# Conditions for positive contact and a positive organization: a case study of Chinese workers in Maniitsoq fish factory

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*To deal with the shortage of a stable workforce, Royal Greenland has recruited Chinese workers in their fish factories. The factory encounters challenges in managing intercultural diversity, and this case study has examined Chinese workers´ perspective on positive contact conditions and crucial factors for a positive organization. The context of this case study is Chinese workers in the Maniitsoq fish factory, for its heatedness in local media and absence of workers' voice. Ten interviews were conducted in October 2017 and four more in March 2018, and contact factors such as equal status, common goal, cooperation and management support; as well as positive organization factors such as corporate government, human resource management, work environment, conflict management, social activity, language skill, leadership strategy, and stress management are recognized. The final part gives implication for factories to facilitate positive contact and establish a positive work environment and discusses the limitations of the study.*

## Background

In recent years, the self-government of Greenland has demonstrated a commitment to building a more resilient economy. However, a lack of labor constrains Greenland's economic development. Grønlands Erhverv, Greenland's primary business organization, conducts annual labor surveys, which reveal a persistent workforce shortage. Businesses across a wide range experienced a labor shortage of about 1,000 people in 2022. There is a constant shortage of skilled workers, and a high turnover rate among unskilled workers results in a 55% workforce gap throughout the year (Grønlands Erhverv, 2022).

Along with labor shortages, Greenland has also seen an increase in foreign immigration in recent years. In the year 2023, Statistics Greenlandic registered 1958 foreigners living in Greenland, of whom 1267 were of Asian origin. The percentage of foreigners has increased from 0.91% in 2000 to 3.46% in 2023. The largest group of foreigners come from the Philippines (725), Thailand (313),

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Iceland (121), Poland (94) and Sri Lanka (92). Europeans work mainly in public administration and service, building, and transport sectors, while Filipinos and Thais uphold hotels and restaurants, where foreign workers consist of 20% of the total workforce (Statistics Greenland, 2023).

The fishing and fish-related businesses, which are essential drivers of Greenland's economy and export sector, have experienced severe challenges in maintaining a stable labor force. Gønland Erhver's 2022 report demonstrated a shortage of more than 500 personnel in the fishing industry. (Grønlands Erhverv, 2022) In response to the situation, the largest corporation in Greenland, Royal Greenland A/S, began to recruit workers from a distant nation, China. 35 Chinese workers arrived in Greenland in 2017 to work in fish factories in Maniitsoq, Ilulissat, and Uummannaq, while another 27 arrived in 2018. Since then, Chinese workers are employed on a regular basis at Royal Greenland's fish factories. In year 2022, the number of Asian workers reaches 128, constituting around 10% of Royal Greenland's total employees. The largest group among them comes from Philippine (77), next biggest are 48 workers from China (Kristensen, 2022)

Concerns regarding workplace diversity have grown in parallel with the rising number of international workers. Workplace diversity can contribute to competitive advantages in numerous domains, including cost, resource acquisition, innovation, problem-solving, and organizational flexibility. To capitalize on such competitive advantages, however, organizations must first overcome obstacles such as language barriers, cultural shock, misunderstanding, lack of trust, stereotyping, and conflicts (Cox & Blake, 1991). Organizations need to establish a positive work environment where individual differences are recognized, learned, and accepted to profit from workplace diversity. The attitude of an organization toward diversity may influence its employees' ability to gain long-term benefits from a diverse work environment (Lambert, 2016).

The effective management of workplace diversity holds significant importance within the Arctic region. The population of foreign-born individuals in the Nordic nations has increased significantly, from 1.3 million in 1990 to 3.3 million in 2018, and there is substantial potential for their engagement in the labor market (Heleniak, 2018). Incorporating a diverse range of perspectives and experiences can lead to creative approaches to resolving regional concerns such as climate change and sustainable development. Furthermore, the Arctic regions struggle to attract labor due to their distant locations and the associated excessive cost of transportation. By promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, Arctic regions can get access to an expanded range of skills and experience, inspire innovation, and eventually contribute to economic growth.

