

Giving Meaning to Workplace Fun: Personal Experiences of Employees

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Abstract

Workplace fun has been a concept that is more widely researched and applied since the start of this century. This qualitative study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base on workplace fun by exploring employee experiences. Three constructs were explored to better understand workplace fun. 1) High-quality relationships, because workplace fun is often defined in social context between colleagues. 2) Negative experiences, because jokes can lead to bullying. And, 3) psychological safety, because the first two constructs impact psychological safety. All constructs were meant to give more meaning and a more complete picture of workplace fun. Twelve qualitative interviews were conducted. Exploratory results showed both negative and positive experiences of workplace fun. Positive experiences of workplace fun seem common and more frequent between people in high-quality relationships. Although it is not clear whether it is a cause-effect or vice versa. More research is needed to determine this. Negative experiences are less common, but were found in the data. The severity of these experiences range from mild to harming psychological safety. Results indicated how participants give meaning to workplace fun. Some aspects such as high workloads seem to reduce the workplace fun experiences, while validation of the work and physical environment seem to increase positive experience. Possible explanations and directions for future research were described. Results are exploratory and offer directions for future research, but must be read with caution.

Keywords: Workplace fun, high-quality relationships, psychological safety, experience of employees.

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Throughout history work used to be hard labour. Since the 1960s work became a little more relaxed and socializing during breaks was more common. It is only since the last decades that work environments became more focused on being social or playful. Some even argue that since the 2020s a workplace fun era has begun (McDowell, Ehteshami, & Sandell, 2019). Several global companies have incorporated fun into their businesses, Google, Walt Disney World and Marriott are examples of corporate cultures that emphasize fun (Collins & Porras, 1997; Michel, Tews & Allen, 2019). Reasons for this shift are changes in expectations of employers, workforce demographics, and work in itself (McDowell et al., 2019).

Since the start of the century more research has been done about workplace fun, however research is still mostly in the exploratory phase. This study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base on workplace fun by exploring employee experiences. The research question was *In the experience of employees, what is the meaning of workplace fun?* To examine this three concepts were explored to give more meaning to workplace fun: 1) Workplace fun is often defined in social contexts between colleagues. The quality of the relationship between those colleagues possibly shapes the experience of workplace fun. For that reason high-quality relationships were explored. 2) Jokes are part of workplace fun, but when they are personal, unpleasant and persistent these jokes can be part of bullying behaviours (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Negative experiences of workplace fun were explored. 3) Both the quality of relationships and negative experiences of fun can impact psychological safety. For that reason psychological safety was included as a construct in this study. All three constructs are defined in the following paragraphs.

Workplace Fun

Fun in general leads to higher levels of endorphins, epinephrine and adrenaline which increases energy and well-being and lowers stress and related effects (Neuhoff & Schaefer,

2002). Laughter, play and a sense of humour could be used as instruments for improving communication, innovation, lowering stress, accelerating learning, and increasing creativity (Miller, 1996). There is however a distinction between fun, humour, and play. While humour and play are part of fun in the workplace, workplace fun encompasses a wider range (Michel, Tew & Allen, 2019). Different aspects of fun are being implemented in workplaces. This is a construct known as workplace fun, Table 1 shows different definitions of workplace fun that are used in literature. Provided definitions have similarities and differences between them. One similarity is that they all describe a variety of playful or humorous activities which provided enjoyment, pleasure, or amusement. Differences between definitions included the result of workplace fun which increases corporate performance (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009) or excluded task activities in the workplace fun definition (McDowell, 2004). This research used the broadest definition provided by Fluegge (2008) to define workplace fun.

Fluegge (2008) defined fun at the workplace as “any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment or pleasure” (p. 15). Practical examples of these fun social workplace activities were measured in a survey, the three highest scoring activities were recognition of personal milestones, social events, and public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., birthdays, parties, and award ceremonies) (Ford, McLaughlin & Newstorm, 2003). Pryor, Singleton, Taneja and Humphreys (2010) described workplace fun not as either present or absent, but they proposed to see it as a continuum with less or more fun experienced. The amount of fun that is interpreted by individuals, plays a role in how the workplace fun continuum is perceived. They described many aspects that can either increase or decrease the experienced workplace fun. An individual can experience many situations that promote workplace fun while at the same time experiencing a situation that decreases their workplace

fun. The same ‘fun’ experience at work can be perceived differently on the continuum by individuals.

Table 1

Definitions of Workplace Fun

Authors	Definition of workplace fun
Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstorm, 2003 (p. 22)	A fun work environment that intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities.
Fluegge, 2008 (p.15)	Any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure.
McDowell, 2005 (p.9)	Engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful.
Michel, Tews, & Allen, 2019 (p.99)	Characteristics or features of the work environment of a social, playful, and humorous nature, which have the potential to trigger positive feelings of enjoyment, amusement, and light-hearted pleasure in individuals.
Bolton, & Houlihan, 2009 (p.557)	Workplace fun draws on an implied link between play, fun and laughter and increased corporate performance.

A growing body of research showed results on workplace fun. Examples are how it generated positive and refreshing breaks which created greater workplace and task engagement (Plester & Hutchinson, 2016). It increased recruitment, development, and retention of employees (Jeffcoat & Gibson, 2006; McDowell, Ehteshami, & Sandell, 2019) and increased creativity and higher profits (Mariotti, 1999). Fun activities at work were

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positively and significantly correlated to overall informal learning and learning from others (Tew, Michel & Noe, 2017).

The Confines of Fun

Jokes or comments can seem harmless and simultaneously cause great harm (Pinay, 2018). Bullying reduces the potential for fun in the workplace and creates unpleasant work environments (Pryor et al., 2010). When jokes or remarks are persistent and received as unpleasant it can be described as workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is defined as negative behaviours directed at organizational members or their work context that occur regularly and repeatedly (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Multiple examples of workplace bullying were found by Leymann (1990) who collected qualitative data on the subject. He found hundreds of cases where 'jokes' built up to workplace bullying. Bullying at the workplace included relatively subtle forms (e.g. personal jokes and gossip) and more explicit forms (e.g. insults and threats) (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). The results of workplace bullying are described as significant and negative for individuals, organisations, and society (Aquino & Thau, 2009).

Studies showed victims and observers of workplace bullying experienced more general stress, mental stress reactions, and lower self-confidence (Sansone & Sansone, 2015; Vartia, 2001). Workplace bullying created significant disruption, stress symptoms, and lowered psychological safety (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010). Workplace bullying also consists of unpleasant or sexual jokes (Hoel & Salin, 2002).

Workplace fun seems obvious, forthright, and simple but is also described as ambiguous and complex (Plester & Hutchinson, 2016). Where lies the turning point of when fun at work stops being fun for all parties involved? Research shows workplace bullying occurred in 15% of the workforce, but some numbers even go up to a third of the workplaces (Davidson, & Harrington, 2012; Hodgins et al., 2020). Workplace fun has been linked to

detrimental results. Fun activities, especially with mandatory attendance and held on evenings and weekends, were related to greater incidences of unwanted sexual attention (Tews, Stafford & Jolly, 2019).

Building on previous arguments and the fact that workplace fun has become a more researched and practical applied topic, this exploratory study researched experiences of employees around workplace fun. This included exploring experiences where workplace fun might no longer be fun for all parties involved. To be able to explore workplace fun experiences, the constructs of high-quality relationships and psychological safety were also explored. Both constructs and the reason for adding them to this research are explained in the next paragraphs.

High-quality Relationships

People in high-quality relationships feel connected and valued in a way that grants them power to overcome uncertainties in organisations. Relationships consist of three aspects: 1) emotional carrying capacity (capacity to care for different types of emotions), 2) tensility (capacity to withstand change or difficulty within a relationship), and 3) degree of connectivity (acceptance of new ideas or influences). High-quality relationships have a higher emotional carrying capacity, higher tensility and a higher degree of connectivity (Carmeli, Brueller & Dutton, 2009). This means people in high-quality relationships care about each others' emotions, accept new ideas or influences and can tolerate changes or difficulties that face them.

Shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect are the foundation for high-quality relationships (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). People in high-quality relationships feel valued, appreciated, and safe. Research found they were more active within the organization and felt free in sharing their feelings and thoughts without fear of how others would respond (Kahn, 2007). Individuals are more connected with each other in high-quality relationships.

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Therefore, high-quality relationships increased information processing as a result of higher quality communication by individuals. Increased information processing occurred even more in high-quality relationships where work is highly interdependent or time constrained (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Teams are defined as two or more people working together towards a common goal (Jackson & Joshi, 2011). Depending on the size of the team, one or more relationships exist between its members. The quality of relationships dictates the success of team learning (Eraut, 2004). High-quality relationships have a positive result on learning behaviours (Carmeli, Brueller & Dutton, 2009) and task performance (Zellmer-Bruhn & Gibson, 2006). When individuals have shared goals that transcend their own, they are more driven to reach them together and less likely to blame each other for mistakes. High-quality relationships are shaped by respectful interactions and engagement. For that reason, high-quality relationships that are formed in shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect developed psychological safety (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009).

The way workplace fun contributes to the quality of the relationship has been the subject of some research. Michel, Tews and Allen (2019) described short-term and long-term benefits of workplace fun. Short-term benefits included making new connections with colleagues and learning something new. Long-term benefits included stronger social relationships and greater psychological well-being. Caccamese (2012) stated that creating fun in the workplace does not automatically lead to a great workplace, but it will enhance camaraderie, build trust, and offer everyone the chance to be their true selves. Being able to share feelings and thoughts without fear of how others will respond corresponds to psychological safety which is discussed in the next chapter.

Workplace fun leads to new connections with colleagues, stronger social relationships, and greater psychological well-being (Michel, Tews, & Allen, 2019). It might also lead to more or higher-quality relationships. The quality of the relationship might shape the

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experienced workplace fun and vice versa. The focus of this research was to explore these experiences.

Psychological Safety

High-quality relationships developed psychological safety (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009), jokes and remarks can harm it or turn into workplace bullying (Pinay, 2018). For that reason psychological safety is explored in this study. Psychological safety goes beyond trust, where team members can be their true selves without risk (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety is defined as “a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up. This confidence stems from mutual respect and trust among team members.” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354).

Psychological safety in organisations is a construct that reaches beyond the individual. It is a group-level construct, which characterizes teams rather than individual members. These members must have comparable perceptions of psychological safety for them to work. Psychological safety stands for a collective level of psychological safety experienced by the team (Edmondson, 2004).

Psychological safety has personal consequences. Psychological safety is one of three conditions that shape how individuals fulfil their roles within a team or organization (Kahn, 1990). A result of team psychological safety is learning behaviours, for example when team members are not afraid to make mistakes and share these mistakes with the team to learn from them. It also facilitates other learning behaviours when team members dare to admit they need help and ask for it. Or when they can ask and give feedback (Edmondson, 1999).

Psychological safety is required for teams to learn (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Schein & Bennis, 1965). When individuals are not afraid to be embarrassed, rejected or punished for speaking up, collective respect and trust will occur

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among individuals throughout the team. This will lead to both co-construction and constructive conflict of team learning (Decuyper, Dochy & van den Bossche, 2012).

High-quality relationships lead to feeling valued, appreciated, and safe. People in high-quality relationships feel free in sharing their feelings and thoughts without fear of how others would respond (Kahn, 2007). This corresponds to Edmondson's (1999) definition of psychological safety. Psychological safety is vital when individuals collaborate to achieve a shared outcome. Especially when looking at the growing numbers of collaborative relationships and complex interdependencies in workplaces (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). The importance of psychological safety is clear for many contexts. The amount of experienced psychological safety possibly impacts the experienced fun and vice versa. The focus of this research was to explore employee experiences of these constructs.

Methods

Research Design

The present study is a qualitative research because it focused on giving meaning to employee experiences of workplace fun. To better understand positive and negative experiences of workplace fun, high-quality relationships and psychological safety were explored too. Qualitative unstructured interviews were chosen to answer the research question: *In the experience of employees, what is the meaning of workplace fun?* The qualitative interviews consisted of in-depth open-ended questions (Punch, 2014). Template analysis was used to analyse the data (King, 2012). This qualitative study used unstructured interviews with in-depth open-ended questions. This was the most suitable approach for answering the research question. The goal of the interview instrument was to construct a detailed picture from the experiences told by the participants (Punch, 2014).

Participants

Participants were gathered through three sampling methods. The goal of sampling was to reach a diverse sample which provided thematic saturation in the data. First a convenience sample was used to find three participants. Saturation nor diversity were reached at this point. Second each of these participants brought one or two colleagues via the snowball sampling method bringing the total of participants to eight. The snowball method offered multiple views on the same organization, including workplace fun, team members and relationships. Making generalizations is difficult because the snowball method is a convenience sample. Saturation was reached at this point, but diversity of the sample was not. Participants to this point were relatively young. To find a more diverse set of participants a purposeful sample was used. Participants were purposefully selected based on their age and being employed at the time of the interview. A total of twelve employed individuals with a variety of professions participated. Diversity of the participants and saturation were reached at this point.

Participants were collected from 7 different companies. A more detailed, yet anonymous description of all participating companies and employees can be found in Appendix E. All participants worked together with colleagues and had collaboration moments with team members or other colleagues on a daily basis. A total of 7 men and 5 women participated in this study. Ages ranged from 24 to 61 years old ($M=38$, $SD=16.32$). Convenient, snowball and purposeful sampling were needed to obtain diversity as well as saturation in data. Due to these sampling methods statements concerning other populations than the participant sample should be made with caution (Pyrzack, 2016). To ensure ethical and confidential processing of the data only essential personal information such as name, age and years of work experience were retrieved from participants. These personal details were not attached to the data and were only known to the researcher (Sieber, 2008).

Instrumentation

A total of twelve qualitative interviews were conducted. The first three interviews were conducted on site of the organisation in a separate room. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the last nine interviews were conducted by phone. The COVID-19 regulations affected the working conditions of the participants. The first three interviews were with participants who were working on site as usual, the last nine participants were working from home because of the COVID-19 regulations. All interviews were prepared in an interview guide. Questions were formulated in a descriptive and compact manner to get a long and detailed answer (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). Follow-up questions and probes were used to reach more depth when necessary (deMarrais, 2003). Why questions were mostly avoided to gain information around the concept instead of reasoning behind it (DeMarrais, 2003). By using probes, a more in-depth understanding of the experiences around workplace fun and the other two constructs (high-quality relationships and psychological safety) was reached (Kvale, 1983). All qualitative interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes and started with a small exercise. Participants were asked to name the first five words or phrases that entered their minds when thinking about workplace fun and high-quality relationships at work. Continuing open-ended in-depth questions were asked around the constructs of high-quality relationships, psychological safety, and workplace fun. Example questions were *Think about a moment where you experienced a lot of workplace fun, can you describe this to me? How would you describe your relationships with colleagues? Do you have the same amount of workplace fun with all colleagues, can you describe the differences or similarities?* Probes and follow-up questions were prepared and used when necessary. Example probes were *You just talked about ..., can you be more specific about what you meant by that? Can you tell me more about that? Can you explain how that made you (or them) feel? Can you explain what happened next?* All questions and probes can be found in the interview guide in Appendix A.

Procedure

All participants were given an informed consent form based on FETC guidelines. The informed consent explained the aim of the study. It indicated that participation (1) was voluntary, (2) could be withdrawn at any time without consequences, (3) all data would be processed confidentially, and (4) the purpose of the research was clear to the participant. The informed consent form can be found in appendix D. To reduce the expectancy effect limited information was given before the interviews. Each session was concluded by a debriefing. Participants got the chance to ask questions about the interview and research purposes. Participants were welcomed to further contact the researcher when necessary (Pyrzczak, 2016).

