

Good job! again...

The experience of compliments of long-tenured employees

Irina Kluiters

Communication Science, University of Twente

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Dr. Mark van Vuuren

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Abstract

Introduction: This qualitative study aims to find what the experience of long-tenured employees is with compliments. More specifically, whether tenure changed the amount and type of compliments they receive, whether they have a need to receive compliments and what is the impact of compliments on long-tenured employees. **Method:** 15 long-tenured participants are interviewed using the CIT (Critical Incident Technique) in a semi-open interview. Additionally, the study examines whether the interviews worked as an intervention changing the participants and/or their colleagues in their compliment behaviour, by sending additional questions to the participants after the interview. **Results:** This study found that long-tenured employees have varying levels of receiving compliments or alternatives. However, the need for receiving compliments was not unanimous as the perceptions on receiving compliments differed. When the long-tenured employees do receive compliments there is either no change, or most often, they resulted in positive changes. Lastly, the interviews worked as an intervention for only half of the participants, which means that the impact of the interview was less than previously found. **Discussion:** This study aims to fill the gap on literature on the relation of long-tenured employees and compliments. Other research mainly focused on education, but long-tenured employees show to have a largely different relation to compliments. Future research should focus on further exploring the experiences of long-tenured employees.

Keywords

Compliment – compliment culture – Tenure – Internal organisational communication – CIT – praise

Good job! again...: The experience of compliments of long-tenured employees

Working at the same company for a long time may reduce your chance to receive compliments. When you start working at a company, entering a new workplace can be quite exciting and nerve-wracking. You have to get used to the work culture, where everyone's place is and even where the coffee machine is located. When you finally figure out how to do something on your own perfectly, you are proud of yourself and colleagues around you may pay you a compliment on the job well done. However, after working for some time at the company, can you still expect compliments from your colleagues when you do something well? As they have seen you do the job perfect numerous times before. And if they stop giving you compliments after a while, does that have an impact on your motivation to work?

The relationship between tenure and compliments is understudied, as compliment literature is mainly focused on education (Morton et al., 2020). The purpose of this study is thus to add to the existing research on compliments, specifically in the context of work. By interviewing long-tenured employees about their experiences on compliments on the work floor, this study tries to find whether long-tenured employees indeed receive less compliments in the progress of time, while compliments remain as important to them. To do this, compliments are defined as a verbal interaction between the compliment receiver and compliment giver, aimed to positively highlight an act or aspect of the compliment receiver.

Moreover, it is crucial to find out whether compliments affect the motivation to work for long-tenured employees. Particularly, as the labour force ages, due to a decrease in the number of births and the pension age rises due to longer life expectancies, people keep working longer and longer (De Lange, 2019). Since people will work longer in their lives, researchers have started to look at how to fulfil sustainable employment, in order to ensure the full use of resources in terms of long-tenured employee knowledge (De Jonge & Peeters, 2019). In order to improve the sustainable employment in companies, many studies have used

different interventions to try to improve, for example, social support at work (Hengel et al., 2012), productivity (Van Holland et al., 2017) or organizational commitment (Weiss, 2013). However, Hazelzet et al. (2019) concluded that mostly the interventions ineffective in changing the sustainable employment. As most interventions have been shown to be ineffective, this study aims to find whether an intervention for compliments could improve the motivation to work for long-tenured employees, improving the sustainable employment.

Additionally, for management it is beneficial to find out what motivates the long-tenured employees at work, as motivation gives employees job satisfaction, even when they experience work stress or a large workload (Salsabilla et al., 2022). Moreover, the motivation of these employees to stay at the company is also important to inspect, since their human capital positively impacts the company performance (Hancock et al., 2011).

Whether long-tenured employees may have a different experience regarding compliments than employees that have just started, is unclear. Perhaps the long-tenured employees receive less compliment than they did before, perhaps they do not need compliments as they feel rewarded in other ways or perhaps nothing changed at all, meaning that tenure has no effect on the compliment culture around them. The aim of this study is to find whether the compliment culture and frequency has indeed changed for the long-tenured employees compared to when they first started and what their perspective is on this. To concisely find the relation between tenure and compliments, this study aims to answer the research question: *How do long-tenured employees experience compliments on the work floor?*

The scope of this study was to gain a broad understanding of how long-tenured employees perceive compliments. Therefore, the participants were not part of a specific company or had jobs in a specific field but rather, the aim was to find as much variation between the participants as possible.

Additionally, other pro-social behaviours, such as expressing gratitude (Kumar & Epley, 2018) or asking for help (Zhao & Epley, 2022) have been found to follow the same mechanism as compliments, mainly in the underestimation of the positive impact (Kumar & Epley, 2023; Zhao & Epley, 2022). These pro-social behaviours may act as a form of compliments for the long-tenured employees. This research paper will thus look into these alternatives and whether they may be even preferred by long-tenured employees.

