



Investigating the influence of bureaucratic and humanistic work environment on the employees' work ethics

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore how bureaucratic and humanistic work environments impact employee work ethics. To delve deeper into these concepts, extensive literature review was conducted. Employing an assessment and correlational research design, the study focused on the employee population of Divine Word College of Laoag. Validated questionnaires were utilized for data collection, and data analysis involved the calculation of weighted mean and ANOVA.

Results revealed that the bureaucratic work environment in the institution outweighed the humanistic one. Additionally, the work ethics of employees were found to be notably high. Surprisingly, upon examining their correlation, it was discovered that there exists no significant relationship between the work environment and employee work ethics. This suggests that variations in work ethics may not be directly influenced by the work environment but could potentially stem from other individual or organizational factors.

Hence, the study recommends further investigation, particularly focusing on the impact of individual work values on employee work ethics. Exploring these factors in depth could provide valuable insights for fostering a more conducive work environment and enhancing overall work ethics among employees.

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Introduction

Organizational success hinges on various factors beyond financial and human resources, including work relationships, treatment of employees, and organizational dynamics (Zhenjing et al., 2022; Tran et al.,

2018; Abun et al., 2020; Hagenimana, 2018). Research indicates that a conducive work environment fosters positive behaviors and enhances performance (Ashkanasy et al., 2014), shaping employee attitudes and behaviors (Cherian et al., 2021), and influencing ethical conduct (Wu & He, 2021; Limone & Toto, 2022).

Different management styles, such as bureaucratic and humanistic, yield distinct outcomes on employee values and behavior (Feeney DeHart-Davis, 2008). Bureaucratic control can lead to varied employee responses, including reduced effort or creativity (Alanoğlu & Demirtaş, 2021), while humanistic management fosters motivation and job satisfaction, ultimately enhancing organizational success (Daley, 1986). A combination of both management styles is advocated for optimal results (Mele, 2016).

Although previous research has explored the impact of management styles on employee performance (Alanoğlu & Demirtaş, 2021; Kean et al., 2017; Daley, 1986; Pirson, 2017), limited attention has been paid to their influence on work ethics, except for Zimmerman (2001). This study aims to address this gap by investigating the effect of bureaucratic and humanistic environments on employee work ethics.

The study comprises several sections: a rationale providing background information, a literature review elucidating relevant theories, a research methodology detailing the study design and procedures, data presentation and analysis, and finally, results, discussions, and conclusions, contributing to existing literature and theories.

Literature review

The literature review centers on comparing distinct work environments, specifically, bureaucratic and humanistic settings. Additionally, it delves into the philosophy of work and work ethics, serving as the theoretical bedrock of the study.

Work environment

The work environment is a critical aspect of organizational management, with a healthy environment facilitating the achievement of objectives (Zhenjing et al., 2022; Kodarlikar & Umare, 2020; Bulti & Gopal, 2021; Lindeberg et al., 2022). Management should prioritize (Zainol, 2020) creating such an environment to ensure positive working conditions, as emphasized by Razak et al. (2016). However, various definitions exist for the term 'work environment,' highlighting the need for clarity. For instance, Salunke (2015) emphasizes its physical aspect, affecting job satisfaction and productivity, while Kohun (1992) views it as the interface between employees and the workplace, encompassing situational factors influencing job performance. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) describe it as the interpersonal dynamics among employees, and Balzer and Burnfield (2004) see it as a factor shaping feelings of boredom. Research consistently indicates that a positive work environment enhances employee performance (Shammout, 2021; Zhenjing et al., 2022; Saidi et al., 2019; Al-Omari & Okasheh, 2017; Alemu, 2022; Suryani et al., 2022), underscoring the importance for management to prioritize its improvement to enable employees to fulfill their roles effectively and achieve organizational goals.

Bureaucratic management shapes bureaucratic environment

Bureaucratic management, pioneered by Weber (1966), prioritizes efficiency and rationality in organizational governance, relying on established rules, procedures, and hierarchical structures (CEoPedia, 2019; Howard, 2012; Mulder, 2017; Swedberg & Agewal, 2005). It encompasses characteristics such as formal authority, rule dependence, division of labor, performance-based promotion, efficiency, and impersonality (Reynolds, 2018; Barnet and Finnemore, 2004). While lauded for efficiency, it has drawbacks including bloating, friction, insularity, disempowerment, risk aversion, inertia, and politics (Hammel & Zanini, 2017). This approach can lead to a bureaucratic environment characterized by inflexibility, limited autonomy, routine tasks, and excessive paperwork (Langer et al., 2017; Wright & Davis, 2003; Bozeman & Feeney, 2011).

