

Organizational Norms and Work Demand as Predictors of Employees' Perceived Productivity: Evidence from Financial Institutions in Malaysia

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Abstract

Employee productivity remains a central concern for organizations operating in highly competitive and performance-driven environments, particularly within sectors undergoing rapid transformation, such as finance. While work demand has traditionally been viewed as a key determinant of productivity, recent research has increasingly highlighted the importance of organizational context—particularly organizational norms—in shaping employees' subjective evaluations of their performance. This study examines the effects of organizational norms and work demand on employees' perceived productivity within financial institutions in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, survey data were collected from 388 employees across banking, insurance, fintech, and asset management organizations. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were employed to test the proposed relationships. Results indicate that organizational norms significantly predict perceived productivity, whereas work demand does not exhibit a statistically significant relationship. These findings support prior claims that social and cultural workplace factors often outweigh workload intensity in shaping productivity perceptions. The study contributes to organizational behavior and human resource management literature by underscoring the importance of supportive normative environments in strengthening employee productivity in emerging economy contexts. Practical implications highlight the need for organizations to cultivate positive norms, transparent communication, and supportive leadership practices to enhance employee effectiveness.

Keywords

Organizational Norms, Work Demand, Perceived Productivity, Job-Demand-Resources Model, Employee Performance

1. Introduction

Employee productivity is a foundational element of organizational success, particularly in performance-driven sectors such as Malaysia's financial industry, where efficiency, regulatory responsiveness, and customer service are critical for competitive advantage. Employees in this sector face intensifying pressures due to digital transformation, evolving customer expectations, increasing compliance demands, and rapid technological disruption (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schneider et al., 2013). In such contexts, understanding the factors that shape employees' perceived productivity—their own subjective evaluation of work output and effectiveness—has become increasingly important, as perceived productivity is strongly associated with performance, engagement, and well-being (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002).

Traditional studies have focused heavily on work demand, including workload intensity, role overload, and time pressure, as predictors of productivity outcomes (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Spector & Jex, 1998). High job demands are often linked to fatigue, strain, and lower performance, suggesting an inverse relationship with productivity. However, research conducted in high-pressure or fast-paced industries—such as banking and finance—reveals inconsistent findings. Some employees perceive heavy workloads as normal or even motivating, particularly when such demands are embedded within the culture of the sector (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Taris & Schaufeli, 2015). As a result, work demand alone may not sufficiently explain variations in perceived productivity.

Recent scholarship highlights organizational norms—shared behavioral expectations and informal rules—as a more powerful determinant of employee attitudes and performance-related perceptions (Schneider et al., 2013; Denison, 1996; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organizational norms differ conceptually from organizational culture, which reflects deeper values and assumptions, and from organizational climate, which reflects employees' perceptions of organizational practices. Norms represent the actionable layer of culture: what employees believe they should do in everyday interactions (Schneider et al., 2013; Brown & Leigh, 1996). Supportive norms—such as fairness, collaboration, clear communication, and psychological safety—have been widely associated with stronger motivation, higher engagement, and more positive evaluations of individual and team effectiveness (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). Organizational norms are conceptually distinct from organizational culture and organizational climate. While organizational culture refers to deeply embedded values and shared assumptions that evolve over time, and organizational climate reflects employees' perceptions of organizational

policies, procedures, and practices, organizational norms represent the explicit and observable behavioral expectations that guide employees' day-to-day interactions. This distinction is critical, as norms operate at the most immediate level of influence on employee behavior and perceived performance outcomes. By focusing on norms, this study captures the actionable layer of organizational context that directly shapes how employees interpret and evaluate their work effectiveness.

Perceived productivity is defined in this study as employees' self-evaluations of their work efficiency, output quality, and task effectiveness relative to job expectations. Unlike objective productivity measures, perceived productivity reflects the psychological dimension of performance, which has been shown to be closely associated with motivation, engagement, and behavioral effort. This conceptualization aligns with prior research emphasizing the predictive value of self-rated performance in organizational settings.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of organizational norms, research examining their direct influence on perceived productivity remains limited, particularly in emerging economies such as Malaysia. Much of the existing literature focuses on Western contexts or large multinational corporations, leaving a gap in understanding how norms function within culturally diverse and collectivist-oriented environments (Hofstede, 2001; Schneider et al., 2013). In Asia, where workplace relationships, hierarchical structures, and social expectations play central roles in employee behavior, organizational norms may exert an even stronger influence on productivity-related attitudes than job-related pressures. This provides a compelling rationale for deeper examination in the local financial sector.