This paper will first clarify the scope of the interviews by defining the concepts that are used in the research. Then, an elaboration on the methodology follows, namely the sample composition as well as the data collection and analysis. The next section unveils the insightful findings from the interviews, alongside the coding scheme with concise explanations. The findings of the study will then be discussed and put into perspective with the existing literature on the topics. Lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed and what future research should focus on to broaden the knowledge on compliments in a work context.

Theoretical framework

Definition of a compliment

Telling someone that they look good, giving a thumbs up in an email or even a nod of approval, can all be perceived to be positive and as a compliment, but what exactly makes something a compliment? Morton et al. (2020) created a model in which they defined a compliment as a verbal act between two people, but noted that it is a social interaction rather than simply an expression and reaction. They suggested a new model for compliments that illustrates this complex interaction. In this model, the antecedents to give a compliment are: (1) the evaluation of merit (the evaluation whether the receiver deserves a compliment), (2) characteristics of the complimenter and (3) the intention to compliment. To expand on the intention to compliment, Falk and Fischbacher (2005) explain that people react differently on kind actions, depending on the underlying intention. For instance, when the intention to compliment someone is bad natured, the receiver will be more likely to react negatively, then when the intention was good-natured. Thus, a good intention, such as highlighting something positive should be added to the definition of a compliment, as a bad-natured compliment will likely not be perceived as a compliment, resulting in completely different reactions and (long-term) results. To conclude, this study defines a compliment as a verbal interaction between the receiver and giver, aimed to positively highlight an act or aspect of the receiver.

Moreover, Morton et al. (2020) included in their model that the reaction of the compliment receiver will impact how the complimenter perceives the merit after the interaction. Additionally, when the receiver agrees with the compliment, it positively impacts the relation between the two people. However, the receiver may also decide to reject or react dismissive to the compliment, negatively impacting their relation. A reason for a dismissive reaction could be due to a low self-esteem, making the compliment feel untrue (Kille et al., 2017). Overall, when a colleague continuously reacts dismissive to your compliment, you

rethink how deserving they are of the compliment and may decide to not give a compliment in the future. In conclusion, there are many aspects surrounding the ‘simple’ act of giving a compliment. Thus, to fully understand how the long-tenured employees experience the compliments, these complex aspects will also be taken in consideration.

Furthermore, the focus of this study is to find the relationship between tenure and compliments, however, long-tenured employees may perceive other actions as compliments or even prefer them. To find what the alternatives for the compliments are, the similarities with other concepts used in literature need to be discussed. Firstly, an often used concept is praise, which is interchangeable with compliments (Morton et al., 2020). Secondly, although feedback is not the same as compliments, positive compliments can be perceived to be compliments (Morton et al., 2020). Lastly, the act of showing appreciation verbally, can be described as being a compliment, but appreciation in the form of valuing, as well as respecting or acknowledging someone else (Pfister et al., 2020), does not fit within the compliment definition. In conclusion, this study will look at literature using praise, positive feedback and verbal appreciation in order to broaden the scope, without defying the set definition of compliments.

Underestimation of the positive impact of compliments and pro-social behaviours

Receiving compliments results in a good feeling, so why are compliments not given to each other compliments all the time? In a study from Zhao and Epley (2021) participants were asked to think of a compliment and estimate the positive impact it will have on the receiver, as well as how awkward the receiver will feel. After the compliment was given, the receiver was asked about their experience. Zhao and Epley (2021) found that the receiver consistently rated the experience as more enjoyable and less awkward than the giver expected. This finding is also consistent in situations where the participants were either strangers (Boothby & Bohns, 2020), acquaintances (Dungan et al., 2022) or romantic partners (Dungan et al., 2022).

Compliments are perceived to be less well received than the reality, and interestingly, other pro-social behaviours appear to have the same mechanism at play. Examples of these are expressing gratitude (Kumar & Epley, 2018), starting a conversation (Kardas et al., 2022), asking for help (Zhao & Epley, 2022) and acts of kindness (Kumar & Epley, 2023). This phenomenon can be explained by two factors, namely the focus on the warmth or the focus on the competence of the behaviour/compliment. The compliment giver often focusses on the competence of their behaviour or compliment, specifically how useful the compliment is or how it may help to fix a situation (Dungan et al., 2022). While the receivers are more focused on the warmth of the behaviour or compliment (Kumar & Epley, 2023). On this contrast, Fiske et al. (2007) note that in interactions, warmth is noticed first and weighs heavier than competence. Which means that the giver should also instead focus more on the warmth, rather than the competence.

