

## **The Value Respect – Collecting data in UK**

This chapter reports on the findings from UK's participation in the EU ETHIKA project<sup>1</sup>: Ethics and values education in schools and kindergartens (2014-2017). Birmingham City University established a partnership with the ETHIKA project in 2016. The results provide an insight into the exploration of the value of respect in the workplace in adults and impulses on the use of tools in different age groups and countries. The research findings collected in UK will be helpful to optimize the learning tools developed in the project.

In the workplace, it is important that managers and colleagues feel respected and that their communications are received well to improve productivity and job satisfaction (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Respectful behaviour displays personal integrity and professionalism, practices fairness and understanding, demonstrates respect for individual rights and differences and encourages accountability for one's actions ("Promote Respect in the Workplace - Province of British Columbia", 2017).

Psychological literature has highlighted more specific reasons as to why respect is vital within the workplace; contemporarily an example is autonomy (Renger, Renger, Miché, & Simon, 2017). Renger, Renger, Miché, and Simon (2017) found that respect contributed strongly and independently towards perceived autonomy as opposed to other forms of social recognition such achievement-based social esteem and also need-based care. Respect was also found in the same literature to affect both life and work satisfaction; It was also found that the effect respect has on perceived autonomy leads to better social cooperation.

Clarke and Mahadi (2017) investigated the significance of the mutual recognition of respect in mediating the relationships between trait emotional intelligence, affective commitment and job satisfaction. The literature looks at millennials and their experiences of the workplace and how it differs among age cohorts. It was highlighted that there are attributes that these millennials have which older individuals are less savvy to such as technology and it was found that being able to have mutual respect between generations within the workplace helped to improve colleagues coming to a common agreement or having a personal understanding of others which led to job satisfaction increase.

Similarly, Ng (2016) looked at respect as a key component to perceived organizational embeddedness (POE) which is feeling as one with the company. It was highlighted that younger educated individuals desire to be respected and valued within the workplace. The longitudinal study found that increases of perceived respect led to greater amounts of gratitude over twelve months. The increases in gratitude were then linked to the increase of within-person POE. This demonstrates that those who are just starting in their career can feel more embedded within the organization if they feel respected by their colleagues.

Linking onto the generational gap discussed, McCann, Gil, and Ota (2017) looked at the aging working population and the way this affects the communications held in the workplace. In eastern cultures the respect that younger individuals had for older individuals is slowly dying down and this is translating into dissatisfaction from the younger workers when trying to communicate with older colleagues. This highlights a communication barrier that needs to be managed.

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<sup>1</sup> The ETHIKA project is an ethics intervention which seeks to foster critical thinking skills, using ethics education as a way to enhance personal development.

A very contemporary method of communication within the workplace is through the use of electronic communications. Cascio (2000) highlights that virtual workplaces, where individuals work with each other remotely are a reality and will only increase. Therefore, it is important that employees are aware of how to conduct themselves when using these platforms of communication such as email and video calls.

The objective of the research was to create an educational tool for those who are at the age of employment, through using tools already provided by the ETHIKA project. The rationale behind the decision to do this was that employment levels are not high within the UK and the conventional methods of work are changing, though many people do not have certain skills which are basic to securing available jobs. Skills such as IT literacy and technological etiquette are some very common skills to have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to acquire a job. The demographics of the workplace are also changing rapidly, there are more people from various ethnic backgrounds securing jobs within the UK along with older individuals working alongside younger workers due to the increase of the retirement age. This emphasizes the point that respect among people who are different needs to be focal point of all companies, between the managers and the colleagues, to be cohesive. With the respect in place also individuals are more likely to effectively communicate with each other, which may facilitate higher outputs.

## **Methodology**

### ***Design***

The research study looked at how individuals who were of employment age felt about respect, mediation and effective communication within the workplace and what should be incorporated in the workplace to encourage this further. Open-ended questions were used in the framework of a focus group and the responses were audio-recorded.

### ***Participants***

Four individuals participated in the focus group (two male and two female adults). The participants were aged between 16 and 55 years (M= 36 years). All participants were of Black British heritage and were of legal formal employment age. In order that confounding variables such as an extremely positive or extremely negative experience (Bohner, Moskowitz, & Chaiken, 1995) were minimized, opportunity sampling was used so no individual had necessarily a more eventful or less eventful experience than any other individual who could have been chosen. Though only individuals of employment age could be selected.