Scientific management

Scientific management, pioneered by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911), aims to enhance economic efficiency and productivity by replacing subjective decision-making with data-driven analysis (Mitcham, 2005). Taylor observed issues like "soldiering" among workers, attributed to factors such as employee assumptions, non-incentive wage systems, and reliance on rules of thumb (NetMBA, n.d.). He advocated for decision-making based on statistical data and research, exemplified in his pig-iron case study (Wrege, 1991). Taylor emphasized standardization, wage incentives based on output complexity, and the division of labor to optimize performance (Solomos, 2012). While Taylor's approach revolutionized management practices (Von Berg, 2009) criticisms emerged regarding its focus solely on efficiency and productivity at the expense of quality and employee satisfaction (Deming, 1991). Drury (1918) criticized Taylor for dehumanizing work processes and advocated for job enlargement and team incentives as alternatives.

Humanistic management creates humanistic environment

Humanistic management, emerging in the early 20th century, offers an alternative to mechanistic approaches like bureaucratic and scientific management, prioritizing people over processes (Mele, 2016). Unlike Taylor's scientific management, which views management as a science, proponents of humanistic management see it as an art (Lilienthal, 1967). Advocates include Maslow, Rogers, Moustakas, Follett, and Mayo, who emphasize human needs and values as central to organizational success (Adaui, 2013; Thompson, 2019; Wright, 2002; Kerstein, 2019). While profit remains important, humanistic management places human well-being above economic objectives, critiquing approaches that prioritize profit maximization (Humanistic Management Center, 2018). Key tenets include prioritizing employee motivation, satisfaction, and relationships to enhance productivity (Swart, 1973), alongside a commitment to unconditional respect for human dignity (Gabelli School of Business, n.d.). Practicing humanistic management fosters a supportive environment characterized by dignity and a focus on human needs (Langer et al., 2017 Von Kimakowitz, et.al., 2011).

Work ethics

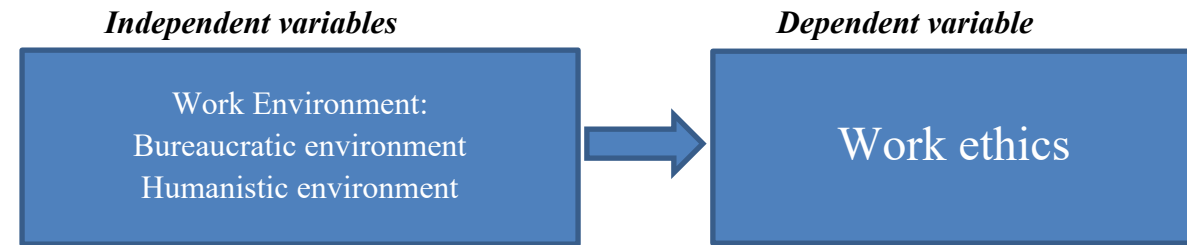
The philosophy of work

Understanding work ethics requires delving into the philosophy of work, which examines one's attitude towards work. Work ethics are closely tied to the philosophy of work, which dictates how we perceive and approach work. Dictionaries define work as mental or physical effort directed towards achieving a purpose or result, highlighting its dual nature involving both mental and physical activities (Britannica, 2020). Philosophers offer varying perspectives on the purpose of work. Plato viewed work as essential for societal improvement and personal development, with individuals contributing to both societal welfare and personal growth through work (Cholbi, 2022; Ward & King, 2017). Conversely, totalitarianism and capitalism view work to serve the community or accumulate wealth, respectively (Little, 1948). This contrasting view leads to unnatural working conditions and job dissatisfaction (Schwartz, 2022). Little (1948) presents a nuanced view of work, defining it as both manual labor and deliberate production aimed at changing matter for human benefit. He emphasizes that work serves not only societal or financial ends (Nesterak, 2020) but also the perfection of the self, aligning with human nature's inclination towards productive activity (Little, 1948; Sharma & Rai, 2015). This holistic perspective challenges contemporary notions of work solely tied to employment and monetary gain, highlighting its intrinsic value beyond external rewards (Cholbi, 2022; Clark, 2017). Aristotle underscores the connection between work and human rationality, suggesting that work is an expression of human intellect and an avenue for personal development (Elster, 1989; Sayers, 2005).

