to achieve peak performance, they must foster an environment conducive to employee development and skill enhancement. Leadership plays a crucial role in influencing employee performance, according to the path-goal theory, wherein leader behavior's effect on subordinates is contingent upon various situational factors, including job characteristics and leadership attributes.

However, leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by the leader's style, but also by their ability to adapt to different situations and contexts (Yukl, 2013). Situational leadership theory proposes that effective leaders adjust their leadership style based on the readiness and development level of their followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). For instance, leaders may need to adopt a more directive approach when working with inexperienced or unskilled employees, while employing a more participative or delegative style with experienced and capable individuals (Yukl, 2013). By understanding and applying different leadership theories and approaches, leaders can enhance their effectiveness in guiding and motivating their teams toward achieving organizational goals.

Hypothesis (H₃): Leadership style has positive effects on employee performance.
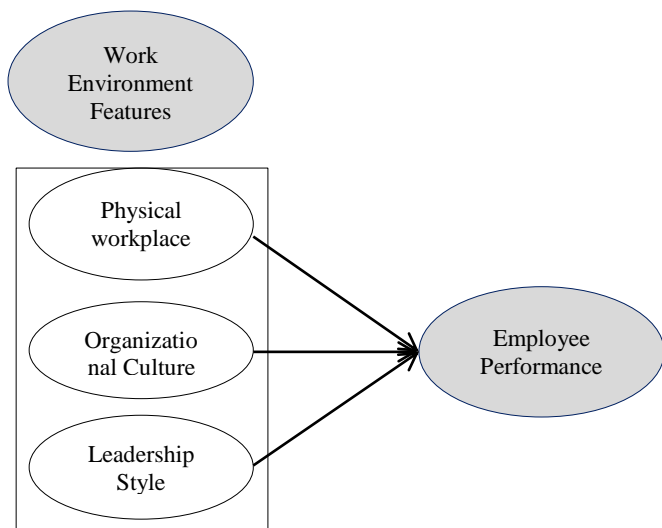
Employee Performance

Employees' work is really important for a company to succeed. It affects how much work gets done, how much money is made, how happy clients are, and how many workers stay. When workers do a great job, the company does better, stays ahead of others, and meets its goals (Pfeffer, 1998). But when workers don't do well, it hurts the company by making less work done, spending more money, and making workers feel bad (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Also, how workers do their work is tied to other company processes like managing work, growing talent, and planning for the future, showing how important it is for the company to do well overall (Aguinis, 2013).

Knowing what affects how well employees work is important for companies to help them work better. There are different things like personal, job, and company stuff that impact how people do at work. For example, personal skills and motivation, the way the job is set up, the company culture, and the way leaders lead. If companies understand and deal with these things, they can make a good work setting that helps employees feel involved, happy, and do well, which in the end helps the company succeed.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for our study encompasses three core components: organizational culture, physical workplace, and leadership. Organizational culture, defined by shared values, beliefs, and norms, shapes employee behavior and decision-making within the organization. The physical workplace, including layout, amenities, and safety features, directly influences employee comfort, productivity, and satisfaction. Leadership, through its various styles and approaches, guides and motivates employees, fostering a positive work culture and aligning organizational goals. Together, these features interact to create a work environment that significantly impacts employee performance, engagement, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Figure 1: Framework of Research

Conceptual Definitions

This section offers definitions of important terms like "working environment" and "employee performance" from multiple sources.

Working environment

According to Kohun (1992), the working environment encompasses all forces, actions, and influential factors that currently or potentially affect an employee's activities and performance. It represents the interrelationship between employees and their work environment.

Employee Performance

Sinha (2001) asserts that employees' performance hinges on their willingness and openness to engage in their job responsibilities. He further suggests that this willingness and openness can enhance employees' productivity, thereby contributing to overall performance.

Physical workplace

(Kamarulzaman, Saleh, Hashim, Hashim, & Abdul-Ghani, 2011) discovered that various environmental factors such as noise, color, temperature, workplace design, and the presence of indoor plants impact both employee performance and well-being. They propose that future research should explore the relationship between the working environment and employee productivity, suggesting comparative studies between government and private office environments. Their findings underscore the importance of a comfortable working environment, as it enables employees to focus on their tasks effectively, leading to enhanced employee performance and ultimately improved organizational productivity (Kamarulzaman et al., 2011).