Chinese workers gained attention in the media before they even arrived in Greenland. In 2012, the world's giant of aluminum, Alcoa, had considered to build a new smelting plant in Maniitsoq. Both Greenlandic and Danish media illustrated worries about thousands of underpaid Chinese workers rushing into Greenland. The arrival of Royal Greenland's Chinese employees has been closely reported, although the peak number of 80 Chinese people living in Greenland only makes them as 3rd largest among Asians in Greenland in 2022 (Statistics Greenland, 2023). Unlike Philippine or Thailand, which has a rapid growing number of people living in Greenland in recent years, Chinese people appeared to be less interested in living in Greenland for an extended period. The number of Chinese living in Greenland in 2023 drops to 68, outnumbered by Sri Lanka (92) (Statistics Greenland, 2023). And despite extensive coverage of Chinese workers in the media, their own voices are rarely heard of. Therefore, it is of great academic interest to learn from Chinese laborers

about their experiences in Maniitsoq, the major challenges they encounter in a diverse work environment, and their perspectives on a positive work environment.
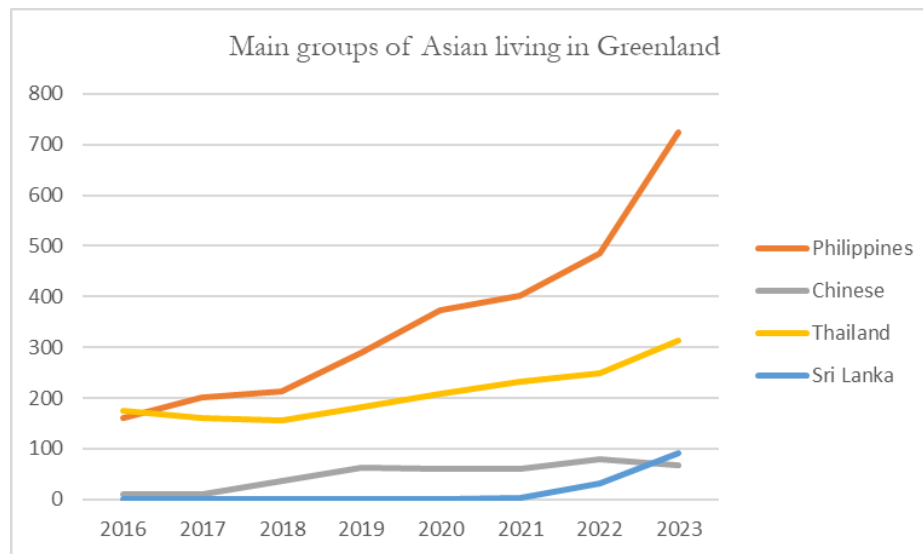


**Figure 1**: Main groups of Asian living in Greenland. Data source: Statistics Greenland, 2023. *Population by Citizenship 1977-2023 [BEEST6].*

## Positive work environment

Prior studies have acknowledged the significance of a positive work environment in the context of diversity management. However, more research is still needed to identify the essential elements that contribute to a positive work environment. Patrick and Kumar (2012) conducted interviews with 300 IT employees and discovered that discrimination, prejudice, and ethnocentrism were the most common barriers in a diverse workplace, with cross-cultural training, overseas assignment opportunities, and language courses being the most recommended approaches for promoting inclusiveness. To diminish cognitive workload during communication, people frequently base their responses on prejudice, which has been shown to have a negative impact on intergroup attitudes and communication efficacy (e.g., Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002). According to contact theory, positive contact between group members, such as friendship, can inspire personalization (focusing on the unique characteristics of out-group members rather than group stereotypes) and de-categorization (reducing the salience of the original group boundaries). As a result, personalization and categorization would lessen the original intergroup bias and conflict (Wilder, 1986).

Positive contact, therefore, has been defined as contact with outgroup members which reduces intergroup prejudice. Allport (1954) recognized four conditions for positive contact: equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities. Meta-analysis by Pettigrew et al. (2006) found that Allport's conditions facilitated, but were not essential to, the decrease in prejudice. The meta-analysis also showed the special importance of cross-group friendship in promoting positive contact effects, and essential mediators for the relationship between positive contact and prejudice reduce, such as increased knowledge, anxiety reduction and enhanced empathy.

Aside from positive contact, positive organizational theory focuses on a broader range of positive events and processes that occur within organizations. PRIDE theory (Cheung 2014, 2015) identified five essential components of a positive organization: positive practices, relationship enhancement, individual attributes, deviant leadership, and emotional well-being. According to Wenstrom et al. (2018), these kinds of positive behaviors can lead to positive emotions and attitudes, which in turn create a positive atmosphere at work. Positive events and processes are also linked to energy, work engagement, and enthusiasm. This approach originated from the positive psychology movement and emphasized more on capitalizing on individual strengths rather than solely focusing on shortcomings or deficiencies (Cheung, 2014).