The concept of work ethics

Understanding work ethics is intricately linked to comprehending the philosophy of work, which views work not merely as an obligation or means of earning a living but as a pathway to self-perfection (Little, 1948). Work ethics, defined by Bazzy (2018) as "an individual's attitude toward work and effortful activities," encompass various perspectives (Miller, 2002) on the purpose and significance of work (Bouma, 1973; Nelson, 1973). While some emphasize work's intrinsic value and importance (Bouma, 1973; Nelson, 1973), others view it as a relentless pursuit of economic roles (Lessnoff, 1994), aligned with the concept of "homo economicus" (Petrovic, 2008; Efeoğlu & Çalışkan, 2018). However, these perspectives are not necessarily contradictory to the philosophy of work, as it serves as an avenue for human creativity and self-realization (Petrovic, 2008). Studies by Bazzy (2016), Mudrack (1997), and Marri et al. (2012) suggest a positive correlation between strong work ethics and job performance, commitment, and satisfaction. Despite differing views on the dimensions of work ethics (Van Ness et al. 2010), Sharma and Rai (2015) propose a single-dimensional construct comprising work centrality, moral approach, and intrinsic motivation, aligning with the secular nature of work ethics and devoid of religious bias (Sharma & Rai, 2015). Hence, the study adopted Sharma and Rai's (2015) 10-item Work Ethics Scale, reflecting the philosophy of work and validated through rigorous testing.

Conceptual framework



Source: Langer, et.al. (2019), Salkind (2010),

Yukl, et.al. (2013).

Figure 1: The conceptual framework explains the relationship between work environment and work ethics. It indicates that the work environment can affect the work ethics of the employees.

Statement of the problems

The study examined the effect of the work environment on the work ethics of employees. It specifically answered the following questions:

- 1. What is the work environment of the Divine Word College of Laoag in terms of:
a. bureaucratic work environment
b. humanistic work environment?**
- 2. What is the work ethics of employees?**
- 3. Is there a relationship between the work environment and the work ethics of employees?**

Assumptions

The study assumes that the behavior of employees is influenced by the social work environment. Moral values and work ethics are influenced by the social work environment and it can be measured.

Hypothesis

Bureaucratic and humanistic management styles produce different results in terms of employees' behavior and performance (Feeney DeHart-Davis (2008). The study by Zimmerman (2001) also suggested that the work environment affects the work ethics of employees. Based on these studies, the current study hypothesizes that there is a relationship between the work environment and the work ethics of employees.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study limits its investigation to the effect of work environments specifically bureaucratic and humanistic work environments on the work ethics of employees. The population of the study is limited to the employees of the Divine Word College of Laoag.

Research methodology

This section delineates the methodology employed for conducting the investigation. Adhering to the principles of scholarly inquiry, the study meticulously outlines its research design, selection of data collection tools, identification of the study population, delineation of the study locale, specification of data collection procedures, deployment of appropriate instruments for data gathering, and application of statistical analyses for data interpretation and inference.

Research design of the study

The study employed a descriptive assessment and correlational research design to assess the levels of bureaucratic and humanistic work environments within Divine Word College of Laoag (DWCL) and to analyze their impact on work ethics. Ariola (2006) argued that a descriptive correlation study aims to elucidate relationships among variables without attempting to establish causal connections. Descriptive research, on the other hand, serves the purpose of depicting populations, situations, or phenomena. It is utilized to outline profiles, frequency distributions, and characteristics of individuals, circumstances, or occurrences. In essence, descriptive research addresses questions pertaining to what, when, how, and where, rather than why (McCombes, 2020).

The locale of the study

The locale of the study was Divine Word of Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

Population

The survey respondents comprised faculty and staff members of the Divine Word College of Laoag. The study employed a total enumeration sampling method, involving all 176 faculty and employees as participants in the research.

Data gathering instruments

The study adapted validated questionnaires of Langer, et.al (2019) on Routine and Centralized Work Environment questionnaires and Salkind (2010 (n.d) on humanistic work environment and Yukl (2013) on work ethics.

Data gathering procedures

Prior to distributing the questionnaires, the researcher sent a formal letter to the President of the Divine Word College of Laoag, requesting permission to administer the surveys within the institution. During the data collection phase, the researcher enlisted employees' representatives to facilitate the retrieval of data from individual employees before it was submitted to the researcher.