Leadership Styles

According to Thoha (2001), leadership entails directing individuals toward a specified destination within the organization (p. 227). Conversely, Ermaya (1999) defines leadership as the leader's ability to exert control, guide, and influence the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors of others to achieve predetermined goals (p. 11).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, as described by Ortega-Parra & Sastre-Castillo (2013), constitutes a framework of values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that subtly guide members of the organization in their decision-making processes. According to Schneider et al. (2013), it encompasses the perceived norms within the work environment, shaping members' behaviors and adaptation strategies toward achieving organizational objectives. Furthermore, organizational culture, as noted by Simoneaux & Stroud (2014), reflects the interactions among organizational members and other stakeholders. Yirdaw (2016) views organizational culture as the cohesive force that integrates nonhuman resources with human resources within the organization, fostering teamwork and enhancing performance.

Methods and Procedure

To meet the objectives of the research, we opted for a quantitative data collection method. The aim of quantitative research is to translate defined variables, opinions, behaviors, and phenomena into numerical data and representations. For data collection, we utilized two main sources: This involved gathering information from books, research articles, and previous studies that examined the field of training and performance. Additionally, university theses related to the topic were consulted, along with relevant theoretical insights mentioned in the research's theoretical section. Our primary data collection method focused on distributing questionnaires developed based on the determinants of Training. The questionnaire's sections were formulated to align with the study's objectives, allowing us to gather the necessary information to achieve our research goals.

Research Respondents

To achieve this, we distributed questionnaires among employees working at the university. The questionnaires were dispersed across various departments, with the population segmented into sub-groups based on the core operational functions of the institution. The sample comprised 101 participants, with a nearly equal distribution of genders: 58% were male, and 41.6% were female. In terms of age, most participants (42.6%) were between 41 and 50 years old, followed by those aged between 31 and 40 (22.8%), more than 50 (20.8%) and less than 30(13.9%). The educational background of the sample exhibited diversity, encompassing 9.9% with diplomas, 24.8% with bachelor's degrees, 35.6% with master's degrees, and 29.7% with Ph.D. qualifications. Regarding Occupation, 51.5% were in academia, while the other 49.5% worked as staff. Regarding experience, 15.8% of participants had less than 5 years of experience, 54.5% had between 5 to 10 years, and 29.7% had more than 10 years of experience.

Table 1. Demographics of Sample.

Variable	Items	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	59	58.4%
	Female	42	41.6%
Age	Less than 30	14	13.9%
	Between 31 and 40	23	22.8%
	Between 41 and 50	43	42.6%
	More than 50	21	20.8%
Educational Level	Diploma	10	9.9%
	Bachelor	25	24.8%

	Master	36	35.6%
	Ph.D.	30	29.7%
Occupation	Academic	51	51.5%
	Staff	50	49.5%
Experience	Less than 5 years	16	15.8%
	From 5 to 10 years	55	54.5%
	More than 10 years	30	29.7%

Instruments and Data Analysis

We used questionnaire on the basis of 25 statements. These questions were adopted from previous studies in the same field. Descriptive statistics are a set of techniques used to summarize and describe the basic features of a dataset. These statistics help to organize and simplify large amounts of data, providing a clearer understanding of its characteristics. For data analysis, we utilized Microsoft Excel including the following analysis tool: Descriptive statistics, Correlation Analysis and Regression.

Results and Discussion

Leadership Styles

On a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating indicates that respondents generally perceive leadership as positively influencing employee performance. The mean score of 3.95 suggests a prevailing belief in the positive impact of leadership. Additionally, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.0898, it indicates that the ratings closely align around this average. Overall, these statistics suggest a strong and consistent perception among respondents regarding the influence of leadership on employee performance.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Leadership