To strengthen conceptual clarity, the present study distinguishes organizational norms from organizational culture and climate. Organizational culture refers to deep-seated values, shared meanings, and underlying assumptions that develop over time, while organizational climate captures employees' perceptions of organizational practices, procedures, and policies. Organizational norms, however, denote the specific behavioral expectations that guide everyday interactions—what employees believe they “should” do. This conceptual distinction is crucial, as norms represent a proximal and observable layer of culture that more directly influences behavioral intentions and perceived work outcomes (Denison, 1996; Schneider et al., 2013; Brown & Leigh, 1996).

Perceived productivity, in this study, is defined as employees' self-evaluations of their work efficiency, task completion, and overall effectiveness in fulfilling job responsibilities (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). Unlike objective productivity metrics, perceived productivity captures the psychological dimension of work performance, which is closely associated with motivation, engagement, and psychological well-being. Studies have shown that self-perceptions of productivity are strong predictors of individual performance, even after controlling for objective output (Christian et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2001).

Despite substantial research on work demand and employee outcomes, findings remain inconsistent in high-pressure industries. Some scholars argue that heavy workloads reduce employees' perceived productivity due to strain and resource depletion (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Other studies, however, suggest that employees in demanding sectors become accustomed to elevated workloads and therefore may not perceive them as hindering productivity, particularly when job resources—such as supportive norms—are present (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Bakker et al., 2014). This inconsistency highlights the need to examine demand-resource relationships within specific cultural and industry contexts.

Given these gaps, the present study investigates the additive effects of organizational norms and work demand on perceived productivity. Unlike earlier studies that conceptualized job resources as buffering the negative effects of job demands, this research adopts an additive model, consistent with reviewer recommendations. This approach aligns with empirical findings showing that job resources and job demands may independently influence employee outcomes without moderating each other (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014). By focusing on the Malaysian financial sector, this study contributes context-specific evidence that advances theoretical understanding and informs managerial strategies for improving productivity.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Organizational behavior scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of contextual factors—particularly organizational norms—in shaping employee attitudes and performance outcomes. Organizational norms are defined as the shared behavioral expectations and informal rules that guide how employees should act within the workplace (Denison, 1996; Schneider et al., 2013). Unlike organizational culture, which comprises deep-rooted values and underlying assumptions, norms represent the observable expectations that directly influence daily interactions. Similarly, although organizational climate reflects employees' perceptions of practices and policies, norms serve as the actionable layer of culture that governs acceptable and expected behavior (Brown & Leigh, 1996; Schneider et al., 2013).

Supportive organizational norms such as fairness, cooperation, open communication, and respect play a critical role in shaping employees' motivation and work experiences. When employees perceive that their organization promotes clear behavioral expectations and positive social interactions, they are more likely to report higher levels of motivation, engagement, and perceived effectiveness (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In collectivist work environments—including Malaysia—these relational dimensions are particularly influential due to strong cultural emphases on harmony, respect, and hierarchical relationships (Hofstede, 2001; Schneider et al., 2013). Thus, organizational norms constitute a critical predictor of perceived productivity, especially within

Asian work contexts where interpersonal dynamics significantly influence work outcomes.

Perceived productivity refers to employees' subjective assessments of their work efficiency, output quality, and ability to complete tasks in alignment with job expectations (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). It captures the psychological dimension of performance and is strongly associated with job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being (Christian et al., 2011). Scholars argue that perceived productivity often predicts actual performance because employees' self-assessments influence motivation and behavioral effort (Judge et al., 2001). In high-pressure sectors such as finance, perceived productivity becomes especially meaningful as employees frequently navigate demanding roles with limited downtime.

Work demand—typically conceptualized as workload intensity, time pressure, and role overload—has been extensively studied as a factor shaping employee performance (Demerouti et al., 2001; Spector & Jex, 1998). High job demands are commonly associated with stress, fatigue, and lower psychological well-being, which may undermine performance. However, findings in the Malaysian financial sector and other high-pressure industries remain inconsistent. Some employees normalize or adapt to heavy workloads, perceiving them as expected components of their roles (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015; Bakker et al., 2014). Other studies suggest that workload may be unrelated to productivity perceptions when organizational resources are sufficient (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). These mixed results indicate that work demand alone may be insufficient to predict perceived productivity.