## Research questions

An intercultural workplace provides good opportunities to examine positive contact conditions. Compared with neighborhoods, Laurence et al. (2018) indicated that workplace characteristics, such as team composition, task assignment, and the necessity of interaction with co-workers, facilitate inter-group contact. On the other hand, workplace contact could be more competitive, or involve larger status differentials, and individuals may be compelled into negative contact where other contexts would allow them to avoid it. Unlike migration from Philippines or Thailand, who normally come to Greenland through social network in their home country, Chinese workers were first recruited to Greenland by Royal Greenland's office in Qingdao, China, and had limited knowledge about Greenland before coming. Lacking social networks and social capital in Greenland, social lives of these Chinese workers are also intricately linked with their workplace and the group of workers in the same workplace. Therefore, positive contacts in the workplace are vital for their integration into the local society. Also, their limited language ability, and as a result their lack of power in the workplace, make it more difficult to fulfill Allport's conditions for positive contacts. With its specific features discussed in previous section, the context of Maniitsoq fish factory has provided good opportunity to study intergroup contact process between Chinese workers and local workers, and to recognize key factors that facilitate/hinder positive contact and attitude improvement.

Positive organization theory demonstrates that positive attitudes fostered by social contact may contribute to improved work performance. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) revealed that the presence of effective communication and supportive expressions among team members was a significant differentiating factor between flourishing teams and languishing teams. And Bakker et al. (2005) discovered that job demands, including work overload, emotional demands, physical demands, and work-home interference, did not lead to burnout among employees who had access to job resources such as autonomy, performance feedback, social support, or supervisor coaching. Chinese workers in Maniitsoq were regarded as a reliable and productive workforce in general. Chinese workers, however, also must deal with issues like limited language proficiency, opportunities for professional growth, and development programs. The lack of prospects for advancement encouraged a short-term perspective, and most Chinese laborers did not plan to stay in Greenland permanently. This case study provided an opportunity to explore the perspectives of Chinese laborers on a positive work environment and provided insights into actions that are most pertinent to developing a supportive work culture that may draw and keep Chinese laborers, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and diverse workforce in Greenland.

The following research questions aim to investigate the factors of positive contact and positive organization in the context of Chinese workers at the Maniitsoq fish factory:

1. How do Chinese laborers perceive their contacts with their Greenlandic colleagues and supervisors at the Maniitsoq fish factory?

2. What are the key elements that contribute to a positive work environment for Chinese workers at the Maniitsoq fish factory?

## Methodology

A case study is defined as" an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units (Gerring, 2004: 342), and the case study design is suitable to explore complicated individual-environment interactions. A case study of Chinese workers in the Maniitsoq fish factory can provide valuable information on the specific experiences and challenges faced by Chinese laborers in Maniitsoq. Such research can acquire firsthand accounts of these workers' daily lives, interactions with locals, and cultural challenges they may experience; therefore, it can contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics between Chinese laborers and their work environment, as well as inform policies and interventions that can improve their workplace as well as their overall well-being and integration into the local community.

To guide the research on a project's complexity and uniqueness, it is required to first determine the subject of interest and the theoretical topic of interest. By doing so, we can study the theoretical topic of interest through the prism of the subject of interest. In this study, I defined my subject of interest as Chinese workers employed in the Royal Greenland fish plant in Maniitsoq, and my subject of interest as the factors that constitute a positive contact condition and a positive organization. To address the issue, a semi-structured interview guide was used. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to share in-depth insights and viewpoints. Furthermore, it enables the detection of emerging themes and patterns that were not predicted previously, boosting overall comprehension of the project in a "real-life" setting (Yousfi, 2014). Triangulation offers multiple perspectives to assess the complexity of a project. Triangulation improves the validity and reliability of the findings by combining several data sources and techniques, such as document analysis and observations. Furthermore, a more comprehensive understanding of the project makes the research findings more representative and applicable to real-world situations (Williams & Shepherd, 2016). Data collected for triangulation includes public resource data, such as news articles, academic papers, and public statistics, and informant-shared data, such as reports, marketing materials, oral descriptions, presentations, and observations. Such data enriched the context of the project and complemented the interview findings.

