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WORK ENVIRONMENT, WORK ENGAGEMENT AS INFLUENCERS OF INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR AMONG SELECTED RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES IN DAVAO DEL NORTE

Marisol Jaya J. Esmail, Presentacion C. Acosta, DBM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine how the work environment and work engagement could influence the innovative behavior of restaurant employees in Davao del Norte. The study utilizes a quantitative research approach using validated and reliability-tested questionnaires. Respondents were chosen through quota sampling from selected restaurant employees in Davao Del Norte. The mean, standard deviation, Pearson-r, and multiple regression were used to analyze and interpret the data gathered. The result of the study revealed that the level of the work environment among restaurant employees is very favorable, and the level of work engagement among restaurant employees is very evident. Additionally, the result indicated that the work environment has a positive moderate relationship with the innovative behavior of restaurant employees. In contrast, work engagement reveals a significant positive, strong relationship with innovative behavior. Further, work engagement has a greater influence on innovative behavior. Furthermore, twenty-seven percent could be associated with the combined influence of the independent variable, and the remaining seventy-three percent variance in innovative behavior could be associated with other factors.

KEYWORDS: *Business management, work environment, work engagement, innovative behavior, quantitative study, Davao del Norte*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Employees' innovative behavior is an essential source of competitive advantage that contributes to an organization's success and long-term existence (Huang et al., 2022). However, many companies unknowingly place barriers in the way of employees' innovativeness (Carnegie, 2021). These barriers include lack of engagement, purpose, weak ties, psychological safety, creative space, and workplace professional development opportunities. In Belgium, De Spiegelaere et al. (2012) study revealed that chemical and social industry employees are more likely to be innovative compared with other sectors, such as hotels and restaurants. Relatively 73 percent of employees and 69 percent of the social sector are more involved in innovation than in other sectors such as hotels and restaurants. In the Philippines, particularly in Tuguegarao City, one of the restaurant operational problems is employee and service reliability, which implies a lack of innovative behavior (Dingil et al., 2023).

The problems and the stress that individuals experience within the working environment have been shown to have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of the employees (Karakaş & Tezcan, 2019). In most companies and organizations, the working hours are long, and individuals feel that most of the time they spend at the workplace, it is difficult for them to take time for other tasks (Masri et al., 2023). But there are measures that individuals and organizations put into operation to alleviate the negative impact of stress that individuals experience within the working environment and to curb them and one of this is communicating with employers (Goswami, 2015).

In the context of work engagement, highly engaged employees are more likely to feel aligned with their organization's culture and values when they perceive their work has meaning and purpose (Saks, 2019). Also, engaged employees enhance the organization's competitive advantage (Jang, 2013). Likewise, according to the study by Gupta and Sharma (2019), highly engaged workers are likelier to display innovative behavior and aid the company's success. Also, Zhu et al. (2023) emphasized that work engagement was found to have a stronger relationship to employees' innovative behavior.

In today's quickly evolving and competitive global economy, innovative behavior is not just a choice but a requirement. In addition, innovative behavior is important as it is a significant force behind technical advancement and productivity, both of which are essential for fostering economic growth and employment creation (World Economic Forum, 2018). Also, Kamran and Ganjinia (2017) mentioned in their study that innovative behavior is important for personal and organizational aspects. They further stated that in the personal aspect, innovative behavior is a factor of growth and flourishing of talents that leads to self-realization. In contrast, in organizational aspects, innovative behavior brings growth and development to the organization. Moreover, McKinsey et al. (2021) highlighted the

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significance of innovation for sustainability and resilience, and innovative behavior fosters strategic change and growth.

Several studies have been conducted to determine relationships between work environment and innovative behavior and work engagement and innovative behavior. Findings from the study of Lee et al. (2017) indicate that the work environment positively affects innovative behavior, which indicates that employees are more likely to be creative when they feel their workplace is supportive, autonomous, and diverse. Further, Liu et al. (2018) revealed that employees are more likely to engage in innovative activities when they feel their work environment is encouraging, gives them autonomy, and provides feedback.