Interviews were conducted within the timespan of two months by the same researcher. Interviews were recorded with permission of the participants. All interviews were transcribed with anonymized recordings by the researcher. All interview transcripts were approved via a member check to check if all participants agreed with what was said and used for analysis (Koelsch, 2013). The member check increased the internal validity of the research. In this research, the researcher kept a log. The log held an overview of all decisions made and steps taken to be able to reproduce it in the future, this increased the transparency of the research. Taking confidentiality of participants in mind the log is not published but can be requested if needed.

Thematic saturation was obtained after eight interviews. The first eight participants were young (ages from participants one through eight ranged from 25 to 30). To gain a more complete image of workplace fun older participants were purposefully added to the participant set. The last four participants were significantly older (ages from participants nine through twelve ranged from 59 to 61). Thematic saturation was obtained when little new data came forth after twelve interviews (O'reilly & Parker, 2013). Data collection stopped at this point.

Analysis

The data collected from interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed in Microsoft Excel. The process of analysis consisted of 4 phases. All findings were presented in the result section. Quotes from interviews were used to clarify results.

In the first phase of analysis the data was divided into fragments. Each fragment consisted of one or more sentences about a topic. A new fragment started when participants started a new (aspect of a) topic. Each fragment was meaningful and complete on itself. Interview questions were also marked as fragments to be able to see context if necessary, these question fragments were not coded. All twelve interviews combined produced 862 fragments. Preliminary thoughts and observations were collected in notes during the process of coding. An example of a note was two codes frequently being coded together.

The second phase was analysing these fragments. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. More specifically template analysis of King (2012) was used. This phase started by using *a priori* themes that formed the first draft of the template (King, 2012). This draft was based on literature and led to 13 codes. These codes were used to form an initial template. Three full interviews with young and old participants to ensure diversity were analysed and coded with the initial template. In this phase the template was modified while analysing and coding three interviews. This phase led to the first version of the final template which consisted of 26 codes.

The third phase checked the quality of the template by using interrater reliability (King, 2012). The goal of this was to critically examine the codes and explanations through dialogue, which increased reliability of the study. An independent coder analysed one interview with the template. As a result, several codes gained a more detailed explanation. It also resulted in 2 codes being added, bringing the total number of codes to 28. With the completed template all interviews were coded. The full template with 1) final template, 2)

explanations per code, 3) frequencies of occurrence, and 4) phases of reaching the final version can be found in Appendix B.

The last phase analysed all codes across interviews. Frequency of codes, notes and possible relations between codes were analysed. Four main themes were found: Definition of workplace fun, Experiences of workplace fun, Quality of the relationship, and Psychological safety. The first main theme Definition of workplace fun mainly existed from fragments coded with *Defining workplace fun*. Fragments that were assigned to these codes were examined for similarities and differences, which formed the first main theme. This code was often used in relationship with *Content of the job as workplace fun*, *Team*, *Appreciation* and *Environmental aspects*. Analysing the content of fragments led to the result section of the first theme. The second main theme Experiences of workplace fun came forward after looking at the codes *Laughing*, *Jokes and remarks* and *Team*. Some codes had a relationship between Negative experiences of workplace fun. Analysing the content of fragments led to the result section of the second theme. The third main theme Quality of the relationship became apparent after analysing the first two themes after being frequently named. Fragments on how relationships were structured and how workplace fun contributed to them formed the third theme. The fourth main theme Psychological Safety is related to the third theme. Content of the fragments suggested some relationships fostered psychological safety. Codes that fostered psychological safety according to literature such as *Respect and trust*, *Feeling valued*, *Being yourself*, *Sharing thoughts and feelings* and *Asking for help* were analysed. Relationships between codes and content of fragments led to the result section of the fourth theme.

Results

While analysing the data key findings were categorized into four themes in order to give meaning to the experiences provided by participants. These themes were: Defining workplace fun, Experiences of workplace fun, Quality of the relationship, and Psychological

safety. Findings are displayed per theme. Each theme has two or three subsections displaying results. Quotes from the interviews were used to clarify the results, each quote starts with Q-number. These numbers are referred back to in the discussion section. All quotations were translated from Dutch to English, since interviews were taken in Dutch. A list of the original and translated versions can be found in Appendix C.

Defining Workplace Fun

More than half of the participants experienced workplace fun more or less as Fluegge (2008) defined it. They described social, interpersonal and task activities with a playful or humorous nature. An example is watching funny YouTube videos with colleagues, playing a game, or chatting with a colleague over coffee. Some results indicated aspects that were less compatible to Fluegge's definition. These results are presented per subject.

Content of the work. Two of the participants combined the work content and successes they achieved with activities of a playful or humorous nature in their workplace fun. When asked about workplace fun they answered: "I get triggered by enough variety and challenges that I have in my work. I get the freedom to take aspects and experiment with them." (Q1, Interview 2, Fragment 372) or "But I also like it when things just go well. It doesn't have to be just fun. When you are collaborating with a team towards a goal and that results in something beautiful. That, for me, is also very much workplace fun." (Q2, Interview 5, Fragment 486). These quotations show a combination in the definition of workplace fun. These participants still named activities with a playful or humorous nature, while they also defined workplace fun as the content of their work.

Four of the participants did not describe workplace fun as something of a playful or humorous nature. These participants named solely the content of their work and the successes they achieved as workplace fun. Some of them even excluded playful and humorous aspects from their form of workplace fun. Examples of their workplace fun were successfully

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completing a large project or receiving positive feedback from clients on a product produced. The following quotes are examples of this. “When you can confer with people on your own level, it often led to very elegant solutions. Thinking outside the box. What surfaces there led to fun experienced.” (Q3,Interview 10, Fragment 621). And “A fun day can also mean drinking coffee all day. And that can be fun. But it is not what I mean when thinking about workplace fun. A fun day for me is really achieving something, contributing to something, finishing something.” (Q4,Interview 9, Fragment 124). When participants related workplace fun directly to the content and success of the work, the opposite was also true. When the work was not successful, when projects did not lead to a good result or when problems hindered the success, workplace fun was experienced less. “It all depends on the projects or the clients that are involved.” (Q5,Interview12,Fragment 841).

Aspects that affect the workplace fun experiences. Three aspects were named by participants that affected their personal workplace fun experiences. High workloads were named as a cause for less experienced workplace fun. While validation of work and environmental aspects were named as causes for more experienced workplace fun. All three aspects are presented.

The first aspect that affected workplace fun experiences is participants’ workload. Results suggested that workloads can affect workplace fun. When workloads were described as continuously too high it led to less playful and humorous activities. Unrealistic targets or an unfruitful relationship with clients meant participants experienced less fun in the content of their work. One participant pointed out that workloads that are too high have led to burnouts in colleagues. No statements were made on low workloads. “When targets are too high or unrealistic, they won’t be achieved. When you are constantly held responsible for these failures, motivation quickly leaves the team.” (Q6,Interview 8, Fragment 732).

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A second aspect that affects workplace fun experiences was the environment in which people work. More than half of the participants named environmental aspects as workplace fun. Examples named were a good desk, nice coffee, no noise irritations, or natural light. Next to these material needs the commute and accessibility of the organisation were named as well. These additions in the definition of workplace fun do not categorize as playful or humorous.

The third aspect that affects workplace fun experiences is validation of your work and feeling appreciated. Both were named by many participants. Results indicated that workplace fun was higher when participants felt recognized. Appreciation and validation were established by receiving compliments or positive feedback. The next quote relates to appreciating team members: “In my opinion this is one of the main points when you want a team to function well. You have to compliment people on what they are doing.” (Q7, Interview 10, Fragment 661). Participants found the fun in their work in these different forms of validation. One participant explicitly added that the absence of this validation or compliments led to less experienced workplace fun for her. “I really had a good day when I achieved a goal or when I can see I did something well. Or when I hear that I did a good job from someone.” (Q8, Interview 3, Fragment 15).