Ethical procedures

The study was undertaken after the approval of its content by the research ethics committee, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and affirming the absence of any potential harm to human life or the environment.

Statistical treatment of data

To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of work environment of the school and work ethics and the ANOVA was used to measure the correlation between work environment and work ethics.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>
4.21-5.00	Strongly agree/Very High
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat agree/Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree/Very Low

Data presentation and analysis

Empirical data and analysis

The data that were gathered through research questionnaires are presented below. The data presentation follows the statement of the problems of the study.

Problem 1: What is the bureaucratic work environment of Divine Word College of Laoag in terms of bureaucratic and humanistic environment?

Table 1: Bureaucratic environment

Indicators	Weighted mean	Descriptive interpretation
Employees are always doing the same job and the same way every day	3.67	A/H
All employees are encouraged to follow the established rules and procedures	3.90	A/H
There is little action taken until a supervisor or the higher-up approves a decision.	3.78	A/H
Even small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer	3.68	A/H
In general, a person who wants to make his/her own decisions would be quickly discouraged	3.56	A/H
Employees are always monitored closely by their higher-up	3.73	A/H
Doing your job well means you have to follow the rules and procedures	3.70	A/H
Communications, decisions, and proceedings are put in writing for future references	3.83	A/H
Everyone has to conform to the rules and procedures because violation means punishment.	3.61	A/H
Employees are expected to respect the chain of command	3.67	A/H

Composite Mean	3.71	A/H
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Source: Langer, et al. (2019).

Legend:

Range of Mean Values	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly agree/Very High
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat agree/Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low/High
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree/Very Low/Very High

The table data indicates a composite mean of 3.71 for the bureaucratic environment, classifying it as "agree/high." This suggests a moderate level of bureaucracy, where employees consistently perform tasks according to established rules and procedures, with strict supervision and adherence to the chain of command. Abun et al. (2021) highlight that bureaucracy prioritizes efficiency over employees' personal needs, while Ritzer (2004) critiques it as fostering impersonal, rule-based control.

Table 2: Humanistic environment

Indicators	Weighted mean	Descriptive interpretation
The management puts the employees first before the work	3.31	SWA
Employees are rewarded for giving new ideas on how to solve their problems	3.30	SWA
The management considers the ideas of employees when making decisions	3.26	SWA
The management always tries their best to serve the needs of employees	3.23	SWA
The management listens to the employees when they employees counter problems in their work.	3.23	SWA
The management respect and treat the employees as human beings with dignity	3.24	SWA
The management recognizes the good efforts of the employees to help the institution	3.26	SWA
There is an open communication between employees and management	3.15	SWA
Composite Mean	3.25	SWA

Source: Salkind, (2010).

The table data shows a composite mean of 3.25 for the humanistic environment, indicating a "somewhat agree/moderate" interpretation. This suggests a moderate level of human-centric practices within the institution. Employees somewhat agree that management prioritizes their well-being, rewards innovative ideas, and considers their input in decision-making. Mele (2016) argues that humanistic management

values people as essential assets and aligns profit motives with human welfare, fostering employee motivation and dignity.

Problem 2: What are the work ethics of the employees?

Table 3. Work ethics of the employees of Divine Word College of Laoag (n=150)

Work ethics	Weighted mean	Descriptive interpretation
A. The ATW		
1. I consider my occupational career to be one of the most important activities in my life	4.11	A/H
2. I believe that a person is known in society by the work he does	3.87	A/H
3. I believe that one's work provides the best source of achieving perfection in life	4.08	A/H
4. Even if I don't have to work to earn a living, I would still prefer to continue working.	4.22	A/H
5. I believe that work provides a powerful channel to express one's knowledge, ability and creativity.	4.29	A/H
Composite Mean	4.12	A/H
B. The MAW		
1. Even in this fast-changing world, sincerity, hard work and integrity continue to be the golden keys to success in one's work life.	3.80	A/H
2. I feel a moral obligation to give a full day's work for a full day's pay.	4.12	A/H
3. I believe that one should never be last for work unless there is some real emergency	4.20	A/H
Composite Mean	4.04	A/H
C. The Work Motivation (WM)		
1. I believe that a job well done is a reward in itself	4.37	A/H
2. I welcome jobs that involve greater responsibility and challenge as they contribute to my learning and growth.	4.35	A/H
Composite Mean	4.36	A/H
OVERALL MEAN	4.17	

Source: Sharma and Rai (2015).