The present study adopts an additive theoretical model, consistent with reviewer feedback and empirical evidence from JD-R scholarship. Instead of assuming that organizational norms buffer or moderate the impact of work demand, the additive model posits that both variables independently contribute to perceived productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014). This approach reflects evidence that job resources exert direct positive effects on employee outcomes regardless of job demands, and that job demands may or may not impact performance depending on context and employee coping strategies.

Hypotheses Development

The present study adopts an additive theoretical model grounded in the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework. Rather than assuming a buffering or moderating relationship between job resources and job demands, this study conceptualizes organizational norms and work demand as independent predictors of perceived productivity. No interaction effects are tested. This approach reflects emerging empirical evidence suggesting that job resources may exert direct positive effects on employee outcomes regardless of job demands, while job demands may vary in their influence depending on contextual and cultural factors.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Organizational norms positively predict employees' perceived productivity.

This hypothesis is grounded in empirical findings showing that supportive norms

enhance motivation, cooperation, and work effectiveness (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). Given Malaysia's relationally oriented work culture, norms are expected to play an even stronger role in productivity perceptions.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Work demand negatively predicts employees' perceived productivity.

Although the findings are mixed, traditional job demands research suggests that heavy workloads may undermine employees' ability to sustain high performance (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This hypothesis tests this classical assumption in the Malaysian financial context.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Organizational norms and work demand jointly contribute to employees' perceived productivity through their additive effects.

This hypothesis reflects the study's additive framework, aligning with JD-R evidence showing independent effects of demands and resources on work outcomes without implying moderation or buffering (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the additive effects of organizational norms and work demand on employees' perceived productivity within financial institutions in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The target population consisted of full-time employees working in banking, insurance, fintech, and asset management organizations. To ensure appropriate inclusion, employees were required to meet three criteria: 1) full-time employment status, 2) a minimum tenure of six months, and 3) involvement in operational, administrative, or managerial roles. Exclusion criteria included interns, part-time workers, contract workers, and frontline commission-based sales agents to avoid variability in performance structures.

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques was used due to the difficulty in obtaining comprehensive employee lists from financial institutions, a common challenge in organizational studies (Etikan et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). Recruitment was conducted through corporate email invitations, LinkedIn professional groups, HR department referrals, and WhatsApp professional networks. A total of 650 employees were approached, yielding 412 responses. After data cleaning—removal of incomplete surveys and patterned responses—388 valid cases remained, producing a response rate of 63%.

The sample included employees from banking (46%), insurance (28%), fintech (16%), and asset management (10%) institutions. Respondents' average tenure was 5.7 years, with job positions distributed across junior (41%), mid-level (37%), and senior (22%) roles. To assess possible nonresponse bias, early and late respondents were compared using independent samples t-tests, revealing no significant differences across key study variables ($p > .05$), indicating minimal bias.

To assess potential nonresponse bias, early and late respondents were compared

using independent samples t-tests. The results indicated no statistically significant differences across key study variables ($p > .05$), suggesting that nonresponse bias was unlikely to affect the findings. This strengthens the validity and generalizability of the results despite the use of purposive sampling.

3.2. Measures

A pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to assess clarity, reliability, and contextual appropriateness of the instrument. Feedback from the pilot study resulted in minor wording refinements. Additionally, two subject-matter experts in organizational behavior reviewed the questionnaire to ensure content validity and alignment with the study constructs.

All constructs were measured using established multi-item scales adapted from prior studies. Minor wording modifications were made to ensure contextual relevance to the Malaysian financial sector while preserving the original meaning of each item. All responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Hair et al., 2022).

Organizational Norms. A six-item scale adapted from Schneider et al. (2013) and Brown and Leigh (1996) was used to assess organizational norms. Sample items include: “Employees in my organization are expected to treat one another fairly” and “Collaboration is the norm in my department”. These items capture observable behavioral expectations and informal rules that shape daily interactions within the workplace.

Work Demand. Work demand was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Spector and Jex (1998) and Bakker and Demerouti (2007). Items assessed respondents’ perceptions of workload intensity, time pressure, and role overload. Sample items include: “I am required to work under tight deadlines” and “My workload is often excessive”.

Perceived Productivity. A four-item scale adapted from Christian et al. (2011) and Harter et al. (2002) was used to measure employees’ self-rated productivity. Sample items include: “I am able to complete my work efficiently” and “My output quality is high”. Perceived productivity captures employees’ subjective evaluations of their task effectiveness and work outcomes.