Experiences of Workplace Fun

When looking at experiences of workplace fun several statements were made by participants. Positive and negative experiences of workplace fun were stated. Negative experiences were about jokes, remarks, and workloads. Both positive and negative experiences are displayed.

Positive experiences of workplace fun. Grabbing coffee at the start of the day with colleagues, having lunch while chatting and laughing, playing a PlayStation game after a break, or drinking a beer after work were all named as workplace fun. Participants indicated that these positive examples of workplace fun occurred more with colleagues with whom they

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had a high-quality relationship. Participants sought out and planned fun workplace activities with these colleagues.

More than half of the participants encountered jokes at the work floor. In some cases, jokes were used to lighten the mood or to give someone feedback in a positive and fun way. “Are you going to do something today or are you already on your holiday? Jokes like these are common in our office.” (Q9, Interview 1, Fragment 280).

Negative experiences of workplace fun. About a third of the participants stated to have negative experiences with workplace fun caused by jokes. Negative experiences had different impacts; some were perceived as insignificant while others had a large impact. Some jokes did not have a large impact on the participants. In some cases, personal circumstances caused the negative experience of a joke. In these cases, people felt slightly offended because their background was the subject of jokes. These jokers were often described as narrow minded. “He said he genuinely did not know there were universities in the south of our country. He told a university student from Tilburg she couldn’t participate (...) He genuinely didn’t know, he thought there were only universities in Amsterdam or something. Very narrow minded. I can get annoyed by this narrow minded attitude towards the rest of the Netherlands when you are from Amsterdam.” (Q10, Interview 4, Fragment 246). In a couple of interviews a negative feeling of workplace fun occurred when people were openly or comically confronted with their level in the hierarchy of the organisation. It left a negative feeling with the participants but did not lead to being less able to work. “There was one time where I was addressed as a certain level, which I wasn’t. (...) Or people estimate your level, while I think it should not be relevant.” (Q11, Interview 5, Fragment 450). Negative experiences mostly occurred between people who the participants did not work with frequently and would not consider as a high-quality relationship. “I could talk to them about general things, but I wouldn’t trust him” (Q12, Interview 4, Fragment 249).

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While some jokes were described as narrow minded but harmless, others had a larger impact. One participant described how jokes were made by male colleagues aimed at her for being a woman. These jokes lowered her feeling of safety. She added she could not be herself in the situation and was less able to perform her tasks well at that point. This participant described this situation only took place on one occasion and was non recurrent. "They did not take me seriously; I was a woman. They kept making jokes about how I looked or what I was wearing." (Q13,Interview 3, Fragment 49).

Quality of the Relationship

Social activities with colleagues were named by almost all participants. At the same time almost all participants indicated that relationships with colleagues were very different from one another. Connection on different aspects or the degree of sharing goals and knowledge are displayed.

Connection with colleagues. Half of the participants described that a connection with colleagues is needed to be able to make jokes, ask or give help and feedback. The connection was based on the length or quality of the relationship. "It is usually with people you know for about 1 or 2 years. You know if they can handle a certain joke." (Q14,Interview 3, Fragment 38). And "I think it is because when you know someone well and they say something it's easier (...) While when someone else would say something similar, I would not like it. I think when you know people better you can take more of their feedback" (Q15,Interview 11, Fragment 803) And "I am not someone who asks a lot of questions. (...) In that case I would learn more from people who I feel more comfortable with than from people who I get along with less. I would ask them less." (Q16,Interview 6, Fragment 533).

Half of the participants indicated that a similar work ethic led to a higher quality relationship. For example, when everyone worked 20 minutes extra, it gave a feeling of collective perseverance which bonded participants. When someone continuously did not work

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the extra 20 minutes, they were considered outsiders. When work ethics were too different it damaged the connection with colleagues or caused conflict. “I feel like everyone should take their responsibility, when they don’t it can really annoy me.” (Q17, Interview 11, Fragment 778).

More than half of the participants said they searched for a form of connection when forming (high-quality) relationships at work. This connection could be deep level, such as having a similar work ethic as was described in the previous paragraph. But it can also be a more surface-level connection. For example, both having the same age, being born in the same city, or both having the same hobbies. Especially when participants were new to an organisation or client these connections helped.

Shared goals and knowledge. More than half of the participants suggested that shared goals and knowledge added to the quality of the relationship. Especially during collaboration, a sense of sharing knowledge while working towards the same goal strengthened the relationship. Participants described a pleasant feeling when colleagues shared their knowledge or helped them. “I think shared goals are important for the team. There will be conflicts when not everyone wants to move in the same direction.” (Q18, Interview 7, Fragment 600). And “I have the luxury that I am able to assemble the team I will work with. I can actively pick and choose. (...) I choose them on capacities that I don’t have. (...) Together we form a complete team.” (Q19, Interview 10, Fragment 623 and 625).

Psychological Safety

All participants described aspects of psychological safety. A number of these aspects are displayed in this paragraph.

Asking for help. Almost all participants indicated they could ask colleagues for help at any time without fear of rejection of any kind. A couple of participants added to experience

differences in the willingness or speed this help was given to them. Several participants added that they asked help more often with people they trusted.

Being yourself. Some participants who have had negative experiences with workplace fun also stated they sometimes felt as if they could not be themselves at work at all times. On the one hand a number of participants named the connection between being their true selves and positive workplace fun. “I would not want to pretend to be different at work if I am being honest. Because I don’t think that you are truly having fun at work when you pretend to be different.” (Q20,Interview 6, Fragment 480). On the other hand, the question arose in interviews if one should always be their true selves at work. According to one participant some parts were best left at home, another participant added to choose to not show all his personal qualities at the work floor. “There are more ways of being yourself. No, I am not the same person here as I am at home. Especially when I am with clients. (...) There is also a piece of yourself best left at home.” (Q21,Interview 6, Fragment 552 and 554).

Sharing feelings. Almost all participants claimed they could share their feelings when necessary. Some added that they did not have this feeling with all colleagues, but they shared mainly in a few high-quality relationships. “With some people you can truly show your emotions. (...) When my father was sick, I burst out crying. That just happened. But you have to feel safe enough.” (Q22,Interview 10, Fragment 675). In some cases where participants worked on site with clients, the feeling of picking and choosing specific colleagues to share feelings and thoughts with was stronger. “I always notice when I am starting a new project... I always look how the rolls are distributed in the office. What the balance of power is.” (Q23,Interview 5, Fragment 470).

Discussion

The aim of the exploratory study was to give more meaning and contribute to the knowledge base of workplace fun by examining employee experiences. Qualitative interviews

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were used to collect the data. To get a better understanding and a more complete picture of workplace fun, high-quality relationships and psychological safety were also explored.

The research question in this study was: *In the experience of employees, what is the meaning of workplace fun?* This chapter will start by outlining the findings of the explored constructs, followed by positive and negative experiences of workplace fun. Last, aspects affecting experienced workplace fun are interpreted and explained. All results are linked to previous studies where possible. This chapter closes with limitations and implications of this study.

Giving meaning to workplace fun entailed looking closer to the definition of workplace fun. Fluegge (2008) defined workplace fun as “any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment or pleasure” (p. 15). When looking at most of the results this definition fits well. However, some results (e.g. Q3, Q6, Q8) suggest a broader definition of workplace fun, for example including work content. Earlier exploratory research showed some individuals who categorized work content as workplace fun (Plester & Hutchinson, 2016). While other definitions excluded task activities (McDowell, 2004). Consensus does not seem to be reached in literature, results from this study add to the dissension in definitions. When looking closer to the data a possible explanation for this finding may be offered. There seem to be differences in experiences of workplace fun when looking at the age of participants. Due to the small sample and exploratory nature of this research no conclusions can be drawn. However, it might be interesting to analyse this in future studies. Differences between experiences of workplace fun have been found in previous studies. Plester and Hutchinson (2016) found that workplace fun was experienced as a refreshing break by some and a distraction and disharmony by others. Groot and van den Brink (1999) found a similar result when looking at job satisfaction. Older workers named job content as main factor for

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satisfaction at work. This finding might also be applicable to workplace fun, but this study emphasizes its exploratory nature. No claims can be made at this point and all possibilities need to be further explored and verified.