The table data reveals a mean rating of 4.17 for employee work ethics, indicating an interpretation of "agree/high." This suggests a high level of work ethic among employees. They prioritize their work, viewing it as integral to personal fulfillment and self-expression, while upholding sincerity, integrity, and a sense of moral obligation. Additionally, they find intrinsic reward in job performance and value

opportunities for learning and growth. Bassy (2016) underscores that high work ethics lead to success, satisfaction, and engagement in work, consistent with findings by Mudrack (1997).

Problem 4 Is there a relationship between the work environment and their work ethics?

A. Work environment and the ATW

The linear regression analysis revealed that the work environment of DWCL such as the bureaucratic work environment and humanistic work environment taken together could not predict the ATW, $F(2,147) = .084, p > .05$ with .01 per cent overlap between the predictor variables. Hence, the differences in the work ethics of the employees in terms of the ATW are not attributed to the work environment.

The work ethics of the employees in the ATW remains the same regardless of the work environment at DWCL.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.034 ^a	.001	-.012	.52503

a. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.046	2	.023	.084	.920 ^b
	Residual	40.522	147	.276		
	Total	40.568	149			

a. Dependent Variable: ATW

b. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.209	.322		13.088	.000
	Bureaucratic Environment	-.003	.073	-.004	-.044	.965
	Humanistic Environment	-.024	.060	-.033	-.401	.689

a. Dependent Variable: ATW

B. Work Environment and the MAW

When the bureaucratic environment and humanistic environment are taken together, they could not significantly predict the employees' work ethics in terms of MAW, $F(2,147) = .560$, $p > .05$, with .08 per cent overlap between the predictor variables. Therefore, the observed variations in the employees' MAW are not attributed to the work environment. The employees' MAW remains similar regardless of the levels of work environment in the institution.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.087 ^a	.008	-.006	.49040

a. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	.269	2	.135	.560	.573 ^b
Residual	35.352	147	.240		
Total	35.621	149			

a. Dependent Variable: MW

b. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.971	.300		13.219	.000
1 Bureaucratic environment	-.030	.068	-.036	-.436	.663
Humanistic environment	.056	.056	.082	.999	.319

a. Dependent Variable: MW

C. Work environment and the MAW

The bureaucratic and humanistic work environment at DWCL, when considered together, could not significantly predict the employees' work ethics in terms of work motivation, $F(2,147) = 1.297$, $p > .05$, with 0.17 per cent overlap between the two predictor variables. Thus, the variations noted in the employees' work motivation are not due to the work environment in the institution. The work motivation of the employees does not vary regardless of the levels of work environment that prevail in the institution.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.132 ^a	.017	.004	.58359

a. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.884	2	.442	1.297	.276 ^b
1 Residual	50.065	147	.341		
Total	50.948	149			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Humanistic Environment, Bureaucratic Environment

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.549	.357		12.727	.000
1 Bureaucratic environment	.041	.081	.042	.511	.610
Humanistic environment	-.104	.067	-.129	-1.568	.119

a. Dependent Variable: Work Motivation

Results and discussions

The study finds that the institution exhibits a higher preference for bureaucratic practices over humanistic ones, with the bureaucratic environment rated higher than the humanistic environment, which remains at a moderate level. However, despite this disparity, employees' work ethics are rated high across three dimensions: attitude toward work, moral attitude toward work, and work motivation. Surprisingly, the analysis reveals no correlation between the work environment and work ethics. Thus, the variances in work ethics cannot be attributed to the institution's work environment, suggesting that management should explore other individual and organizational factors influencing work ethics. It's recommended to investigate the impact of employees' individual work values, as suggested by Arciniega et al. (2019) and Arieli et al. (2018).

Conclusion

The study explored how bureaucratic and humanistic work environments influence employee work ethics. While the institution leans more towards bureaucracy than humanism, there's no correlation between these environments and employees' work ethics. This suggests that work ethics are not determined by the work environment. Instead, other individual and organizational factors may be at play.

It is recommended that future research examine the impact of individual work values on employee work ethics.

Authors' contribution: **Conceptualization:** F.P.J..., E.R.C., K.O.M., G.J.Q.B. **Methodology:** F.P.J., G.J.Q.B., **Data collection:** K.O.M., E.R.C. **Formal Analysis:** F.P.J., G.J.Q.B., E.R.C., K.O.M., G.J.Q.B. **Writing-Review and Editing:** F.P.J., K.O.M. E, R.C.

All authors have read and agreed to the published final version of the manuscript

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