Two subject-matter experts in organizational psychology reviewed the adapted items to ensure content clarity and contextual relevance. A pilot study involving 30 respondents demonstrated strong internal consistency for all scales ($\alpha > .80$), confirming the reliability of the measurement instruments prior to full-scale data collection.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28.0 (IBM Corp., 2022). Preliminary analyses included assessment of missing data, descriptive statistics, and examination of normality (Hair et al., 2022). Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine relationships among key variables. Multiple

regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the additive effects of organizational norms and work demand on perceived productivity, consistent with the study's conceptual framework.

Assumption testing indicated no violations of regression requirements. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factor (VIF) values, which ranged from 1.08 to 1.21—well below the threshold of 5. Normality of residuals was confirmed using Q-Q plots. Scatterplot inspection indicated homoscedasticity, and the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.98 suggested no autocorrelation concerns. These diagnostics confirm the suitability of multiple regression for the study.

3.4. Reliability and Validity

Reliability analysis demonstrated strong internal consistency across all constructs. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, with organizational norms ($\alpha = .89$), work demand ($\alpha = .86$), and perceived productivity ($\alpha = .88$), indicating high reliability.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring confirmed that all measurement items loaded strongly on their respective constructs, with factor loadings exceeding .60 and no significant cross-loadings observed. Convergent validity was supported through average variance extracted (AVE) values above .50 for all constructs. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, whereby the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded inter-construct correlations.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring indicated that all items loaded above .60 on their respective constructs, with no problematic cross-loadings. Convergent validity was supported by average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding .50 for all constructs. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with each construct's square root of AVE exceeding inter-construct correlations.

4. Results

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among organizational norms, work demand, and perceived productivity. Descriptive statistics indicated that mean scores for organizational norms and perceived productivity were moderately high, while work demand showed considerable variability across respondents. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that organizational norms were positively and significantly correlated with perceived productivity ($r = .47, p < .001$), suggesting that supportive behavioral expectations are associated with stronger subjective productivity evaluations. In contrast, work demand exhibited a weak and non-significant correlation with perceived productivity ($r = .08, p = .12$), indicating that employees did not necessarily perceive heavy workloads as detracting from their productivity.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that organizational norms were positively and significantly associated with perceived productivity ($r = .47, p < .001$), whereas

work demand was not significantly related to perceived productivity ($r = .08, p = .12$).

Multiple regression analysis indicated that organizational norms significantly predicted perceived productivity ($B = .51, \beta = .44, t = 9.02, p < .001$), while work demand remained non-significant ($B = -.03, \beta = -.04, t = -1.21, p = .227$). The model explained 22.1% of the variance in perceived productivity ($R^2 = .221$).

Diagnostic tests confirmed the robustness of the model. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.08 to 1.21, indicating no multicollinearity concerns. Residual analysis confirmed normality and homoscedasticity, and the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.98) indicated no autocorrelation.

Regression Model 1 examined the direct effect of organizational norms on perceived productivity. The model was statistically significant ($F = 92.57, p < .001$), explaining 21.5% of the variance in perceived productivity ($R^2 = .215$). Organizational norms positively predicted perceived productivity ($B = .53, \beta = .46, t = 9.62, p < .001$), confirming Hypothesis 1. This finding supports the argument that supportive behavioral expectations and interpersonal norms enhance employees' perceptions of their effectiveness.

Regression Model 2 assessed the effect of work demand on perceived productivity. The model was not statistically significant ($F = 2.05, p = .153$), and work demand accounted for less than 1% of the variance in perceived productivity ($R^2 = .006$). The predictor was non-significant ($B = -.04, \beta = -.05, t = -1.43, p = .153$), providing no support for Hypothesis 2. These results align with studies suggesting that employees in high-pressure industries may normalize heavy workloads and therefore do not perceive them as impairing their productivity.

Regression Model 3 incorporated both organizational norms and work demand as predictors in the additive model. The combined model was statistically significant ($F = 55.02, p < .001$), explaining 22.1% of the variance in perceived productivity ($R^2 = .221$). Organizational norms remained a strong predictor ($B = .51, \beta = .44, t = 9.02, p < .001$), while work demand remained non-significant ($B = -.03, \beta = -.04, t = -1.21, p = .227$). These findings support Hypothesis 3, confirming that organizational norms and work demand contribute additively—rather than interactively—to productivity perceptions.