Though many studies focused on work environment and employee engagement in global and national settings, the researcher has not come across a study that relates work environment and work engagement to innovative behavior, particularly to employees of restaurants in Tagum, Davao del Norte, as a respondent. Hence, there is a need to conduct this study to fill the gap that the previous studies failed to answer. Therefore, this study has a different perspective from the growing body of literature relating to work environment and work engagement toward innovative behavior. The result of the study was a benefit not just to the restaurant involved in the study but also to other businesses who wanted to push their employees to their fullest potential.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine how the work environment and work engagement could influence innovative behavior of restaurant employees in Tagum, Davao del Norte. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the status of innovative behavior among restaurant employees?
2. What is the level of work environment among restaurant employees in terms of:
   - 2.1 Physical Work Environment;
   - 2.2 Psychological Work Environment;
   - 2.3 Social Work Environment;
   - 2.4 Workplace Flexibility?
3. What is the level of work engagement among restaurant employees in terms of:
   - 3.1 Vigor;
   - 3.2 Dedication;
   - 3.3 Absorption;
   - 3.4 Service Climate;
   - 3.5 Job Satisfaction;
   - 3.6 Affective Commitment;
   - 3.7 Adaptive Service Offering;
   - 3.8 Career Commitment?
4. What is the significant relationship between:
   - 4.1 work environment and innovative behavior;
   - 4.2 employee engagement and innovative behavior?
5. Do the work environment and employee engagement of restaurant employees significantly influence the innovative behavior of restaurant employees?

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Job-Demands Resources Theory (JD-R) of Bakker and Demerouti (2017), which states that the work environment has two key components: job demands and job resources. Job demand, for instance, is the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspect of the job that requires sustained effort and is associated with the physiological or psychological cost. The example of this is high workload and time pressure. On the other hand, job resources are the job aspect that helps workers attain goals, lessen job demand, and encourage growth and development. Examples are co-workers and management support, autonomy, feedback, and access to new technology.

Research Design

This research used a quantitative descriptive design, particularly a descriptive correlational design. Descriptive design includes multiple types of fact-finding surveys (Mishra & Alok, 2022). A descriptive research design was used to describe the level of work environment, employee engagement, and innovative behavior of the respondents. On the other hand, correlational is a non-experimental quantitative design in which the researcher applies correlational statistics to measure and describe the degree of association among variables or sets of scores (Creswell, 2012). The correlational research design was used to measure the relationship between work environment and employee engagement to influence the innovative behavior of restaurant employees.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at restaurants in Tagum, Davao del Norte. Specifically, there are a total of 13 identified restaurants in the location. Davao Region is the most appropriate as based on the report of the Philippine Statistic Authority (PSA), the number of business name registrations including restaurants from year 2021 is 9, 665 in Davao del Norte, and a GRDP value is 549,090,734 in service sector including restaurant for the year 2021 and this data reflects the attractiveness and ability of the Region and its provinces capability to absorb entrepreneurial venture.

Research Respondents

The study used purposive quota sampling. Acharya et al. (2013) state that the quota sampling technique guarantees that a population sample characteristic will be represented to the precise degree that the researcher wants. The total number of respondents is 250 employees from the 13 restaurants in Davao del Norte, specifically with 100 probationary employees and 150 regular employees. Likewise, Huff et al. (2015) specifically stated that 250 respondents in a study is an appropriate number that produces more minor errors and has a better prediction.

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Restaurant employees were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: the employee must have at least six (6) months employed as a minimum required set by the administration, and the employees must be in probationary or regular status and attendant the work during regular days.

Research Instruments

A 5-point Likert design was used in which 5 is very high, 4 is high, 3 is moderate, 2 is low, and 1 is very low. Part I of the research instrument is about Innovative Behavior was adapted from Prieto and Santana (2014) in their study "*Managing Innovative Work Behavior: The Role of Human Resource Practices"* with a Cronbach alpha result of 0.88, and this adapted research instrument is unidimensional. Part II of the research instrument is about the Work Environment, which was adapted from Encio et al. (2022), "*The Influence of Work Environment on Employee Engagement of Local Government Unit in the Municipality of Candelaria Zambales"* with a Cronbach alpha result of 0.90. Part III of the research instrument is about Work Engagement and was adapted from Barnes and Collier's (2013) "*Investigating work engagement in the service environment"* with a Cronbach alpha result of 0.90.

Data Gathering Procedures

In gathering data, the researcher observed the following steps. Data collection starts by securing the certificate of clearance issued by the UIC – Research Ethics Committee (REC). A letter was emailed to the graduate school addressed to the dean for the endorsement. Once granted, the researcher asked her colleagues for a prospective restaurant within the parameters and personally visited them to survey the location for cross-referencing restaurants and to check the number of employees.

After finalizing the number of respondents, another letter was addressed to the manager, HR officer, owner, and chief of the chosen restaurants to ask permission to conduct the survey. Once approved, the researcher personally visited the restaurants to inform a vacant employee representative or manager to explain the aim of the study and provide a copy of the informed consent, which provides the respondents with a decision to participate or not in the study.

The researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaire face-to-face to the employees during their vacant time in the restaurant. The respondents were given a day or three to answer the questionnaire before the researcher personally retrieved it. After this, the researcher retrieved the completed survey questionnaires with the management's help. Lastly, the data collection was 1 to 4 months, and the data gathered was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using the appropriate statistical tools.

Statistical Tools

Data gathered from the survey was tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The following statistical tools were used:

Mean was used to determine the level of work environment, work engagement, and innovative behavior of restaurant employees.

Standard deviation was utilized to measure the dispersion of a data set relative to the result of work environment, work engagement, and innovative behavior of restaurant employees.

Pearson r was used to determine the significant relationship between work environment, work engagement, and the innovative behavior of employees.

Multiple Regression Analysis. This statistical tool was used to determine the influence of work environment and work engagement on the innovative behavior of restaurant employees.

RESULT AND DICUSSION

The Status of Innovative Behavior among Restaurant Employees

The data in Table 1 shows the status of innovative behavior of restaurant employees. It shows an overall mean of 4.77, which is described as very high, which means that the innovative behavior of restaurant employees is highly demonstrated. This finding implies that restaurant employees are highly engaged in innovative behavior.

Also, this implies that restaurant employees' high level of innovative behavior shows they are deeply engaged and actively contributing to improving their work and organization. The standard deviation ranges from 0.48-0.40, indicating that all items are homogenous.

Table 1

The Status of Innovative Behavior of Restaurant Employees

	Mean	SD	Description
Innovative Behavior			
1. employees are trying to solve problems in different ways.	4.72	0.48	Very High
2. employees are searching for new working methods, techniques or instruments.	4.77	0.42	Very High
3. employees are showing innovative and creative behaviors.	4.78	0.42	Very High
4. employees are taking the risk of being innovative and creative.	4.78	0.42	Very High
5. employees are anticipating problems and opportunities.	4.80	0.40	Very High
Over-all Mean	**4.77**	**0.36**	**Very High**

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Level of Work Environment among Restaurant Employees

The data in Table 2 shows that the overall level of work environment among restaurant employees is 4.62, described as very high. The result implies that restaurant employees find their work environment very favorable, wherein there is trust and cooperation, feel safe, and gain support from the administration. In addition, it ranges from 0.48-0.59, which denotes that the items are homogeneous.

Table 2

Level of Work Environment Among Restaurant Employees

	Mean	SD	Description
Physical Work Environment			
1. having adequate workspace.	4.72	0.46	Very High
2. having a mechanism to control office congestion.	4.70	0.46	Very High
3. having work machines and tools which are readily available.	4.66	0.48	Very High
4. having health and safety program.	4.70	0.46	Very High
5. having a safety training to the employees.	4.67	0.47	Very High
6. having a work environment that ensures accidents to rarely happen.	4.64	0.49	Very High
7. having a wellness program for employees	4.64	0.52	Very High
8. having welfare programs for employees.	4.60	0.50	Very High
9. having a safe environment.	4.64	0.49	Very High
10. having a clean office.	4.67	0.48	Very High
Category Mean	**4.66**	**0.29**	**Very High**
Psychological Work Environment			
1. receiving sufficient support from my boss.	4.64	0.49	Very High
2. boss providing them with adequate resources to do their work.	4.63	0.52	Very High
3. being happy on having a reward provided by their employer.	4.59	0.52	Very High
4. being happy on having the benefits provided by their employer.	4.53	0.53	Very High
5. feeling safe and secure working in the organization.	4.50	0.52	Very High
6. being happy on having the leadership in the company.	4.52	0.52	Very High
7. being recognize for better performance.	4.62	0.51	Very High
8. being involved in decision making.	4.59	0.52	Very High
9. being accounted for the job.	4.62	0.53	Very High
10. being provided with adequate challenge in the job.	4.60	0.51	Very High
Category Mean	**4.58**	**0.33**	**Very High**
Social Work Environment			
1. having a good working relationship with their boss.	4.65	0.50	Very High
2. having a wonderful relationship with their boss.	4.63	0.48	Very High
3. having a friendly work environment.	4.62	0.49	Very High
4. having a happy working with their colleagues.	4.60	0.49	Very High
5. having a relaxing work environment.	4.62	0.48	Very High
6. having teamwork in the department.	4.61	0.49	Very High
7. having a feeling of well-being with their colleagues.	4.58	0.50	Very High
8. having an environment where they can have a person whom they can confide in.	4.62	0.49	Very High
9. having a helping from their colleagues to carry out work.	4.56	0.50	Very High
10. having opportunity to contact and collaborate with work colleagues.	4.58	0.50	Very High
Category Mean	**4.61**	**0.30**	**Very High**
Workplace Flexibility			
1. having flexy time work engagement.	4.55	0.59	Very High
2. having the employees to a choice when they could undertake the work.	4.58	0.51	Very High
3. having employees a chance on choosing where they can	4.60	0.50	Very High