### Research context

Royal Greenland Ltd. is the largest company in Greenland, 100% owned by the self-government. In total, the company has 38 plants along the west coast of Greenland, with around 2200 employees worldwide; among them, 1400 are employed in Greenland. In 2022, Royal Greenland A/S had a turnover of 5.757 billion DKK. Maniitsoq Fish Plant is one of the biggest plants in Royal Greenland. Its production capacity is around 80 tons per day, and the employee number ranges from 25 to 100 in low and peak seasons. The main products are fish fillets of cod in the summer and Greenland halibut in the winter. The factory is quite automatically equipped, with machines for fish sorting, freezing, transporting, and fillet processing lines.

Conditions for positive contact and a positive organization

Maniitsoq is a town in Qeqqata Municipality, West Greenland, with around 2500 inhabitants. The area around the town is rich in fish, reindeer, minerals, and precious stones, and the most important industry is the fishing industry and other food production. Since the fishery was industrialized during the 1960s and 1970s, Maniitsoq has become a town in the center of industrialization (Dybbroe, 2008). Located about 140km north of Nuuk, Maniitsoq is easy to reach with flights from Nuuk and Kangerlussuaq and with passenger ferry and fast boat shuttle. The town has good facilities such as supermarkets, shops, banks, restaurants, museums, and football pitches.

In 2016, Royal Greenland attempted to recruit a larger number of Chinese workers through a fish plant in Qingdao, which produced fish imported from Royal Greenland. The recruiting process took a longer period than expected, and finally, in May 2017, the first group of Chinese workers arrived in Maniitsoq. Most of them were in their 30s and 40s, had middle school education, and had work experience in fish production at the Qingdao plant. Many also came as couples, leaving the kids in the care of their grandparents back home. With former work experience, they need little adjustment with fish processing tasks. Workers have come under a two-year work contract, while work permits still need to be renewed every year. The wages were time-paid every two weeks. Chinese workers received the same paid rate as local workers; in addition, the plant provided an 8-hour working day guarantee to Chinese workers. Chinese workers lived in dormitories with a relatively low rent, and their travel expenses between China and Greenland were covered.

Workers are divided into three groups: material, filling line, and packaging. The material group has 2–3 workers in charge of fish defrosting and sorting. Fillet processing and packing have a larger group of workers, and they shift between different tasks according to a work schedule published one day before. Daily routines started at 7 o'clock for production preparation and finished when the required quantity of products was achieved. In the long winter seasons workers had more leisure time, but outdoor activities were extremely limited due to wintry weather, and the main entertainment for workers was card playing and chatting. And summertime is the high season for production, as well as an enjoyable time for outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and berry picking.

One Chinese-born translator was hired by Royal Greenland first in 2010 as a part-time translator and later as a HR consultant. The translator spent her daily life in Aasiaat, a town 367 kilometers north of Maniitsoq, taking care of seven plants with foreign worker-related issues such as recruitment, work permit application and renewal, travel arrangements, document and meeting translation, and translation of daily life issues.

**Semi-structured interviews**

As a Chinese coming to Greenland in the similar period as the first-coming Chinese workers, I noticed the media focus on Chinese workers, and the absence of voice from workers themselves. To learn about Chinese workers' expectations, opinions, and experiences, I contacted the management of Maniitsoq fish factory, and with the assistance of the factory arranged interviews with five Chinese workers. A semi-structured interview method is chosen to narrow down the discussion to the main themes of research, and to avoid the risk of ignoring interesting topics. Each interview has a length between half an hour to one hour. The guideline covered topics as follows: background and work condition; expectation; optimal contact condition; and adapting process. Five interviews in total took place in October 2021 in the meeting room of Maniitsoq fish factory.

After arriving in Maniitsoq, I happened to meet a group of Chinese workers in a local supermarket and learned that these workers had just started their work at the Royal Greenland fish plant for two weeks. I thought it was a good chance to do longitudinal research about their adapting process. Five interviews were conducted in October 2021, in Chinese workers' dormitories. These interviews followed a revised guideline to focus more on their first impressions of Maniitsoq. After about six months, four out of five participants participated in the following interviews in March 2022 to examine their experience of adaptation. Compared to the group of workers picked out by the plant management, this group of workers were recruited to Greenland through a different channel. They learned the recruitment information through a foreign worker agency, and after a simple interview and long waiting time for necessary documents and permit application processes, they took the flight to Greenland. This group of workers covered a variety of work backgrounds, such as worker agent, truck driver, cook, and assembly line worker in electronic plants. Several also had experience working abroad before coming to Greenland.