The experiences that were found in the results seem varied, most experiences described in the data suggest that workplace fun are mostly experienced as positive. The positive experiences of workplace fun seemed common, all participants named examples of positive experiences. Every participant had one or more colleagues who they felt they could trust. They felt more comfortable speaking up, sharing feelings and asking for help with these colleagues. Fun workplace activities such as grabbing lunch or coffee, chatting about personal subjects, or playing games also seemed to occur more between colleagues with whom higher-quality relationships were formed. These fun workplace activities seemed to further strengthen their relationships. What happened first, the relationship or the fun within them, is not clear at this point. This finding complies with other research. Workplace fun can lead to making new connections with colleagues, strengthen social relationships, and create psychological well-being (Michel, Tews, & Allen, 2019). Results from this study also seemed to point in this direction, although more research is needed to confirm this. Participants named examples of these high-quality relationships and fun within them, it was also stipulated that this is not the case with every relationship at work.

Participants who described high-quality relationships mentioned more communication (e.g. asking for help or having coffee) in these relationships, other literature supports this finding (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Miller, 1996). Data seemed to indicate that different kinds of connections between individuals (deep-level or surface-level) can lead to higher quality relationships. The nature of these relationships seemed to be the foundation of how jokes, remarks and requests for help were received. Carmeli and Gittell (2009) found how shared goals, knowledge and mutual respect strengthened relationships and improved the quality, this

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seems to be supported by the data. Respect and trust were named by many participants when describing high-quality relationships. The results showed almost all participants were able to ask one or more colleagues for help when needed without fear of rejection of any kind. They also had someone who they could share their feelings with at work. These results seem to indicate that participants in general feel safe at work. But these interpretations are made with caution. Data showed the frequency and nature of jokes were based on the length and quality of these relationships (e.g.Q17,Q23).

Exploratory findings from this study suggest how positive experiences of workplace fun can improve the quality of relationships. However, it can also be the other way around, where higher quality relationships provide more positive workplace fun experiences. This exploratory research design does not offer conclusive results. Other research designs are better suited for correlations and directions to further investigate these constructs.

Next to the positive experiences, some results show negative experiences of workplace fun. Examples were given of situations where jokes and remarks from colleagues were perceived as a negative form of workplace fun (e.g.Q10,Q11). Sometimes these jokes had a negative impact on psychological safety. In one case, the impact was so high that the participant was not able to properly do her job anymore. These jokes were hurtful to her (e.g.Q13). However, this turning point seems to be different for all participants. Data suggest that the differences between how jokes are interpreted are namely in the length and quality of the relationship. When colleagues were new, and a relationship was not yet established, jokes seemed to be absent or made with caution (e.g.Q14,Q15). Some jokes were not received well by participants, it seemed that in these cases a high-quality relationship was absent. When someone is not aware of personal backgrounds, jokes can unintentionally hit a soft spot, this occurred sometimes when the relationship between people was new or low-quality (e.g.Q11). Negative experiences were not labelled as recurrent or as bullying by participants in this

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study. While some participants had encountered unpleasant jokes, more than half of the participants were not able to produce any examples. That is why the turning point of workplace fun still needs more attention. At this stage in the research it is hard to conclude how often these high-impact negative experiences occur. Participants had to share these possibly sensitive experiences with a single researcher face-to-face or by phone, it could be that not all participants felt comfortable sharing this information and are in fact more common.

Furthermore, results showed that some aspects affected participants' experiences of workplace fun. Workloads that were too high seemed to reduce the workplace fun. This finding was also supported by other researchers. When work demands are too high individuals perceive that participating in fun activities is an obstruction to their work (Barnes, Wagner, & Ghumman, 2012; Ilies, Wilson, & Wagner, 2009; Michel, Tews & Allen, 2019). Validation of work by superiors or colleagues seemed to have a positive effect on workplace fun experienced.

Findings seemed to indicate that the physical environment of the workplace contributed to the amount of workplace fun experienced. Other research found that physical environments can have positive or negative impacts on recruitment, retention, productivity, and motivation of employees. While improving the physical work environment does not guarantee more workplace fun, not improving it likely decreased workplace fun (Doyle, 2008).

There are four main limitations of this research: sampling methods, sampling size, conceptualization of constructs, and the COVID-19 timeframe of the study. All four limitations will be discussed. 1) The first limitation of this study are its sampling methods. This study used convenience and snowball sampling methods to recruit participants who provided saturation in the data. These sampling methods do not guarantee a representative

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sample of the population. That is why a purposeful sample was added to create a diverse set of participants. After all three sampling methods diversity and saturation was achieved. 2)The second limitation concerning the sample is the size. Only 12 interviews were conducted, which is fairly small. Future research could examine if these results can be replicated with more generalizable sampling methods and larger samples. 3)A third limitation in this study is its conceptualization of constructs. Taking note of the expectancy effect, little information was given to participants beforehand. Michel, Tew and Allen (2019) described the distinctions between fun, humour, and play. While humour and play are part of fun in the workplace, workplace fun encompasses a wider range. Participants were not given this information and could possibly use these terms interchangeably. Conceptualizations and definitions were translated throughout the entire study. All literature was written in English, while all interviews were in Dutch and translated to English for the result and discussion section. The English concept '*workplace fun*' might not have the same meaning as the Dutch translation used '*werkplek plezier*'. Words, meaning and definitions could be altered or lost in translation. This could have affected the findings. 4)The fourth and last limitation is the COVID-19 timeframe of this study. The first three participants were questioned in person in their own offices. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the last nine interviews were held on the phone while participants were working from home. They were questioned about situations where they were no longer physically in. These participants answered questions about their workplace in retrospect. This may have coloured the experiences and affected the findings of this study (Blank et al.,2008).

Implications of this thesis are mostly scientific. The exploratory results and possible explanations offered new possibilities for research on workplace fun. Future research can investigate the different experiences of workplace fun. How participants give meaning to workplace fun seems to be very different, for example including or excluding work content.

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Future research can look into the origin of these differences (e.g. participants' ages). Negative experiences with workplace fun are also found, the turning point still needs more research.

Results of such research could further shape our understanding and the definition of workplace fun. Practical implications are difficult to make at this point and must be read with caution. Especially because this research is exploratory and contributes mostly to our understanding. However, some forms of fun workplace activities seem to foster high-quality relationships and the psychological safety within them. Creating or simply allowing employees to engage in workplace fun activities can strengthen relationships and improve the quality and possibly lead to more fun. A practical implication that is possibly easier applicable for employers are improvements to the physical environment to improve the experienced workplace fun by employees.

More employers are applying workplace fun in their work environment. The workplace fun era has begun (McDowell et al., 2019). It is our job to create responsible, and safe ways for everyone to enjoy it. There are many ways to create workplace fun. Future studies can contribute to our understanding of workplace fun and how to best implement it in practice.

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Appendix A – Interview Protocol

Voorstellen, uitleg onderwerpen, doorvragen, diepte-interview, uur benoemen.

Deelname onderzoek/ interview? Mijn doel. Doel van participant. Verwachtingen vooraf?

Naam & Leeftijd

5 woorden oefening: Wanneer je denkt aan XXX, welke 5 woorden komen dan als eerst in je op. Werkplek plezier Relatie met collega's

Denk eens aan een moment waarop je plezier op je werkplek beleefde, vertel eens?

Hoe belangrijk vind jij werkplek plezier?

Wat is werkplek plezier in jouw ogen? Hoe ziet het eruit?

Heb je evenveel plezier met alle collega's? Waar zit het verschil in? Hoe komt dat? Situatie benoemen?

Wordt werkplek plezier door iedereen hetzelfde omschreven/ervaren? Waarom denk je dat?