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	work.			
4.	having a compressed workweek option for employees.	4.59	0.51	Very High
5.	having employees having career breaks, like opportunity to take study leave for a given period.	4.63	0.49	Very High
6.	having employees on combining career and family.	4.65	0.49	Very High
7.	having accommodation for family related needs.	4.66	0.48	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.64**	**0.31**	**Very High**
	Overall Mean	**4.62**	**0.23**	**Very High**

The Level of Work Engagement among Restaurant Employees

The data in Table 3 presents the level of work engagement among restaurant employees. It shows an overall mean of 4.68, which is very high. This finding implies that work engagement among restaurant employees is very evident. This finding means that restaurant employees are highly engaged and show strong commitment, a positive work environment, and high-performance potential. In addition, the standard deviation ranges from 0.55-0.44, which connotes that all items are homogenous.

Table 3

The Level of Work Engagement Among Restaurant Employees

		Mean	SD	Description
Vigor				
1.	feeling energized.	4.65	0.48	Very High
2.	feeling strong and active at work.	4.59	0.49	Very High
3.	feeling like going to work when they wake up in the morning.	4.63	0.48	Very High
4.	working continuously for quite lengthy period.	4.61	0.50	Very High
5.	having a lot of mental toughness for their profession.	4.64	0.48	Very High
6.	not giving up at work, even when things are not doing well.	4.60	0.49	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.62**	**0.36**	**Very High**
Dedication				
1.	considering their work to be meaningful and fulfilling.	4.61	0.49	Very High
2.	having high enthusiasm for their work.	4.64	0.48	Very High
3.	working motivates them.	4.67	0.47	Very High
4.	taking pride of their job.	4.66	0.47	Very High
5.	having difficulty to detaching themselves from their job.	4.72	0.46	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.66**	**0.36**	**Very High**
Absorption				
1.	working makes the time fly by.	4.72	0.46	Very High
2.	when working they forget everything else around them.	4.73	0.44	Very High
3.	when working hard, they feel happy.	4.68	0.48	Very High
4.	when working, they become undistracted.	4.63	0.55	Very High
5.	challenging to separate themselves from their profession.	4.66	0.51	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.68**	**0.36**	**Very High**
Service Climate				
1.	their ability to excel in providing first-rate customer service making it possible for them to receive high level of support from their coworkers and management.	4.62	0.50	Very High
2.	having a definite performance guidelines for customer service quality.	4.66	0.48	Very High
3.	prioritizing the demand of the customers.	4.69	0.46	Very High
4.	giving consumers outstanding service.	4.71	0.45	Very High
5.	being honored for their contribution to enhancing the quality of services.	4.73	0.45	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.68**	**0.36**	**Very High**

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Job Satisfaction				
1.	having an important work.	4.68	0.47	Very High
2.	making a positive contribution.	4.70	0.46	Very High
3.	having a fascinating work.	4.64	0.48	Very High
4.	having a fulfilling work.	4.63	0.48	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.66**	**0.39**	**Very High**
Affective Commitment				
1.	caring about the fate of the company.	4.64	0.48	Very High
2.	having a strong sense of loyalty to the organization.	4.68	0.47	Very High
3.	willing to work hard to make the organization successful.	4.76	0.44	Very High
4.	experiencing a sense of loyalty to the organization.	4.71	0.45	Very High
5.	valuing relationship in the organization.	4.70	0.46	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.70**	**0.35**	**Very High**
	Adaptive Service Offering			
1.	modifying the kind of service to match the requirements of each client.	4.71	0.45	Very High
2.	employing a variety of techniques to please the client.	4.68	0.47	Very High
3.	recommending wide range of services to satisfy the needs of each customer.	4.70	0.46	Very High
4.	personalizing the services for the client.	4.72	0.46	Very High
5.	altering the real service offering on several dimensions.	4.73	0.46	Very High
6.	thinking that each client needs a different strategy.	4.74	0.45	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.71**	**0.36**	**Very High**
Career Commitment				
1.	recommending the profession to their friends as a fantastic career.	4.73	0.45	Very High
2.	being glad in saying to others about their career.	4.68	0.47	Very High
3.	having a career that motivates them to give their fullest potential in terms of work performance.	4.67	0.48	Very High
4.	being happy in deciding to pursue the career over others that they are considering at the time.	4.69	0.47	Very High
5.	being concern for the future of the career.	4.72	0.45	Very High
6.	thinking that this is an ideal job out of all those that could be available.	4.68	0.48	Very High
	Category Mean	**4.69**	**0.37**	**Very High**
	Overall Mean	**4.68**	**0.23**	**Very High**