**Data analysis**

The interviews were conducted in the Chinese language, and with the participants' consent, the interviews were comprehensively recorded. Subsequently, I undertook the task of translating and transcribing all the conducted interviews. The coding approach consisted of many practices recommended by scholars such as Gioia et al. (2013), Williams and Shepherd (2016), and Yousfi (2014) to enhance the qualitative analysis by ensuring both rigor and comprehensibility. Such approaches included (1) analyzing data from first-order codes to aggregate themes; (2) previewing important findings to provide the reader with clarity and structure; (3) displaying representative quotations; and (4) identifying overlapping stories and expressions to examine the common criteria used by interviewees to express their perspectives. Throughout the process, I reviewed and reread the data and recoded it numerous times to reflect my changing understanding.

To begin with, I gave labels to the transcripts. As there were two rounds of interviews taking place in October 2021 and March 2022 and two groups of workers coming to Maniitsoq at separate times, transcripts were first labeled to facilitate comparison between diverse groups and different rounds of interviews. For example, for label W11, the first number "1" represented the first round of interviews in that the interviewee was from the first group of five workers who came to Maniitsoq in 2017, and the interview took place in October 2021. The second number "1" registered which worker has been interviewed. For label W23, the first number "2" represented the interviewee as a "newcomer" to Maniitsoq, who arrived in 2021, and the interview took place in October 2021. The second number "3", still registered who has been interviewed. Label W33 registered for the following interview in March 2022 for the same interviewee in W23.

After labeling the transcripts, I classified and labeled the text to give initial codes. Positive contact theory and positive organization theory served as guides for the initial codes to emphasize the subjects that were most pertinent to the research questions. Initial codes covered a wide range of topics, including power status, cooperation and collaboration, communication, language skills, leadership, and so forth. Furthermore, the initial set of codes was combined and organized into broader conceptual categories. This involved an ongoing process of analyzing the data and identifying theoretical patterns until all the data were systematically categorized and no new categories emerged. An examination was also conducted to investigate the critical incidents and common expressions. I focused on the stories that the interviewees shared when offering their

perspectives about what makes for positive contact or a positive workplace. The overlapping narratives and expressions provided clues as to key factors applied to the specific setting. In total, four positive contact factors and eight positive organization factors were identified. In the subsequent section, a more comprehensive analysis of these factors will be provided.

## Findings

### Positive contact factors

Allport (1954) proposed four conditions for positive contact: equal group status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities. In the contacts between Chinese workers and local workers in Maniitsoq fish factory, Allport's conditions were not fully fulfilled.

### *Equal group status*

At first glance, it seems that Chinese workers and local workers have equal group status. They work under the same type of work contract, with the same tasks and the same pay level. However, the situation was much more complicated under further examination. In the first round of interviews, both groups of workers reported an equal status at work. However, the following round of interviews revealed a different picture. For example, W31 commented:

> [Local workers] came back and forth to stare at me. When they wanted to order me to do some tasks, they just pointed at me.

W32 also mentioned that:

> We couldn't guess what they were thinking about. Locals were in the same working position as us, but they just stared at how you worked and reported to the team leaders.

W34 commented:

> After reporting us to the leader, they talked with us, smiling as if nothing had happened.

At first, Chinese workers got quite annoyed by the reporting behaviors, and afterwards they learned to deal with the situation and comfort themselves. W31 mentioned:

> I gradually learned to care less (about the reporting behavior) during the half-year period.

W34 mentioned.

> I just pointed at the cap (color of the cap represented the positions in the team; a team leader had a different cap color than the common workers) and gestured that you are not my leader.

Feelings of unequal status hinder the intention of positive contact. W34 commented:

> We couldn't understand their way of thinking, and don't bother to know.

### *Common goal*

Chinese workers generally thought that they had a common goal with local workers while working, which was to finish the job with good speed and quality. However, the working styles were different. Chinese workers were more accustomed to piece-paid work in China and had a habit of focusing more on their working speed. For example, W11 mentioned that:

The working goals are different. They (local workers) do what they want to do, and when they feel tired, they go outside to take a rest. We Chinese don't feel that way. When we notice fish piling up in the line, we just want to do the job as fast as possible.

W12 commented:

Chinese speed. When we produce the fillets, we have three people on each side. The production line has a high speed; more Chinese workers means less effort.

W31 commented:

At first, we felt anxious when there were no fish on the production line and feared that the leader would scold us for laziness.

On the other hand, local workers focused more on following the instructions step-by-step and were described as "rigid". W31 mentioned:

Once, I needed to change to a new knife. We have rules that one person can only hold one knife at a time. I just asked somebody to pass the knife for me, and it was reported by locals that I was holding two knives at the same time.