No.	Question	Mean	SD
1	The leadership style within the organization promotes empowerment employees.	3.99	0.076
2	Leaders demonstrate a supportive attitude towards employees' professional growth.	3.96	0.086
3	Leaders encourage employees to voice their concerns and ideas freely.	3.95	0.086
4	Leaders provide recognition for achievements and constructive feedback	3.95	0.089
5	Leaders communicate a clear vision and direction for the organization.	3.94	0.083
6	Leaders inspire employees to work towards common goals	3.98	0.097
7	Leaders foster a collaborative approach among employees	3.84	0.102
8	Leaders actively engage in coaching	4.02	0.099

	process.		
	Total	**3.95**	**0.089**

Physical workplace

the average rating for the physical workplace is 3.15, indicating a moderate perception of its impact on employee performance. The mean score suggests that, on average, respondents view the physical workplace as having a somewhat positive influence on employee performance. Additionally, the standard deviation (SD) of 0.097 indicates that ratings exhibit some dispersion around this mean,

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Physical workplace

No.	Item (Question)	Mean	SD
1	The workplace is designed to promote employee health and well-being.	3.96	0.088
2	Adequate break areas are provided	3.96	0.100
3	Measures are in place to control excessive noise levels in the workplace	3.89	0.095
4	The workplace is equipped with the necessary technological infrastructure	3.95	0.101
5	The workplace is maintained in a clean and organized manner	3.91	0.100
	Total	**3.15**	**0.097**

Organization Culture

On the same scale of 1 to 5, the average rating for organizational culture stands at 3.93, suggesting a strong perception among respondents regarding its impact on employee performance. with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.096, it suggests that ratings are closely aligned around this average, like the findings for leadership.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of organizations culture

No.	Items	Mean	SD
1	Everyone is valued and respected, no matter who they are.	3.97	0.101
2	Employees' values align with the organization's core values	3.92	0.095
3	The culture promotes teamwork and collective success	3.91	0.100
4	Employees are encouraged to innovate and think creatively.	3.89	0.094
5	The organization prioritizes continuous learning and development	4.03	0.090
6	The culture supports a healthy work-life balance.	3.85	0.098
Total		**3.93**	**0.096**

Employee Performance

The average rating for employee performance is 3.94, indicating a strong and positive perception among respondents. The mean score suggests that, on average, respondents view employee performance as notably high. Additionally, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.099, it indicates some variability in ratings around this mean,

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Employee Performance

No.	Items (Questions)	Mean	SD
1.	Employees are held accountable for their actions	3.96	0.099
2.	Employees are supported in sharing ideas and working together.	3.83	0.098
3.	Everyone is encouraged to do their best and learn from their mistakes.	3.99	0.103
4.	Managers provide regular feedback and guidance to help employees improve and grow in their roles.	3.93	0.095
5.	Employees are recognized and rewarded for their contributions to the team and the organization.	3.97	0.099
Total		**3.94**	**0.099**

Correlation

This correlation indicates a strong and influential relationship, suggesting that variations in leadership style, the quality of the physical workspace, and the prevailing organizational culture have a substantial impact on employee performance outcomes."

Table 6. Correlation among Variables

	L	*Ph*	*C*	*EP*
L	1			
Ph	0.878	1		
C	0.856	0.906	1	
EP	0.871	0.896	0.909	1

Regression

Regression is a statistical method used to examine the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It seeks to model the relationship between these variables by fitting a linear equation to observed data.

Table 7. Impact of Physical workplace on employee performance

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	R^2
Intercept	1.724	0.9126	1.8895	0.06173	0.803
Physical workplace	**0.910**	0.0453	20.059	**0.000**	

Based on the regression analysis, there is strong evidence supporting Hypothesis 1. The coefficient estimate for the physical workplace variable is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that improvements in the physical workplace have a positive and substantial influence on employee performance.

Table 8. Impact of Organization culture on employee performance

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	R^2
Intercept	1.6819	0.8439	1.99	0.049	0.827
Culture	**0.762**	0.0350	21.75	**0.000**	

Based on the regression analysis, there is strong evidence supporting Hypothesis 2. The coefficient estimate for the organizational culture variable is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that a positive organizational culture has a substantial and meaningful influence on employee performance.

Table 9. Impact of Leadership styles on Employee performance

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*R^2*
Intercept	-0.0146	1.1335	-0.01288	0.9897	0.758
Leadership	**0.620**	0.0352	17.63299	**0.000**	

The table 9 provides statistical evidence supporting Hypothesis 3, indicating that leadership style has a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance.