### ***Materials***

The materials used were a list of ground rules (e.g. *We would like everyone to participate*), a set of nine open-ended questions (e.g. *Why is mediation necessary in the workplace*), two scenario extracts, the one on respect and effective communication from ETHIKA education project (Kragić, 2015) and the other on on-line communication devised by the researcher. A pen and paper were also used to capture participants' responses. A tape recorder was used to record verbal responses.

***Procedure.*** The participants were all briefed about the scope of the project, and informed that ethical approval was given prior by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. They read the information sheet and then completed the consent forms. The participants were then given questions in which they were to either verbally required or physically required to give a written response, in some circumstances both written and verbal were appropriate e.g. 'What values are needed within the workplace to succeed (get them to

write down what they can think of within a few minutes)' the participants were then asked to say what they had written down. Once the participants had finished, they were debriefed, their sheets were collected in, and told that they were free to leave.

### **Results**

Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis (2006) was used alongside quoting verbatim to generate findings about the role respect and effective communication play in the workplace in regards to productivity and colleague satisfaction. Three main themes were identified; recognition, representation and support.

#### **Recognition**

This theme encapsulates the ideas that having your efforts noticed is key to underpinning the motivation to keep on progressing in their roles. This is referred to several times through the transcripts where 'recognizing skills', 'appreciation', 'appreciate' and 'recognition' were highlighted as ways in which colleagues feel better at the workplace.

"showing appreciation and being polite towards one another, despite any differences" (female, 18)

When asked to give a definition of what respect was in a workplace context, straight away showing appreciation towards colleagues was the first idea to be brought up. Ideas of appreciation being key within the workplace for job satisfaction is supported by Stocker, Jacobshagen, Semmer, and Annen (2010) who found that appreciation at work correlated positively with job satisfaction and negatively with feelings of resentment.

"we recognize you have this skill we've never used you for this before but you be interested if a new job post came up" (male, 55)

When asked about values, valuing the employers as a whole and recognizing that an individual has a skillset outside of their job post was brought up. The nurturing of these skills can be continual professional development leading to increased job satisfaction.

#### **Representation for the colleagues**

This theme was identified through discussion of mediation within the workplace. It was felt that employees need someone to speak on their behalf to sometimes get their points across or else they may not have a voice at all. This was highlighted many times; 'advocacy', 'middle man', 'all parties heard' were phrases used.

"by having someone on your behalf ... make sure that those points aren't missed" (male, 55)

When talking about mediation it was brought up that having someone on your behalf to bring points to higher authorities is good as possibly without your point may be missed, ignored, or not even heard at all. This was highlighted by Fiester (2012) who found that hierarchical side taking can take place where one party is valued more than another, a mediator changes this dynamic.

"depending on experience and confidence ... less likely to need a mediator" (male, 55)

It was felt that if individuals did have the knowledge, confidence and background to speak on their own behalf, then a mediator may not be necessary to have mediation

within an organization. The individual may be able to mediate without a third party involved.

### **Support**

This theme is underpinned by the ideas that the organization's employees should provide help and support to those who need it, in order that slower individuals with underlying issues are to an appropriate level. This was emphasized by phases such as help giving weaker people the support they need and can feel helpless without support.

“at times I felt I was helpless” (male, 16)

When reflecting on positive or negative experiences it was addressed that feeling helpless can happen, when you are on your own and you may need others to back you up and reinforce your points.

“Technological etiquette to be taught in sixth forms colleges and job centers for those who may not go to university to learn”

After participating in the email scenario activity it was brought up in feedback that formatting wasn't a strong area, and it was felt that electronic etiquette should be taught from an early age so that individuals are prepared when they head into the world of work.

### **Limitations and reflections**

An important limitation of the present study is its relatively small sample size. For this reason, the views expressed throughout represent those of four individuals in the workplace that cannot be applied to the wider community of working adults as the normative understanding of respect and communication.

The ETHIKA EU Project is a transnational intervention strategy, thus applying its methods and resources to a broader and more culturally diverse sample size is put forward as a recommendation for future research. This may enable researchers to compare findings on a larger scale and recognise the effect ethics education has on children's and adults' conceptualisation of values in various parts of the world. Potentially, this could lead to significant changes in the field of ethics education, ranging from national policy development to prompting much needed dialogue concerning ethics across communities.

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