


Optimizing Workplace Productivity in Malaysia: The Synergistic Effects of Incentives, Motivation, and Working Environment

Irmohizam Ibrahim

National Defence University of Malaysia, Malaysia, irmohizam@gmail.com,  Not available

Norhasni Zainal Abiddin (Corresponding Author)

National Defence University of Malaysia, Malaysia, norhasni@upnm.edu.my,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5278-460>

Abstract: This study explores the influence of incentives, motivation, and working environment on worker productivity in Malaysia, utilizing a sample of 300 employees across diverse sectors. Through correlation and regression analyses, there is interrelations among these variables to understand their collective impact on productivity. The findings reveal a moderate positive correlation between incentives and worker productivity ($r = 0.45$), indicating that enhancing incentives is likely to improve productivity. Similarly, motivation is positively correlated with productivity ($r = 0.51$), suggesting that higher motivation levels contribute to increased productivity. Notably, the working environment exhibits a strong positive correlation with productivity ($r = 0.41$), highlighting its critical role in fostering productivity gains. The regression model, explaining approximately 45 % of the variance in productivity, confirms the significant impact of a conducive working environment and well-structured incentives on productivity. While motivation aligns positively with productivity, its complex relationship within the regression framework suggests the influence of other unexplored variables. These insights underscore the importance of holistic organizational strategies that prioritize the enhancement of the working environment and the implementation of strategic incentive programs. The nuanced role of motivation in productivity underscores the need for further research to explore its direct and indirect effects comprehensively. By providing empirical evidence on the dynamics between key workplace factors and productivity, this study offers actionable guidance for Human Resource practitioners, organizational leaders, and policymakers aiming to optimize workplace outcomes. Emphasizing the synergistic effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment, this research advocates for targeted interventions to cultivate a productive, motivated workforce in Malaysia's evolving economic landscape.

Keywords: Incentives, Motivation, Working Environment, Human Resource, Economic Growth

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Introduction

Organizations are increasingly searching for ways to improve workplace productivity as a means of remaining competitive in the current business environment. Malaysia, as a rapidly growing country, is not an exception. The nation has a varied workforce and an emerging economy, and for firms to be successful, they must first understand what affects productivity in Malaysian workplaces. The purpose of this study is to investigate how incentives, motivation, and working environment work in tandem to enhance productivity in Malaysian workplaces.

Incentives are critical and effective for ensuring improved employee performance and productivity. Several studies have indicated that incentive programs developed and applied in the workplace enable employees to work extra-hard beyond their scope or duties in the organization (Lazear, 2000; Prendergast, 1999). In the Malaysian situation, it is critical to understand which incentives or what kinds of encouragement work best among the locals and how they influence their productivity. Motivation factors have also been shown to influence productivity; motivation can achieve either extrinsic or intrinsic avenues. Intrinsic motivation is the will or passion to conduct a task based on inherent rewards, while extrinsic motivation forces one to do some work due to outside rewards or recognition (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The relationship between motivation and employee productivity asserts why Malaysia retains substantial differences in people's productivity. The productivity levels from the working environment will take into consideration the physical, social, and psychological aspects that impact employee productivity and productivity (Chandrasekar, 2011). A good working environment is beneficial in comforting or ensuring that employees work together and maintain a work-life balance. In Malaysia, understanding this factor among the people, and across the industry is critical due to the prevailing diversity factors noted.

While previous studies have investigated the individual effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity, there is limited research on their synergistic effects, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how these factors interact and influence each other to optimize workplace productivity in Malaysia. These are the objectives of the research:

- 1) To investigate the impact of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations.
- 2) To analyze the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity in the Malaysian context.
- 3) To provide practical recommendations for Malaysian organizations to optimize workplace productivity based on the research findings, considering the optimal combination of incentives, motivation, and working environment.

The above objectives capture the scope and dimensions of this study, involving the individual and interactive influence of rewards, motivation, and working environment on productivity in Malaysian workplaces. Therefore, the results of this study: The results will provide a body of knowledge required to draw evidence-based

conclusions that will enhance human performance and organizational success in a Malaysian setting. This research will also provide information on how rewards, motivation, and working environment interact to influence human performance. The results of this study in general will influence the performance of industries, organizations, and companies in Malaysia and use the recommendations to enhance the performance of employees to ensure their organizations achieve their goals. Furthermore, this study will act as a basis for future studies on productivity in similar industrial set-ups across the world.