W14 also mentioned that:

(The locals) believe in machines, not people. At a glance, we could tell the difference in weight of fish pieces—only two kinds: 200 grams and 400 grams. We could spot the difference easily. But here they require that every single piece of fish be weighed by the scale. Even though I could tell anyway, I was required to follow the procedure.

Local workers were also described as responsible. W15 commented:

The locals are ready to admit their own mistakes and did not try to push the responsibility away.

### Cooperation

Chinese workers reported good cooperation with local workers. Although Chinese workers only spoke a few words of English, and most local workers spoke only Greenlandic, the working cooperation did not require much language ability, and the workers learned to understand each other by gestures or facial expression. W11 commented:

When we get familiar, we can easily understand each other without so many gestures. For example, I could simply point to the gloves to show that I need to change them or point to the door to show that I want to go outside for a rest.

W15 commented:

It is happy to work together with local workers because they are funny and often make jokes.

However, small conflicts about joking behaviors were also reported. W11 reported:

(Locals) could make fun of me, but they could not accept it when I do the same kind of thing. One day a female worker patted my butt jokingly, and she thought it was quite OK. Another day when I patted her, she got annoyed.

### Management support

Conditions for positive contact and a positive organization

When there were conflicts between Chinese workers and local workers, factory management would call a meeting to solve the conflicts as soon as possible. W14 commented:

> Firstly, both sides should explain the situation to group leaders. But we could not explain our situations clearly, not as clearly as the locals.

Group leaders would report the situation to the factory manager, and she asked the translator then.

W11 commented:

> (With trivial conflicts) the manager does not interfere and is rather indulgent towards the locals.

W31 mentioned:

> The leaders didn't understand (our situation) and did not try to mediate (our conflicts with the locals). Whatever the locals reported (Chinese worker's "wrongdoings"), they believed and criticize the Chinese on personnel meetings.

The management tended to focus more on production-relevant issues. W14 mentioned:

> Production-related issues will be translated. If these issues are not involved, they will not explain what has happened. During meetings, we just sit there. If Chinese people are not involved, there is no translation.

Chinese workers had little clue about what had been discussed. W14 mentioned:

> There was an event last year which I still haven't figured out yet. The locals were very happy about it. A list was typed out and pasted on the wall, but I don't understand what the letters mean.

W32 mentioned the same event:

> When they had meetings, we were asked to do all the work in the group, and they drank coffee and had leisure time. Still, these activities counted for the same working hours as us.

Chinese workers also reported the unwillingness of management to listen to their opinions in production and management improvements. W14 commented:

> I can't argue with them. He is the leader, so I can't talk, even if I know better. The problems we can spot immediately, they can't spot even if they go around and around. We can finish production at two o'clock, and when they arrange workers and allocate work, they can't finish it until four o'clock. Their management model and team are different from our domestic ones.

W33 mentioned:

> There are good and bad people everywhere. Chinese, Greenlandic, all the same. It's okay, the problem is the management mode is not good.

**Positive organization factors**

Following positive psychology, positive organization theory emphasized strengths rather than shortcomings. The Chinese workers also gave their perspectives on a positive organization. To examine the most relevant factors for Chinese workers, I organized topics into different factor

categories following the guidelines of the Positive Organizational Index (PRIDE-69) (Cheung, 2014).

**Table 1:** Chinese workers' perspective on a positive organization

| Positive Organization Factors | Topics | Interviews | Representative Quotes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positive practices | Corporate governance | W11, W12, W13, W14, W15, W22, W23, W24, W25, W31, W32, W33, W34 | *We come here to earn money. (W12)* |
| | Human resources management | W14 | *New locals were promoted to supervise us. (W14)* |
| Relationship enhancement | Work environment | W14, W21 | *Back in China the factory had little rest time. (W21)* |
| | Conflict management | W11, W31, W32 | *It is harmful for conflicts to accumulate. (W32)* |
| | Social activity | W15 | *People eat cakes and drink coffee together in canteen(W15)* |
| Individual attributes | Language skill | W14, W24, W25 | *When We wanted to speak, no one could help in translation (W14)* |
| Deviant leadership | Leadership strategies | W14, W21, W25, W31, W32, W33, W34 | *The factory leader called me by nickname. (W25)* <br><br> *No improvement over the years. The same questions continued. (W14)* |
| Emotional well-being | Stress management | W31, W32, W33, W34 | *The Work itself is not tiresome, but my heart feels tired. (W31)* |