Assumption testing confirmed the adequacy of the regression models. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.08 to 1.21, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. Residuals exhibited normal distribution patterns based on Q-Q plots. Homoscedasticity was observed through the residual scatterplot, and the Durbin-Watson value of 1.98 suggested no autocorrelation concerns. These diagnostics affirm the robustness of the regression findings.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the central role of organizational norms in shaping employees' perceived productivity within Malaysia's financial sector. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, organizational norms emerged as a strong and significant predictor of perceived productivity. This result reinforces prior research demonstrat-

ing that clear behavioral expectations, fairness, collaboration, and supportive interpersonal norms enhance employees' sense of effectiveness and motivation (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). Given Malaysia's collectivist cultural orientation—where relational harmony and respect for social expectations are emphasized—the influence of organizational norms may be magnified, shaping how employees evaluate their own performance.

The non-significant effect of work demand on perceived productivity, as shown in Hypothesis 2, provides important insight into the dynamics of high-pressure work environments. While classical job demands theories propose that excessive workloads diminish performance and well-being (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), findings from this study support an alternative perspective: in industries where high job demands are normalized, employees may not perceive workload intensity as detrimental. This aligns with research in similar high-demand settings, where employees interpret heavy workloads as intrinsic aspects of their roles and thus do not associate them with reduced productivity (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015; Bakker et al., 2014; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Such normalization may serve as a coping mechanism or reflect adaptive professional identities common in financial institutions.

Together, the results from Regression Model 3 confirm Hypothesis 3, demonstrating that organizational norms and work demand contribute additively to perceived productivity. This aligns with the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework, particularly additive models that suggest job resources exert positive effects on employee outcomes independent of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014). While earlier studies have emphasized buffering or moderating effects of job resources, the present findings support the conceptualization that norms and demands operate as distinct predictors of workplace attitudes. This is consistent with reviewer recommendations and strengthens the empirical validity of the additive approach, particularly within the Malaysian financial context.

These findings also contribute to the theoretical understanding of perceived productivity as an important psychological construct. As employees' subjective evaluations of their work efficiency and output, perceived productivity is influenced not only by task requirements but also by the social environment in which work occurs (Christian et al., 2011; Harter et al., 2002). This study emphasizes that relational and normative factors carry greater weight than task-related pressures in shaping productivity perceptions. Such findings enrich the literature by demonstrating the importance of integrating socio-relational variables—particularly organizational norms—into performance and motivation models.

Contextually, the results underscore the importance of cultural considerations in organizational behavior research. Malaysia's financial sector is characterized by hierarchical structures, collectivist values, and an emphasis on interpersonal harmony (Hofstede, 2001; Schneider et al., 2013). In such environments, the expectations communicated through organizational norms—such as cooperation, respect,

and fairness—may resonate more deeply with employees than workload fluctuations. Managers in Malaysian financial institutions may therefore achieve greater improvements in productivity by reinforcing positive norms rather than focusing exclusively on workload optimization.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that organizational norms represent a powerful and actionable lever for enhancing employee productivity in emerging economy contexts. When employees experience supportive and clearly defined expectations, they are more likely to perceive themselves as effective and capable, regardless of the intensity of their job demands. This highlights the need for leadership development, cultural reinforcement, and norm-focused HR practices as strategic tools for enhancing productivity in the financial sector.

6. Conclusion and Implications

6.1. Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important practical implications for managers, human resource practitioners, and organizational leaders within the Malaysian financial sector. First, the significant effect of organizational norms on perceived productivity suggests that organizations should prioritize the development and reinforcement of positive workplace norms. Norms such as fairness, mutual respect, collaboration, and open communication create a supportive social environment that enhances employees' confidence in their ability to perform effectively. Managers can strengthen such norms through consistent leadership behaviors, transparent communication practices, and the establishment of clear behavioral expectations across teams.

Second, organizations should recognize that productivity is not solely driven by task-related factors such as workload intensity. The non-significant relationship between work demand and perceived productivity indicates that employees in high-pressure environments may normalize heavy workloads. However, this does not imply that workload management can be neglected. Sustained high work demand may still contribute to long-term negative outcomes such as burnout, reduced well-being, and employee turnover. Therefore, managers should adopt a balanced approach by ensuring that workload expectations are aligned with available resources while simultaneously fostering supportive organizational norms that help employees cope with job demands.

Third, human resource management practices should incorporate norm-reinforcement strategies into employee development and organizational policies. Leadership training programs should emphasize the role of organizational norms in shaping employee attitudes and performance perceptions. Additionally, onboarding programs can explicitly communicate expected workplace norms to new employees, ensuring early alignment with organizational expectations. Performance management systems may also integrate norm-based behaviors—such as teamwork and communication—as part of evaluation criteria.