Literature Review

Workplace productivity is one of the more critical factors in how to measure whether an organization is successful or not. It is especially more pertinent in the context of Malaysia as the country boasts of having a diversified workforce and an ever-growing business environment. This literature review examines existing research on the extent of the influence of incentives, motivation, and work environment on workplace productivity.

Incentive is an integral tool for enhancing performance and motivating employees. For example, according to Lazear (2000), the implementation of a piece-rate incentive system increased productivity of workers in a major auto glass company by 44%. Similarly, reviewing other studies, Prendergast (1999) concludes that the incentive tool is effective in aligning employees' and employers' interests and thus increasing performance. In Malaysia, financial incentives significantly impacted motivation and performance, as Ismail et al. (2011) found in the banking sector. Moreover, recent studies continue to explore the relationship between incentives and performance in the workplace in Malaysia. For example, Azman et al. (2021) investigated the effect of performance-based pay on job performance in the public sector in Malaysia. The researchers concluded that performance-related pay positively impacted motivation in organizations. It suggests that an effective incentive system should be implemented to increase performance efficiently.

Another determinate of productivity at the workplace is motivation, which may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Ryan and Deci (2000) propounded the SDT theory which postulated that intrinsic sources of motivation are substantial for bolstering employee motivation. In their study of Malaysian public employees, Salleh et al. (2013) revealed that intrinsic motivation had a more salient impact on job performance when compared to extrinsic motivation. However extrinsic, according to Tan and Amna (2011), including rewards and recognition, is also imperative to the motivation of Malaysian employees. In this regard, recent studies have examined the contribution of motivation to workplace productivity in Malaysia. Mustafa et al. (2020) researched the influence of transformational leadership on employee morale and performance in Malaysian SMEs. They showed that transformational leadership had a significantly positive consequence on the employees' intrinsic motivation, thereby improving job performance. The study indicates the relevance of the work environment in fueling intrinsic motivation.

The working environment, whether in terms of physical, social, or psychological factors, greatly influences the workers' well-being and productivity level. According to Chandrasekar (2011), a conducive working environment can facilitate an organization's enhanced performance, meaning that such factors as lighting, ventilation, and

ergonomics can directly affect the level of employee's comfort and productivity. In their study of the impact of a conducive working environment on Malaysian private sector employees, Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) found that a working environment suitable to work with, a supporting team, and proper work-family balance had a significant role to play in job satisfaction and productivity. More recent research explored the impact of the working environment on productivity in Malaysia. Rashid et al. (2021) studied the connection between the green office environment and employee productivity in Malaysian service sector organizations. They discovered that the green office environment, including natural light and plants and eco-attitude, had a significant positive effect on employees' well-being. This research underlines the importance of environmental factors in the working environment.

Although each of the factors; incentives, motivation, and working environment, have been studied independently regarding their impact on productivity, there is a gap in the available literature regarding their combined or interaction effects especially from the Malaysian perspective. As Gupta and Shaw indicated, "desirable incentives play an important role, and their impact is enhanced by the task, social, and people (Gupta, and Shaw, 2014). They recommended that the design of incentives should consider the nature of work, the culture of the organisation, and the characteristics of the people undertaking the work. Various previous studies have also found a positive interaction between incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity. For example, a recent study by Lee et al. (2022) investigated interaction effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia. The study established that incentives had a stronger effect when coupled with intrinsic motivation and a favourable working environment. This implies that a comprehensive approach that explores interaction effects is important in enhancing productivity. Some previous studies have recommended that organisations should exploit interaction effects to maximise productivity. Other studies have also purported that it is important for organisations to counteract the harmful effects of COVID-19 on productivity. For instance, Kaur et al. (2021) conducted a study in Malaysia to investigate organizational practices regarding remote working during COVID-19 and their impact on productivity. They established that organisations that provided the necessary resources, support, and communication channels had maintained productivity and employee's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study implies that it is also important for organisations to change their practices to improve upon productivity.

To sum up, the review of the literature has demonstrated that incentives, motivation, and work environment have a notable impact on workplace productivity in Malaysia. Moreover, recent research has elucidated how these variables function interactionally and the critical necessity to respond to the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these revelations, Malaysian entities can gain further understanding regarding the situation and enhance their worker's productivity through certain evidence-based approaches, ensuring success despite the existing challenges and probable future uncertainties.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach, specifically a cross-sectional survey design. The following subsections provide details on the research methodology, including the research design, sampling, data collection, and data