Zijn er momenten waarop het plezier op de werkvloer niet voor iedereen gelijk is?

Wanneer?

Wat maakt dat het niet gelijk is?

Voorbeelden

Heb je zelf weleens een negatief gevoel gehad bij 'werkplek plezier'?

Als je denkt aan jouw werkrelatie met collega's, vertel me daar eens over?

Kan jij een voorbeeld geven van een hoge kwaliteit werkrelatie uit het verleden? Hoe zag deze eruit?

Wanneer is de kwaliteit van werkrelaties hoog voor jou?

Wat draagt daaraan bij? Voorbeelden.

In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat je leert van je collega's?

Gezamenlijk doel

Gedeelde kennis

Wederzijds respect

Denk je dat jouw vorm van plezier (grappen, vervelend, XXXX), hetzelfde voelt voor alle collega's waar je dit mee deelt?

In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat je altijd jouw mening mag geven? Ook wanneer deze anders of minder gewenst is binnen het team?

In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat er een wederzijds gevoel van respect en vertrouwen is?

Heb je het gevoel dat je jezelf mag zijn op het werk, zonder dat een ander je daarover beoordeelt?

Komt het weleens voor dat dat wel/niet zo is?

Kan je een situatie beschrijven?

Hoe heeft de relatie tussen collega's daarmee te maken?

Heb je het gevoel dat je hulp kan vragen van collega's?

Heb je het gevoel dat je feedback kan geven aan collega's?

Mogelijke probes

Hoe voelde dat voor jou?

Kan je daar meer over vertellen?

Wat bedoel je precies met...?

Je beschreef net XXX, kan je me daar meer over vertellen?

Hoe vond je het? Had je vooraf verwachtingen?

Uitleg onderzoek, mogelijkheid tot vragen

Appendix B – Template Analysis

Final template of analysis.

- 1 Definitions of workplace fun
 - 1.1 Content of workplace fun
 - (1) Definitions of workplace fun
 - (2) Content of the job as workplace fun
 - (3) Social interactions as workplace fun
 - (4) Achieved results as workplace fun
 - (5) Responsibilities of the job
 - 1.2 Facilitating factors of workplace fun
 - (6) Degree of control/freedom in job
 - (7) Environmental aspects
 - (8) Balance work / private life
 - (9) Type of organization
 - (10) Recommendations made
- 2 Experiences of workplace fun
 - (11) Laughing
 - (12) Jokes and remarks
 - (13) Team
 - (14) Supervisors or managers
 - (15) Balance work / play
 - (16) Negative experiences of workplace fun
- 3 Quality of the relationship
 - 3.1 Outside relationship aspects
 - (17) Co-construction
 - (18) Constructive conflict
 - (19) Culture
 - 3.2 Within relationship aspects
 - (20) Respect and trust
 - (21) Shared knowledge and goals
 - (22) Feeling valued
 - (23) Connection felt between colleagues
 - (24) Recognition of oneself in colleagues
- 4 Psychological Safety
 - (25) Being yourself
 - (26) Sharing thoughts and feelings
 - (27) Asking for help
 - (28) Personal circumstances

Note. Numbers between parentheses refer to the number assigned to the code. Appendix B shows an explanation per code listed by number.

In het schema is in de eerste kolom de code uit Figuur 1 opgenomen. Onder de code uit Figuur 1 is cursief de code uit het codeerschema opgenomen zoals is gebruikt in de analyse in Excel. In de tweede kolom is de uitleg bij de code weergegeven. In de derde kolom is de teller te zien. Daarin is weergegeven hoe vaak elke code is toegekend. In de laatste kolom is de fase waarin de code in het *Template* terecht is gekomen weergegeven: 1) Code is toegevoegd a priori aan de hand van literatuurstudie, 2) Code is toegevoegd na analyse van drie interviews of 3) Code is toegevoegd na interrater reliability.

Code	Toelichting / Explanation	Teller / Count	Fase / Phase
1 Definitions of workplace fun			
1.1 Content of workplace fun			
1 Definitions of workplace fun <i>Fundef</i>	Werkplekplezier Definitie: Wat participanten omschrijven als definitie van werkplekplezier. Wat vinden zij erbij horen. Fluegge, 2008	92	1
2 Content of the job as workplace fun <i>Funwerk</i>	Mensen omschrijven aspecten van het werk als werkplekplezier. Voorbeelden zijn voldoening uit het werk halen, successen binnen het werk of een project goed afronden.	63	2
3 Social interactions as workplace fun <i>Omgcol</i>	Omgang met Collega's. Dit kan zijn samen lunchen of een kop koffiedrinken. Maar ook het aantal keren dat collega's elkaar spreken. Momenten buiten het werk zoals een vrijdagmiddagborrel of een biertje na het werken horen hierbij.	90	1
4 Achieved results as workplace fun <i>Resul</i>	Eraut, 2004; Carmeli, Brueller & Dutton, 2009 Resultaten. Mensen omschrijven het resultaat van het werk als werkplekplezier.	34	2
5 Responsibilities of the job <i>Verant</i>	Verantwoordelijkheden: Mensen halen hun plezier uit de verantwoordelijkheden die zij dragen. Verantwoordelijkheden hebben effect op het werkplekplezier.	19	2

1.2 Facilitating factors of workplace fun

6 Degree of control/freedom in job	Vrijheid/ controle: In hoeverre worden mensen gecontroleerd of hebben zij vrijheid om het werk uit te voeren hoe zij het zien. Wordt er naar hen geluisterd etc.	21	2
<i>Vrij</i>			
7 Environmental aspects	Omgevingsfactoren die bijdragen aan het werkplekplezier. Voorbeelden zijn hoe een kantoorruimte eruitziet. Hoe de koffie smaakt, hoe een bureaustoel zit of hoeveel natuurlijk licht er in het kantoor is.	19	2
<i>Omge</i>			
8 Balance work / private life	Werk-privé: De balans die mensen bewaren tussen werk en privé. Dat geldt ook voor de omgang tussen collega's. De mate waarin collega's (willen) zien. De aard van de onderwerpen die besproken worden.	44	2
<i>Werkpriv</i>			
9 Type of organization	Typeorganisatie. Participanten geven aan hoe hun organisatie eruitziet. Hoeveelheid mensen, manieren van werken, hiërarchie.	27	3
<i>Typeorg</i>			
10 Recommendations made	Participant doet een aanbeveling om het werkplezier te verhogen. Geven wanneer het nog leuker zou zijn.	6	3
<i>Aanbeveling</i>			
2 Experiences of workplace fun			
11 Laughing	Lachen: Voorbeelden van wanneer en waarom er wordt gelachen op het werk.	26	1
<i>Lach</i>			
12 Jokes and remarks	Miller, 1996; Neuhoff & Schaefer, 2002 Grappen: Er wordt iets gezegd over het soort grappen die er worden gemaakt.	44	2
<i>Grap</i>			
13 Team	Mensen zeggen iets over wat zij bij het team vinden horen. Wat draagt het team bij aan het werkplezier. Ook zaken die horen bij samenwerken vallen onder deze code.	92	1
<i>Team</i>			
14 Supervisors or managers	Jackson & Joshi, 2011; Kayes, Kayes & Kolb, 2005 Leidinggevende: Alles wat over de leidinggevende/management wordt verteld.	21	1
<i>Leid</i>			

GIVING MEANING TO WORKPLACE FUN: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES

15 Balance work / play	Effectief werkgedrag. Hoeveel ruimte is er om te kletsen of grappen te maken tijdens werktijd. De afwisseling van leuke dingen en zakelijke dingen die moeten gebeuren.	38	2
<i>Effwerk</i>			
16 Negative experiences of workplace fun	Werkplekplezier negatief: Negatieve ervaringen met werkplekplezier. Wat is er niet leuk, wanneer is er geen plezier. Wanneer wordt het werk als niet leuk ervaren.	67	1
<i>Negwpp</i>			
	Hoel & Salin, 2002; Pryor et al., 2010		