Based on the regression analysis, the results of hypotheses testing are as follows:

- **Physical workplace**: The regression analysis strongly supports Hypothesis 1. The physical workplace improvement coefficient is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating a substantial positive impact on employee performance.
- **Culture:** The coefficient estimate for the organizational culture variable is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that a positive organizational culture has a substantial and meaningful influence on employee performance.
- **Leadership:** Based on the regression analysis, there is strong evidence supporting Hypothesis 2. The coefficient estimate for the organizational culture variable is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research aims to examine how the work environment at DU University influences employee performance. By investigating aspects like organizational culture, the physical setup of the workplace, and different leadership approaches, we seek to identify what factors contribute to either enhancing or hindering performance within this setting.

Our primary data collection method centered on distributing questionnaires among employees at Dhofar University. These questionnaires, developed consisting of 25 statements, were strategically designed to align with the research objectives.

The findings suggest that the physical workplace plays a significant role in enhancing employee performance. A well-designed and comfortable workspace not only fosters productivity but also contributes to employee satisfaction and well-being. Additionally, organizational culture emerged as a crucial determinant of employee performance. A strong culture characterized by shared values and norms can inspire and motivate employees, driving them towards organizational goals.

Furthermore, our research highlights the importance of leadership in shaping the work environment and, consequently, employee performance. Effective leadership styles that promote collaboration, empowerment, and support have been found to positively influence employee engagement and productivity.

Recommendations

- Improve the Workplace: Staff think the workplace affects their work. So, Dhofar University should make the place better. This may mean changing office layouts and adding better things to make it safer and a good spot to work.
- Make a Good Culture: Workers feel that how the uni works is key to their job. Therefore, Dhofar University should focus on making a kind and good culture. This might be about being open, joining together, and giving staff more say. This should make staff happier and work better.
- Use New Tech and Building: Dhofar University must spend on new tech and buildings. This is key to bring our work up to date and work faster. This may mean better IT, new tools, and digital ways for us to work together.
- Developing Leadership Training Programs: Since leadership style very much influences the nature and efficacy of performance by employees, Dhofar University should invest in training programs for managers and supervisors. The programs shall equip them with the skills and competencies needed in effectual leadership, motivating employees towards the accomplishment of the goals of the university.
- Employee Training and Development: Understanding the importance of experience in employee performance, Dhofar University should provide regular training and development opportunities for the workforce. Such training may cover the areas of workshops, seminars, and skill development programs.
- Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: It can be ensured that the changes recommended actually materialize through regular monitoring and evaluation processes that track progress in the realization of those changes and their eventual impact on employee performance in the long run. Through this iterative process, one can make adjustments and fine-tune the same for constant improvement and long-term success.

Appendix

Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
Leadership					
1. The leadership style within the organization promotes empowerment employees.					
2. Leaders demonstrate a supportive attitude towards employees' professional growth					
3. Leaders encourage employees to voice their concerns and ideas freely.					
4. Leaders provide recognition for achievements and constructive feedback					
5. Leaders communicate a clear vision and direction for the organization.					
6. Leaders inspire employees to work towards common goals					
7. Leaders foster a collaborative approach among employees					
8. Leaders actively engage in coaching process.					
Physical Space					
9. The workplace is designed to promote employee health and well-being.					
10. Adequate break areas are provided					
11. Measures are in place to control excessive noise levels in the workplace					
12. The workplace is equipped with the necessary technological infrastructure					
13. The workplace is maintained in a clean and organized manner					
Organizational Culture					
14. Everyone is valued and respected, no matter who they are.					
15. Employees' values align with the organization's core values					
16. The culture promotes teamwork and collective success					
17. Employees are encouraged to innovate and think creatively.					
18. The organization prioritizes continuous learning and development					
19. The culture supports a healthy work-life balance.					
20. Employees are held accountable for their actions Employee Performance					
21. Employees are supported in sharing ideas and working together.					
22. Everyone is encouraged to do their best and learn from their mistakes.					
23. Managers provide regular feedback and guidance to help employees improve and grow in their roles.					
24. Employees are recognized and rewarded for their hard work.					
25. Employees are recognized and rewarded for their contributions to the team and the organization.					

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