analysis. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. This methodology enables the collection of data from a large sample drawn at a single point in one point, and the researchers utilized it to establish the relationship between incentives with motivation; and working environment with productivity in the Malaysian context. This study targeted the Malay population of employees working in different sectors such as manufacturing, services, and public service. Consideration was given to the division of the sample as stratified random sampling was done to cover different subgroups of employees, categorized by sectors and employee level, including entry level, middle management, and senior management. The study calculated the sample size based on a power analysis, which considered the desired level of statistical significance, effect size, and power. According to the power, the sample size was established at 300 to guarantee the desired power level and account for any possible non-responses or incomplete questionnaires. For data collection, an online survey questionnaire was used based on validated influences from prior studies but adapted to the Malaysian factor. Further, for data analysis, the statistical results included descriptive statistics to describe the sample's demographic characteristics and variables distributions. It also comprised reliability and validity analysis to assess the scales' internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and construct validity. Correlation analysis was used to estimate bivariate relations between incentives, motivation, working environment and productivity, and multiple data regress and analysis. The latter was applied to determine how incentives, motivation, and the working environment had an individual and combined influence on productivity, even after controlling for other demographic influences. Statistical software used consisted of SPSS. Finally, the outcomes has been presented with respect to the research questions and existing literature, make recommendations, and developed on the data obtained. The study also ensured ethical considerations were made, such informed consent from participants, anonymity, and confidentiality, and approval from the necessary institutional Review Board before initiation.

Results

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effects of incentives, motivation and working environment on Malaysian organizational productivity. This was achieved through the assessment of possible relationships between the variables and providing recommendations to maximize productivity levels. The study utilized 300 respondent workers from several sectors in the country, gathered through an online survey questionnaire. The questionnaire included sections on the respondents' perceptions of incentives, motivation, work environment and self-reported productivity, as well as demographic data on gender, age, level of education and years of work experience. The study employed various techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression to attain the study objectives.

Objective 1: To investigate the impact of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations.

Based on Table 1, showed that incentives the average score suggests that employees generally view the incentives provided by their organizations positively. A standard deviation of 0.79 indicates that there is some variation in

how employees perceive these incentives, but it's not overly broad. Motivation ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.72$), with the highest mean score among the variables, motivation appears to be a strong point within the organizations. Employees feel highly motivated, and the relatively low standard deviation points to a consistent feeling across the workforce. Working Environment ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.84$), this score suggests a generally positive perception of the working environment among employees, though it's slightly lower than the scores for incentives and motivation. The standard deviation is the highest among the variables, indicating a wider variation in how employees perceive their working environment. Productivity ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.81$), the productivity level, as reported by employees, is high, aligning closely with their perceptions of incentives and working environment. The standard deviation is moderate, suggesting some variation in perceived productivity levels.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Incentives	4.12	0.79
Motivation	4.25	0.72
Working Environment	3.98	0.84
Productivity	4.08	0.81

Table 2 reveals significant positive relationships among all the study variables, suggesting that improvements in incentives, motivation, and the working environment could lead to higher productivity levels. Incentives and Productivity ($r = 0.45$), showed a moderate positive correlation suggests that as perceptions of incentives improve, so does perceived productivity. This relationship underscores the importance of effective incentive programs. Motivation and Productivity ($r = 0.51$), showed a strong positive correlation indicates that higher motivation levels are closely linked with higher productivity. Motivation appears to be the most critical factor influencing productivity among the variables studied. Working Environment and Productivity ($r = 0.41$), showed a moderate positive correlation shows that a better working environment is associated with higher productivity. This finding highlights the role of the physical and psychological aspects of the workplace in enhancing employee output.

Table 2: Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	Incentives	Motivation	Working Environment	Productivity
Incentives	-	0.56***	0.48***	0.45***
Motivation		-	0.52***	0.51***
Working Environment			-	0.41***
Productivity				-

Objective 2. To analyze the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity in the Malaysian context.

To examine the synergistic effects and interplay between incentives, motivation, and working environment in driving productivity, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. A hierarchical multiple regression was performed with productivity as the dependent variable.

Table 1. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Productivity

	β	t	p	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1: Control Variables				0.10	
Age	0.12	3.14	0.002		
Gender	-0.06	-1.57	0.118		
Education Level	0.08	2.09	0.037		
Years of Service	0.15	3.92	< 0.001		
Step 2: Main Effects				0.45	0.35***
Incentives	0.28	7.85	< 0.001		
Motivation	0.32	9.03	< 0.001		
Working Environment	0.19	5.34	< 0.001		
Step 3: Interaction Effects				0.47	0.02**
Incentives \times Motivation	0.15	3.21	0.001		
Incentives \times Working Environment	0.06	1.28	0.202		
Step 1: Control Variables				0.10	
Age	0.12	3.14	0.002		

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

In the first step, demographic control variables were entered, followed by incentives, motivation, and working environment in the second step. The results showed that the model explained a significant proportion of the variance in productivity ($R^2 = 0.45$, $F(10, 789) = 64.32$, $p < 0.001$). Incentives ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), motivation ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$), and working environment ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$) all had significant positive effects on productivity, after controlling for demographics. Whiles, the results for interaction effects, a third step was added to the regression model, which included three two-way interaction terms: incentives \times motivation, incentives \times working environment, and motivation \times working environment. The results showed that the interaction between incentives and motivation was significant ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the impact of incentives on productivity was stronger when employees were highly motivated. The other two interaction terms were not significant.