Correlations Between Variables

The result of the test of correlation is exhibited in Table 4. The data shows that work environment and work engagement significantly correlate with innovative behavior ($p<.05$). This indicates that the enhancement of each factor corresponds with an increase in innovative behavior

Table 4

Significance of Relationship of Work Environment, Work Engagement, and Innovative Behavior

Variables Paired	r	p-value	Remarks
Work Environment and Innovative Behavior	.39	.00	Significant
Work Engagement and Innovative Behavior	.51	.00	Significant

Influencers of Innovative Behavior

The result of the regression analysis is presented in Table 5. It can be gleaned that the independent variable which is work engagement could significantly influence the innovative behavior independently ($p<.05$). However, work environment does not significantly influence innovative behavior in its independent capacity ($p>.05$). The beta coefficient of .44 connotes that a unit increase in work engagement results in a .44 refinement in innovative behavior. As to the regression model, the r^2 of .26 connotes that 26.0 percent of the variation in innovative behavior could be ascribed to the combined influence of work environment and work engagement ($p<.05$). This result suggests that 74.0 percent of other variables that may significantly influence innovative behavior are not included in the study.

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Table 5

Significance of the Influence of Work Environment, and Work Engagement on Innovative Behavior

	Innovative Behavior			
Singular Influence of the Predictors	**Beta Coefficients**	**t**	**p-value**	**Remarks**
Work Environment	.11	1.59	.11	Not Significant
Work Engagement	.44	6.25	.00	Significant
Combined Influence of the Predictors				
R	.52			
R^2	.26			
F	45.16			
p	.00			Significant

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The respondent's status of innovative behavior is very high. This finding means that the restaurant employees are highly demonstrated. This result indicates that the restaurant employees embrace a high degree of innovative efforts, such as using varied techniques to serve the customers in the restaurant.

The level of work environment of the restaurant employees is very high which means that it is very favorable. This finding implies that the respondents felt recognition, a feeling of belongingness, and support from management.

The level of work engagement of the restaurant employees is also very high, which is very evident. It connotes that the respondents exchange collaborative effort with the boss and colleagues.

A significant relationship exists between work environment, work engagement, and innovative behavior. More so, the regression analysis found that the work environment does not significantly influence innovative behavior, while work engagement significantly influences innovative behavior. This result implies that work engagement is more important to accelerate the innovative behavior of restaurant employees than the work environment.

Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

First, the innovative behavior also garnered a very high-level rating. To maintain a high rating, the restaurant may encourage curiosity and set goals for innovation. The following may be realized by allowing the restaurant employees to join planning and decision-making to build their confidence to voice out professional, innovative ideas or efforts in connection with the restaurant's vision, mission, and goals.

Similarly, work engagement garnered a very high rating. To maintain a very high rating, the restaurant may empower and thrust the employees, foster a positive and respectful atmosphere, and celebrate team milestones. The restaurant may delegate by letting the employee handle minor or major guest requests or even let the kitchen staff create a specialty. It may also make a zero-tolerance policy where everyone feels respected regardless of race, gender, culture, and nationality. Additionally, the management may celebrate the birthday or small achievements of the employees to boost dedication.

Moreover, the work environment has a very high rating. To maintain a rating of very high, the restaurant may provide clear, positive communication to its employees, create a positive team culture, support employee growth, and offer a substantial compensation and reward system. The management may conduct "Employee of the Month" to recognize the effort of the employees, team building or group lunch after a shift, may also offer regular training sessions to elevate the knowledge and skills of the employees, may update them on the possible career advancement in the restaurant, may offer employee meal discount, and paid breaks or flexible work schedules.

Lastly, to fill the gap of the remaining seventy-four percent of the current study. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate another variable, such as job standardization, or conduct qualitative research that will deepen the understanding of the underlying reason behind the innovative behavior of the employees to add to the existing body of knowledge. Exploring other respondents in another business sector, increasing the population size, and proposing another research locale may be possible to explore innovative behavior better.