Finally, in the context of Malaysia's collectivist and relationship-oriented work

culture, reinforcing positive organizational norms may yield stronger effects compared to purely structural or task-based interventions. Organizations that actively cultivate supportive interpersonal environments are more likely to enhance employees' perceived productivity, motivation, and overall organizational effectiveness.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Although the findings provide evidence of significant associations, future research employing longitudinal designs would allow for a more robust examination of causal dynamics and changes in perceived productivity over time.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce common method bias and perceptual distortions. While perceived productivity is inherently subjective and appropriate for self-assessment, future studies may benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as supervisor evaluations or objective performance indicators, to enhance the robustness of the findings.

Third, the sample is limited to employees within financial institutions in Klang Valley, Malaysia. While this context is relevant due to its high-pressure and performance-driven environment, the findings may not be generalizable to other industries or geographical regions. Future research could extend this study by examining similar relationships in different sectors, such as healthcare, education, or manufacturing, as well as in other cultural contexts.

Fourth, the study adopts an additive model without examining potential interaction effects between organizational norms and work demand. Although this approach aligns with the study's theoretical positioning, future research may explore whether moderating or mediating mechanisms exist under different organizational or cultural conditions.

Finally, future studies may also consider incorporating additional variables, such as leadership style, psychological capital, or employee engagement, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing perceived productivity. Such extensions would further enrich the theoretical and practical contributions of this research.

6.3. Overall Summary

The findings of this study underscore the importance of organizational norms as a key predictor of employees' perceived productivity within Malaysia's financial sector. Organizational norms demonstrated a strong and significant effect on perceived productivity, whereas work demand was not a significant predictor. These results highlight that employees' productivity perceptions are shaped more by relational, interpersonal, and normative expectations than by job-related pressures, especially within high-demand sectors where heavy workloads are commonplace.

The study thus concludes that supportive and clearly defined behavioral expectations represent a more influential determinant of self-evaluated productivity than workload intensity in Malaysia's financial institutions.

By adopting an additive theoretical model, this study contributes to the broader organizational behavior literature by demonstrating that organizational norms and work demand exert independent effects on productivity perceptions. This reinforces evidence from job demands-resources (JD-R) research suggesting that job resources, such as supportive norms, influence employee outcomes regardless of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2014). The findings also extend prior work by clarifying the conceptual distinction between norms, culture, and climate, positioning organizational norms as the actionable and observable layer of workplace expectations that directly shape employee attitudes.

Several practical implications emerge from this study. First, managers should prioritize strengthening positive organizational norms, including fairness, mutual respect, open communication, and collaboration. These norms foster a supportive work environment that enhances employees' confidence in their ability to perform effectively. Organizations may reinforce such norms through leadership modeling, communication policies, team-based work structures, and transparent performance expectations.

Second, while work demand did not significantly predict perceived productivity, organizations should remain mindful of workload distribution. Employees in high-pressure industries may normalize demanding workloads, but sustained overwork can still lead to burnout, turnover, and reduced well-being over time. Managers should regularly monitor workload patterns and promote a balanced approach that aligns productivity expectations with available resources.

Third, HR practitioners should integrate norm-reinforcement strategies into employee development initiatives. Leadership training programs should emphasize the role of positive norms in shaping employee behavior and productivity perceptions. Additionally, onboarding processes may explicitly communicate expected norms to new employees to ensure early alignment with organizational expectations.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies would allow future researchers to examine how organizational norms and work demands influence productivity perceptions over time. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may introduce perceptual biases, although perceived productivity is inherently a subjective construct. Future research may incorporate supervisor evaluations or objective performance indicators to strengthen the assessment of productivity. Third, the study focused exclusively on financial institutions within Klang Valley, which may limit generalizability. The influence of organizational norms and work demands may differ in other industries such as education, healthcare, or manufacturing. Future studies may benefit from cross-industry comparisons or explorations of similar relationships in smaller firms or public-sector organizations.

In summary, this study highlights the powerful influence of organizational norms on employees' perceived productivity in Malaysia's financial sector. By demonstrating the independent contributions of organizational norms and work demand through an additive model, the study offers valuable theoretical and practical insights that can guide managers, HR practitioners, and policymakers in designing strategies to enhance employee productivity. Reinforcing supportive norms within organizations may yield long-term benefits for employee motivation, well-being, and organizational performance.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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