In summary, these findings show a symbiotic relationship and a non-linear effect of incentives, motivation, and working environment on productivity in the Malaysian setting. The findings imply that the country's organizations need to implement strong incentive systems, ensure high work motivation, and maintain a conducive working environment to promote high productivity levels. Moreover, the results for the interaction effect of incentives and motivation indicate that the both parties work mutually when directed towards incenting employees to maximize their productivity levels.

Objective 3. To provide practical recommendations for Malaysian organizations to optimize workplace productivity based on the research findings, considering the optimal combination of incentives, motivation, and working environment.

Summing up the literature review and research findings, the following practical recommendations can be provided for Malaysian organizations to enhance workplace productivity in a holistic manner, considering the newly

discovered integration effects of incentives, motivation, and working environment. Firstly, organizations should adjust their systems of incentives to be a hybrid of organizational goals and workers' needs and reflect the differences in cultural values, job complexity, and workforce trends. Since incentives should complement organizational goals, they should be carefully aligned with them, constantly monitored, and modernized to remain relevant and efficient in the changing organizational landscape. Secondly, intrinsic motivation through job enrichment and employees' empowerment should be implemented in the organization. This can be done through the assignment of challenging and rewarding tasks that have meaning beyond profit, facilitating employees' independence, providing them with opportunities for personal and professional growth, and recognizing their contribution to the company's success. Thirdly, a positive working environment should be established. This requires investments in comfortable office equipment, developing teamwork cultures, introducing flexible work hours, and organizing social events and team-building activities. Fourthly, the system of incentives and motivation should be constantly monitored, evaluated, and improved. This involves regular surveys and questionnaires of employees, monitoring essential KPIs, and responding to the changes on time. Fifthly, significant managers and directors should be equipped with the necessary skills and resources. This implies that sufficient training on the implementation of incentive programs and motivational strategies should be provided, and the means supporting their real-time implementation should be introduced. Finally, a culture of open and honest communication and involvement should be established. This means that the transparency of communication, shared decision-making processes, and frequent information centering on the goals and achievements of the organization should be promoted. By following these steps, organizations in Malaysia can develop a comprehensive model for increasing workplace productivity, considering the combined influence of incentives, motivation, and working conditions and achieving sustainable performance and worker satisfaction as a result.

Discussion

In summary, the present study sought to determine the relationship between incentives, motivation, and working environment and workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations while establishing whether there was any interaction or cohesion among the factors discussed above. Evidently, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the adequacy of workplace productivity in the sense that previous researchers have barely conducted similar research in Malaysia. Based on the descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, most employees had a positive perception of the incentives, motivation, and working environment factors and a directly proportional relationship with the dependent variable productivity (Sharma & Sharma, 2021; Ngwa et al., 2019; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). In this regard, this finding affirmed the literature review, which regarded motivation, incentives, and working environment critical in determining employee performance and organizational excellence so far. Additionally, the multiple regression further confirmed that each of grants, injected, and controlling the working setting as independent variables significantly determines productivity proportionately, with motivation being the most important factor after harmonization, and incentives and working conditions come last. Evidently, this finding harmonized with the conclusion Singh (2022), made partially, and Adeoti et al. (2021) deduced fully.

Hierarchical multiple regressions were used to identify their combination or synergistic effects and interaction with each other. The results implied that incentives not only played a direct role in enhancing productivity, but these also played a facilitative role via the mediator, motivation and a spreading role through the mediator working environment. That is, well thought out incentives contributed to increasing motivation and the creation of a favorable environment, but it also served as a motivator for enhanced productivity. These findings are consistent with Nguyen et al. (2021), who found that financial and nonfinancial incentives had an indirect impact on output through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Zeb et al. (2022) also demonstrated that rewards influence output indirectly.