### Corporate governance

The topic most concerned Chinese workers was corporate governance. All Chinese workers emphasized that they came to Maniitsoq to work and earn money, and most of them planned to go back to China after contract expiration. Therefore, they cared most about the workload allocation. The workers were paid by the hours, so their main concern was to work as many hours as they could. Such an intention was strong when they first arrived, and gradually they learned to live a more leisurely life. The second group of workers had experienced unsatisfaction with the overtime work arrangement in the factory and tried to suggest a "fairer" distribution of overtime working hours among Chinese workers. But they felt that they had no channel to communicate their wishes, and a lack of interest from factory management made them disappointed.

### Human resources management

Chinese workers were excluded from training and promotion on the excuse of language ability. W14 mentioned:

> The group leaders were promoted among local workers. Yesterday, two locals were promoted. They just started working for a few days. Now they were leaders to supervise us.

However, development issue was not mentioned that often by Chinese workers. With a short-term perspective, most workers had no intention for a longer stay in Maniitsoq. Consideration of family, especially children, is the main cause for returning. One worker showed interest in applying for permanent residence in Greenland, which requires seven years' stay. But he also mentioned consideration of his family back in China.

### Work environment

In general, Chinese workers had no specific requirements for their work environment and were satisfied with what was provided to them. W21 compared the work environment at the Maniitsoq fish plant with the factory he worked before:

> Back in China, the factory had little rest time. Here, it is quite different.

W14 also mentioned work environment improvement:

> This year music was played during our work time, but we couldn't understand the songs. We thought it was noisy, but the locals were happy and dancing. It's fun to work here. People cheered when they got off work, the atmosphere was quite good.

### Conflict management

Lack of effective conflict management was also mentioned. W31 commented:

> We were told that we could not compare with the locals. Locals could do whatever they wanted; we came here to work.

Although conflict management was not always satisfactory and language barriers made it difficult to communicate, Chinese workers still held a good relationship with local workers in general. W11 commented:

> One day we were annoyed by each other, and the following day we just forgot about it.

### Social activity

Although Chinese workers had participated in some social activities when they first came to Greenland, they gradually lost interest in participating. W15 mentioned:

> The factory has contacted a fitness center to provide us with free entrance. We tried a few times on Sundays, but shortly we went no more. The work itself is exhausting; we need no more training.

The language barrier also diminished their motivation to participate. W13 mentioned:

> I went to a concert once but couldn't understand a thing.

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One key person on social networks could have a huge influence. One local worker was mentioned by several Chinese workers in the first group as being very friendly and enjoying communicating with them. He often visited their dormitory and invited them to his home for dinner and holiday celebrations. He also invited Chinese workers to go hunting and fishing with him. Unfortunately, he died of cancer at the early age of 28, and Chinese workers lost their most important local friend. And the second group of workers loses a lot of opportunities to contact locals. Local workers also had a high turnover rate, which made social networking even more challenging.

### Language skill

Several works also showed an interest in improving their language skills. W33 mentioned:

> The locals speak Greenlandic. Some could speak a little English, others couldn't. During leisure time I like to chat with the local people, and they teach me Greenlandic. One sentence, two sentences. Gradually I could communicate with basic words.

Although the work itself did not require many language skills, the Chinese workers were still excluded from development opportunities. And the inconvenience experienced both at work and in daily life made them motivated to learn the foreign language. Greenlandic and English were preferred, while no one showed an interest in learning Danish.

### Leadership strategies

The second group of workers experienced a change of perspective about leadership. When they first arrived, they were surprised by the equal status and respect shown by factory management. W21 mentioned:

> The leaders stood there and introduced themselves, and we sat and listened. Afterward, we had dinner together with the factory management.

After six months, workers began to be unsatisfied with the overtime work arrangement in the factory and the lack of interest from the management in handling the issue.

W31 mentioned after six months:

> (We were criticized for) wasting the factory manager's time. The manager has no obligation to care whether the workers feel (the overtime allocation) is fair or not.

### Stress management

The lack of communication channels and unsatisfactory allocation of overtime work made some workers show signals of burnout. W31 mentioned:

> It is hard to adjust my mode, and I feel depressed. My children are still young back in China, and when my parents complained about taking care of children, I became very depressed.

> When I worked in Japan, the work itself was tough, but the atmosphere was nice. When something happened, there was someone available to help us fix it. The work arrangement was fair.