3 Quality of the relationship

3.1 Outside relationship aspects			
17 Co-construction	Co-constructie: Wanneer mensen voortbouwen op elkaars ideeën, discussie, overleg, vergaderingen. Dit kan tijdens formele en informele momenten zijn.	12	1
<i>CConstruct</i>			
	Decuyper, Dochy & van den Bossche, 2012		
18 Constructive conflict	Constructional Conflict: Wanneer mensen het niet met elkaar eens zijn op de werkvloer.	17	1
<i>CConflict</i>	Decuyper, Dochy & van den Bossche, 2012; Kayes, Kayes & Kolb, 2005		
19 Culture	Cultuur: Wat voor soort cultuur heerst er binnen het bedrijf. Wat vinden we normaal. Welke waarden en normen horen hierbij. Voorbeeld is het normaal vinden dat mensen tot 7 's avonds doorwerken.	58	2
<i>Cult</i>			
3.2 Within relationship aspects			
20 Respect and trust	Respect Vertrouwen: Is er wederzijds vertrouwen en respect op de werkvloer. Deze code kan zowel positief als negatief gebruikt worden.	24	1
<i>RespTrust</i>			
	Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Kahn, 2007; Kayes, Kayes & Kolb, 2005		
21 Shared knowledge and goals	Gedeelde doelen en kennis. Werken collega's samen aan hetzelfde doel. Wisselen zij daarbij kennis uit.	23	1
<i>Doelkennis</i>			
	Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Jackson & Joshi, 2011		
22 Feeling valued	Waardering voelen: Een compliment krijgen of successen/werk dat erkend wordt door collega's of leidinggevenden.	24	2
<i>Waard</i>			
23 Connection felt between colleagues	Verbinding: Wat bindt met mensen met elkaar. Zelfde humor, leeftijd of achtergrond.	61	2
<i>Verb</i>			

GIVING MEANING TO WORKPLACE FUN: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES

24 Recognition of oneself in colleagues	Persoonlijke herkenning: De mate waarin mensen zichzelf herkennen in collega's.	27	2
<i>Persher</i>			
4 Psychological Safety			
25 Being yourself	In hoeverre mag je jezelf zijn op het werk. Wordt er een houding of versie van je verwacht of niet.	53	1
<i>Jezelfzijn</i>			
Decuyper, Dochy & van den Bossche, 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 2007			
26 Sharing thoughts and feelings	Mening geven, mag dat, vrijuit kunnen spreken.	49	1
<i>Mening</i>			
27 Asking for help	Hulp vragen bij collega's, van elkaar leren. Maar ook elkaar helpen om tot een goed resultaat te komen.	21	1
<i>Hulp</i>			
28 Personal circumstances	Decuyper, Dochy & van den Bossche, 2012 Persoonlijke Omstandigheden: Thuisituatie of gebeurtenissen kunnen invloed hebben op een individu. Bijvoorbeeld iemand die minder lekker in zijn vel zat door een zieke ouder. Gezinnen die niet lekker lopen waardoor mensen minder plezier ervaren.	8	2
<i>Persomst</i>			

Appendix C – Quotations

Table containing the original and translated quotations used.

Translation as in result section	Original quotations	Interview-fragment
I really had a good day when I achieved a goal of when I can see I did something well. Or when I hear that I did a good job from someone.	Ik heb een goede dag gehad als ik zie dat ik een doel heb gehaald of als ik zie dat ik iets goed heb gedaan. Of ik hoor van iemand dat ik goed werk heb gedaan.	Fragment 15
It is usually with people you know for about 1 or 2 years. You know if they can handle a certain joke.	Het is meestal met mensen die ik al 1 of 2 jaar ken, ik weet dan dat ze een grap goed kunnen ontvangen.	Fragment 38
They did not take me seriously; I was a woman. They kept making jokes about how I looked or what I was wearing.	Ze namen me niet serieus, ik was een vrouw. Ze bleven maar grappen maken over hoe ik eruitzie of wat ik aan heb.	Fragment 49
A fun day can also mean drinking coffee all day. And that can be fun. But it is not what I mean when think about workplace fun. A fun day for me is really achieving something, contributing to something, finishing something.	Een leuke dag kan ook zijn heb de hele dag koffiedronken. Dat kan natuurlijk hartstikke leuk zijn. Maar dat versta ik niet onder een leuke dag op het werk. Een leuke dag voor mij is echt ik heb iets bereikt, ik heb iets bijgedragen, het is klaar.	Fragment 124
He said he genuinely did not know there were universities in the south of our country. He told a university student from Tilburg she couldn't participate (...) He genuinely didn't know, he thought there were only universities in the Amsterdam or something. Very narrowminded. I can get annoyed by this narrowminded attitude towards the rest of the Netherlands when you are from Amsterdam.	En hij zei dat hij oprecht niet wist dat er onder de rivieren universiteiten waren. Toen zei iemand dat in Tilburg studeerde toen zei hij hou ja met hbo kun je niet werken dus jammer... Oh nee ik studeerde aan de Universiteit van Tilburg. Hij was oprecht niet dat hij er waren hij dacht dat het alleen in Amsterdam was of zo. Erg kortzichtig. Kan ik mij wel aan storen. En zo'n kortzichtige houding naar de rest van Nederland. Vooral als hij uit Amsterdam komt.	Fragment 246
Are you going to do something today or are you already on your holiday? Remarks like these are common in our work culture.	Ga je nog iets doen vandaag, of ben je op vakantie?'. Een beetje dat soort, die cultuur die leeft hier nog steeds.	Fragment 280
I get triggered by enough variety and challenges that I have in my work. I get the freedom to take aspects and experiment with them.	Ik word heel erg getriggerd door voldoende afwisseling en uitdaging en ik heb dat ook in mijn functie. Ik krijg ook de vrijheid om die zelf te pakken en daarmee te experimenteren.	Fragment 372
There was one time where I was addressed as a certain level, which I wasn't. (...) Or people	Soms, er is een keer een moment geweest waarop je dan aangesproken wordt voor een bepaald level, en dat	Fragment 450

<p>estimate your level, while I think it should not be relevant.</p>	<p>ben je dan niet. Of mensen maken dan een schatting naar je level, en dan denk je bij jezelf naja het zou toch helemaal niet relevant moeten zijn.</p>	
<p>I always notice when I am starting a new project... I always look to how the rolls are distributed in the office. What the balance of power is.</p>	<p>Dat ik toch altijd merk, in het begin op een nieuw project., dat ik toch altijd even denk van nou... eerst even kijken wat een beetje de rolverdeling hier is. Hoe zeg je dat. Ik wil nog niet zeggen van, hoe de apenrots verdeeld is.</p>	<p>Fragment 470</p>
<p>But I also like it when things just go well. It doesn't have to be just fun. When you are collaborating with a team towards a goal and that results in something beautiful. That, for me, is also very much workplace fun.</p>	<p>Maar ik vind het ook heel leuk als dingen gewoon goed gaan. Dan hoeft het niet op die manier, gezellig te zijn, als je gewoon met ze allen heel erg doelgericht samen ergens aan werken zodat er iets moois uitkomt. Dat is voor mij ook wel heel erg werkplek plezier.</p>	<p>Fragment 486</p>
<p>I would not want to pretend to be different at work if I am being honest. Because I don't think that you are truly having fun at work when you pretend to be different.</p>	<p>Ik zou me niet op het werk anders willen voordoen dan dat ik ben eerlijk gezegd. Want ik denk niet dat je dan echt plezier hebt in je werk als je anders gaat voordoen.</p>	<p>Fragment 480</p>
<p>"There are more ways of being yourself. No, I am not the same person here as I am at home. Especially when I am at clients. (...) There is also a piece of yourself best left at home.</p>	<p>Er zijn meerdere vormen van jezelf. Nee ik ben niet op het werk de persoon ik thuis ben. Wanneer ik werk bij klant is het nog wat meer. Dus wat dat betreft weet ik niet en dat opzicht of ik volledig mezelf ben op het werk. (...) Maar er is ook een stuk van jezelf een beetje thuis te laten.</p>	<p>Fragment 552 & 554</p>
<p>I am not someone who asks a lot of questions. (...) In that case I would learn more from people who I feel more comfortable with than from people who I get along with less. I would ask them less.</p>	<p>Ik ben niet iemand die supersnel vraag gesteld (...). Dus in dat geval zou ik wel eerder leren van mensen nee ik me gewoon iets prettig gevoel dan van mensen met wie ik iets minder goed kan opschieten. Omdat ik dan minder snel dingen zou vragen.</p>	<p>Fragment 533</p>
<p>I think shared goals are important for the team. There will be conflicts when not everyone wants to move in the same direction.</p>	<p>Ik denk dat gedeelde doelen belangrijk zijn in het team anders krijg je conflicten wanneer niet iedereen dezelfde kant op wil</p>	<p>Fragment 600</p>
<p>When you can confer with people on your own level, it often leads to very elegant solutions. Thinking outside the</p>	<p>Als je met mensen van je eigen kennisniveau kunt sparen, dan leidt dat in een hoop gevallen tot hele mooie oplossingen. Ook out of the box denken. Dat is wat er vaak komt</p>	<p>Fragment 621</p>