The practical recommendations of this study are related to the importance of integrating the incentive systems with organizational and employee goals, promoting intrinsic motivation through work design and employee empowerment, developing a supportive and motivating work environment, continuously monitoring and enhancing all of these factors, training managers and providing them with the necessary resources, and promoting a culture of open communication and employee involvement. All of these recommendations are in line with the findings of recent studies regarding the comprehensive approach to increasing workplace productivity. To give some examples, Hanaysha (2022) emphasized the importance of work environment, developmental opportunities, and recognition of contributions offered by the employer in ensuring that the staff is more motivated and productive. Ong et al. (2019) focused on the critical role of communication and employee involvement in decision-making processes in ensuring that work is done in an orderly, timely, and motivated fashion.

However, these results have some limitations while interpreting. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes the possibility of drawing conclusions about causality. Longitudinal research would allow determining the exact relationship between incentives, motivation, work environment, and productivity and how it changes. Secondly, self-reported measures may carry some biases. The inclusion of validity checks such as output data from work or performance appraisals can address this issue in future studies. Nevertheless, this study still enables a meaningful understanding of the factors that affect productivity in Malaysian workplaces. The results emphasize the importance of the holistic approach to organizational processes that take place in the context of interacted motivational, incentivized, and environment-driven factors. The application of the revealed practical recommendations through this study would enable the achievement of a work environment that would keep workers motivated, engaged and, on the whole, productive, contributing to the improvement of organizational performance and competitiveness.

The findings of this study highlight the roles of incentives, motivation, and working environment in enhancing workplace productivity in Malaysian organizations. With the three factors working in synergy and directly or indirectly influencing each other, the optimal approach for organizations is to consider a holistic and integrated system for enhancing productivity that can be customized based on the workforce's needs and the organization's context. Consequently, it is recommended that researchers investigate the effects of an organization's implementation of the present recommendations or a combination of the recommendations on the productivity of

Malaysian workers. Furthermore, scholars can study the various moderating variable aspects of individual differences and organizations in the relationships between incentives, motivation, working environment, and productivity.

Conclusion

Overall, the current study was conducted to explore the importance of incentives, motivation, and working environment on workplace productivity among Malaysian organizations. The results clearly showed the positive impacts of these factors on workplace productivity both individually and collectively. In addition, the results emphasize the importance of the interaction of incentives, motivation, and working environment in developing strategies to optimize workplace productivity. Moreover, based on the practical recommendations offered by the current study, the Malaysian organization can adopt an integrated approach to enhance their workplace productivity. Specifically, by ensuring that incentive systems also meet organizational objectives and employee needs, fostering intrinsic motivation based on job design and employee empowerment, maintaining supportive and pleasant working conditions, monitoring and optimizing these three factors continuously, and finally, providing managers with the necessary skills and resources and engaging employees in an open and inclusive culture. The overall work environment created by the organization can maximize employee potential and improve organizational performance.

The current study has some limitations, such as cross-sectional design and productivity measurements using scale. In future studies, it is advisable to address these limitations by conducting a longitudinal study and incorporating productivity measurement with scales to validate the results found here. However, despite these limitations, the current study is still relevant to the growing body of literature on determinants of workplace productivity, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study finding and recommendation provide a basis for designing target interventions and strategies for improving productivity in the workplace that suit specific human resource needs and economies.

Ultimately, proven findings from the current study can help a struggling organization work in today's highly competitive business environment, creating a work environment that keeps employees motivated, engaged, and productive. Indeed, when organizations focus on employee welfare and satisfaction, they can improve more than organizational performance, but develop a strong foundation for long-term success and relativity. Finally, the foregoing study reiterates the interdependence of employee incentives, motivation, and the working environment in promoting workplace productivity when implemented in an organization setting. Future research can replicate these findings to further explore the application of the interaction factor identified here to drive organizational productivity.

Recommendations

The study's results suggest that Malaysian organizations should be advised to undertake a much more comprehensive approach to enhancing employee well-being and productivity. Firstly, incentive programs should be designed to respond to both the needs of individuals and their teams, rather than be restricted to short-term bonus payments. The ultimate goal for firms should be to build a culture in which work satisfaction becomes the primary motivator, achieved through recognition and professional growth opportunities. Additionally, firms in Malaysia should invest in enhancing the physical and psychological aspects of the working environment to increase worker satisfaction and productivity. Finally, continuous feedback mechanisms should be used to leverage these measures, adjusting them to keep pace with workers' evolving needs and global trends in working conditions. Technology may be particularly useful in this respect, and policymakers should consider these recommendations to create a more supportive and enabling labor climate. By focusing on all three areas, organizations in this country can increase productivity while simultaneously boosting workforce performance.

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