W34 also mentioned:

> We were criticized for working in a bad mode. Basically, you won't get emotional because of work. You won't lose your temper easily when you are not tired. People only get emotional when they are unhappy.

## Discussion

To summarize, the workplace at the Maniitsoq fish factory did not fully match Allport's (1954) good interaction characteristics, according to Chinese workers. On the other hand, contacts between Chinese laborers and local workers were often described as friendly. Employees also displayed a "U-curve" process of attitude transmission. Chinese workers had a favorable attitude toward their work and the local workers at first, but their attitude deteriorated with time due to a lack of positive contact variables in the workplace. They gradually learned to adapt to their surroundings over time. Management support was shown to be critical in establishing positive interactions between Chinese labor and local workers. A more inclusive and harmonious work environment developed when management actively supported and encouraged interactions and collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds, as well as actively dealing with conflicts. This not only helped to strengthen relationships between Chinese workers and local workers but also contributed to overall job satisfaction and productivity within the organization.

The short-term perspective of Chinese workers has a significant impact on their expectations for a positive working environment. Due to their limited language skills and communication channels, it is challenging for management to understand them, and they frequently miss advancement opportunities. A short-term perspective encourages Chinese workers to prioritize immediate gratification over long-term aspirations for a positive work environment. A positive organization was more frequently associated with factors like work allocation that have a direct correlation to short-term gains. As a result, for Chinese workers, leadership and corporate governance became the primary areas of focus, while individual qualities and other areas linked to long-term perspectives were largely ignored. Consequently, Chinese workers may overlook the importance of personal growth and development, and this imbalance in priorities may hinder the overall growth and sustainability of the organization eventually.

Conflicts are difficult to avoid in a multicultural setting, and factors such as conflict management, leadership strategies, and stress management were frequently mentioned, particularly by the second group of Chinese workers. Without proper conflict resolution skills and strong leadership, the organization may face increased turnover rates and decreased productivity, ultimately impacting its long-term success. Additionally, stress management techniques can help Chinese workers cope with the challenges of working in a multicultural setting, promoting their overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Open communication and respect should be the foundations of the working relationship between management and employees. This can create a positive workplace where employees feel heard and respected. Furthermore, regular feedback methods like performance reviews can improve the relationship between employees and management by encouraging responsibility and openness. Effective management requires acknowledging and addressing employees' concerns, addressing their needs, and treating them as equals. Furthermore, international workers need a supportive social network to help them deal with life's obstacles.

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Positive contacts and an inclusive environment can also foster the de-categorization process. Because they were a unique group residing in a tiny town, the Chinese workers were more easily identified as "Chinese" than as individuals. and the misbehavior of a single Chinese worker could lead to a negative attitude toward the whole group of Chinese workers. By encouraging personal connections and fostering understanding between individuals from diverse groups, it becomes easier to address conflicts on an individual level rather than attributing them to the entire group.

Maniitsoq shares many characteristics with other small Arctic societies, such as Longyearbyen and Svalbard. Both are on the coast, and since there are no roads connecting them to other networks, most transportation is by air or sea. Furthermore, population sizes are constrained (de Witt et al., 2021). We can read about Filipinos and Thais who live on Svalbard (Sokolickova, 2022) or work in fish factories in Icelandic cities (Bissat, 2013; Skaptadóttir, 2010, 2019). However, there are few accounts about Chinese workers in Maniitsoq that can be compared. The findings revealed unique challenges faced by Chinese workers in terms of positive contact and positive organizational behavior, highlighting the importance of further research in understanding the dynamics of diverse work environments in isolated regions. Arctic regions are known for their harsh weather conditions and remote locations, which can pose significant challenges for such regions to attract workers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, studying Chinese workers experiences in Arctic regions like Maniitsoq can provide valuable insights into the complexities of multicultural interactions.

The study's limitations included a lack of translation and coding comparison. Due to time and resource constraints, the study was unable to involve other scholars in the translation and coding process. Although the author followed guidelines from established research and examined the translations and codes several times to reflect the highest level of accuracy possible, the absence of a second opinion may have introduced some bias or errors in the results. To improve the reliability of the study, further research could consider comparing samples from different Arctic regions and conducting longitudinal research to track the long-term effects of multicultural interactions in Arctic regions. Additionally, a broader range of data collection methods could benefit the study by allowing for a variety of analytical angles. Incorporating mixed methods, such as quantitative data or focus groups, could provide deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of positive work environments.

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