<p>box. What surfaces there led to fun experienced. I have the luxury that I am able so assemble the team I will work with. I can actively pick and choose. (...) I choose them on capacities that I do not have. (...) Together we form a complete team.</p>	<p>bovendrijven. Dat is het plezier wat je daaraan beleeft. De mensen die onderdeel uitmaken van mijn team, daar kan ik zelf actief besluiten of ik iemand wel of niet erbij betrok. Dat maakt het allemaal wat makkelijker. Op capaciteiten die ik zelf niet heb, of minder heb, of minder leuk vindt. Zodat je met elkaar een compleet projectteam vormt.</p>	<p>Fragment 623 and 625</p>
<p>In my opinion this is one of the main points when you want a team to function well. You must compliment people on what they are doing. With some people you can truly show your emotions. (...) When my father was sick, I burst out crying. That just happened. But you must feel safe enough.</p>	<p>In mijn beleving is dat een van de pijlers voor het functioneren van een team. Je moet op zijn tijd iemand complimenteren met waar die mee bezig is. Bij sommige mensen kun je soms gewoon echt je emotie tonen. (...) Toen mijn vader ziek was, op een gegeven moment barstte ik in tranen uit. Dat gebeurt gewoon. Dat moet je dan wel durven</p>	<p>Fragment 661 Fragment 675</p>
<p>When targets that are too high or unrealistic, they won't be achieved. When you are constantly held responsible for these failures, motivation quickly leaves the team.</p>	<p>Als je telkens wordt afgerekend op targets die veel te hoog liggen en die worden dan is ook niet haalt dat trekt dan wel de motivatie uit het team.</p>	<p>Fragment 732</p>
<p>I feel like everyone should take their own responsibility when they don't it can really enjoy me.</p>	<p>Ik vind dat iedereen zelf zijn verantwoording moet nemen. Als iemand dat niet doet dan kan ik me daar wel eens eraan ergeren.</p>	<p>Fragment 778</p>
<p>I think it is because when you know someone well and they say something it's easier (...) While when someone else would say something similar, I would not like it. I think when you know people better you can take more of their feedback.</p>	<p>Ik denk omdat je iemand gewoon goed kent, het makkelijker is (...) Terwijl een ander zoiets zou zeggen dan zou ik het niet fijn vinden. Ik denk dat als je ze beter kent dat je meer van ze kunt hebben.</p>	<p>Fragment 803</p>
<p>It all depends on the projects or the clients that are involved.</p>	<p>Dat ligt dan vooral aan de projecten of aan de mensen die daarmee te maken hebben</p>	<p>Fragment 841</p>

Appendix D – Informed consent form

Uitleg onderzoek

Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om te ontdekken wat werkplek plezier bijdraagt voor jou op het werk. Het gaat daarbij om jouw ervaringen. Ik zal bijvoorbeeld vragen hoe werkplek plezier er bij jou uit ziet. Alle antwoorden zijn goed. Omdat het er nog weinig geschreven is over dit onderwerp, kan ik nog veel toevoegen.

Het interview duurt ongeveer een half uur en zal ik telefonisch afnemen. Ik zal veel open en vervolgvragen stellen. Je moet dus niet schrikken als precies wil weten hoe je iets ervaren hebt, hoe dat zo is gekomen, hoe je je daarbij voelde, enz.

Zodra het interview is afgelopen zal ik je meer uitleg geven over het onderwerp. Je kan natuurlijk ook altijd contact met mij opnemen als je nog vragen of opmerkingen hebt.

Wanneer zou dit voor jou uitkomen?

Het consentformulier is op de volgende pagina te vinden.

Toestemming tot deelname aan onderzoek

- Ik,, neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek.
- Ik begrijp dat ik mag weigeren om antwoord te geven op elk van de gestelde vragen en dat ik mijn deelname op elk moment kan stoppen zonder enige vorm van consequentie.
- Ik kan toestemming tot het gebruiken van data tot twee weken na het interview terugtrekken. De data worden in dat geval verwijderd.
- Het doel en werkwijze van de studie zijn uitgelegd en ik begrijp deze.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek één interview van ongeveer 60 minuten betekent.
- Ik ga akkoord dat een audio-opname wordt gemaakt van het interview.
- Ik begrijp dat alle informatie die ik deel, vertrouwelijk wordt behandeld.
- Ik begrijp dat mijn identiteit anoniem in het rapport wordt weergegeven. Persoonlijke gegevens worden niet vermeld. Informatie gegeven in het interview worden aangepast zodat ze niet meer herleidbaar zijn tot mij.
- Ik begrijp dat citaten of samengevatte stukken gebruikt kunnen worden in werkgroepen, thesis producten, conferentie (presentatie thesis) en eventuele publicaties.
- Ik begrijp dat dit formulier en de audio opname bewaard worden in een beveiligde map op de computer van de onderzoeker en in Joda (data verzamel software) tot twee jaar na de datacollectie.
- Ik begrijp dat een transcript van mijn interview (zonder persoonlijke data) tot juni 2022 bewaard zal blijven.
- Ik begrijp dat ik mijn informatie mag inzien tot de boven genoemde datum.
- Ik begrijp dat ik op elk moment contact op kan nemen met de onderzoeker om verdere uitleg of informatie te krijgen.

Onafhankelijk contactpersoon: Lisette Hornstra, Universiteit Utrecht

Als je een klacht heeft kunt je contact opnemen met: klachtenfunctionaris-fetsocwet@uu.nl

Malou Leunissen
m.c.e.leunissen@students.uu.nl
 06-44902823

Onder begeleiding van Isolde Kolkhuis

Handtekening participant

Datum

Ik geloof dat de participant vrijwillig toestemming geeft om deel te nemen aan het onderzoek.

Handtekening onderzoeker

Datum

Appendix E – Detailed list of participating companies

Compagnie	Description	Number of total employees in compagnie	Number of participants in study, including job titles
Compagnie 1	This compagnie is in the top 5 companies in their field in Europe. They specialize in field for which they sell products online and in a physical store.	20+	1 Account manager 2 Account manager 3 Business developer
Compagnie 2	This compagnie is a consultancy firm that focuses on multiple fields and industries.	500,000+	1 IT consultant 2 IT consultant 3 IT consultant
Compagnie 3	This compagnie sells electricity and gas.	2800+	1 Online marketing specialist 2 Online marketing specialist
Compagnie 4	A global company that produces products and services.	200,000+	1 Master scheduler
Compagnie 5	This compagnie is specialized in construction.	350+	1 Water project management
Compagnie 6	Primary school	25+	1 Teacher
Compagnie 7	A global company that develops, produces, and sells chemicals.	13,500+	1 Information analyst