Many studies found that underestimating the positive feeling that the pro-social behaviour will have on the recipient, makes people less likely to partake in the pro-social behaviour (Kumar & Epley, 2023; Zhao & Epley, 2021). This means that people are not as pro-social as they could be, due to consistently underestimating the positive impact it will have. As is then theorized, Zhao and Epley (2020) found that making people more aware that their preconceived perception might be wrong, indeed increased the number of compliments given. Additionally, as compliments are less often given as givers focus on the competence rather than the warmth of their message, Zhao and Epley (2021) did an experiment aimed to find whether highlighting the warmth in the compliment would make people more likely to give compliments. They found that the likeliness indeed increased. Thus, to increase the likelihood of someone giving a compliment, they need to be informed on how their preconception may be wrong as well as help them focus on the warmth of the compliment. However, in all these studies people were observed in a neutral or leisure setting, but in a

work setting professionals may have a different relationship with compliments and therefore the effect of informing them on the incorrect preconception might be different. To conclude whether the setting indeed created a difference, this study tries to find which effect informing professionals on this phenomenon will have in a work place setting.

Organizational tenure

Although many studies use tenure as a variable, often different measures are used for the tenure. Firstly, in a study from Trimble (2006), it is concluded that not the age of employees, but rather the number of years (tenure) should be used to study the relationship to job satisfaction, commitment and turn over. A few studies, such as (Son & Ok, 2019) and Chang et al. (2022) used measures of years to conclude long organizational tenure, however, Rollag (2004) argues that the relative tenure of an employee should be looked at, as it is part of a socialization process that employees feel as a part of the company. Kim (2018) adds to the importance of using relative tenure that studies that use a precise time as a means to state tenure, have contradicting results, namely the relationship between tenure and organizational performance. Moreover, the relative tenure is based on the growth of the company as well as the internal turnover, which, on average, means that an employee loses their newcomer role after 2 to 3 years (Rollag, 2004). For this reason, a longer tenure will be required in this study, as the experience of being a tenured employee is compared with their newcomer experience. The same reasoning was used by Son and Ok (2019), which resulted in them using a tenure of 5 years, which this study will follow.

Long-tenured employees within companies

In this study, the focus group is long-tenured employees, which means that the employees have been working at the same company for a longer period of time (Kim, 2018). Numerous studies have looked at organizational tenure and focused on various relations organizational tenure may have, such as performance (Chang et al., 2022; Steffens et al.,

2014), job satisfaction (Son & Ok, 2019) as well as organizational commitment (Natarajan & Nagar, 2011; Wright & Bonett, 2002).

For a company, long-tenured employees are important to consider, as employees with a long tenure have a central position within the company (Rollag, 2004), have better resource investment (Glambek et al., 2023), are less likely to leave a company when bullying behaviour occurs (Glambek et al., 2023), influence decisions made by the company to decrease risks (Cho et al., 2024) and positively impact the company performance (Hancock et al., 2011). Although long tenure has clear benefits, the relationship between tenure and other variables is not always decided or linear. For example, Chang et al. (2022) theorized that the relationship between tenure and performance is a reverse U-shape. Namely, that new employees have a low(er) performance and the longer they stay at the company, the more this performance increases. However, at a certain number of years, the performance decreases again. Interestingly, (Son & Ok, 2019) found a non-reverse U-shape relation between organizational tenure and job satisfaction, particularly *the hangover effect*. This is a contrast to what Trimble (2006) argues, particularly, that tenure predicts job satisfaction, as firstly, dissatisfied people would leave the company. And secondly, cognitive dissonance would change the attitude towards the company for those that stayed, as the amount of work and years that they put into the company would be wasted otherwise. In conclusion, long-tenured employees play an important role within an organization, but the exact effect of tenure on an employee requires more research.

Long-tenured employee's relation with compliments

Long-tenure does not seem to affect the perceived amount of support that the employee receives (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). Ng and Sorensen (2008) give two possible explanations, firstly, that employees who have worked for a long time at the same company, still value support. Secondly, these employees feel supported, even without constant

confirmation. Whether the employees indeed feel supported will be analysed in this research, as well as looking into what exactly replaces this constant confirmation. Further literature on the effect of tenure and compliments is missing, highlighting the importance of studying the relationship between tenure and compliments over time.

Support on the work floor for employees

Long-tenured employees have many different relations on the work floor with their boss, direct colleagues, clients or indirect colleagues, which can result in different compliment interactions. Ng and Sorensen (2008) observed the effects of perceived support from both colleagues and supervisors on employees. They found that the perceived support from the supervisor had a significant effect, as it also impacted the perceived support from the company. This is due to the fact that the supervisors represent the company in the employees eyes (Kim et al., 2017). The perceived organizational support is important as it is positively related to job satisfaction and commitment, and at the same time negatively related to burnout, turnover (intentions) and absenteeism (Kurtessis et al., 2015). Thus it is beneficial for companies to increase the perceived organizational support, which can mostly be obtained through the support of the supervisors. This study aims to find whether this support can also be obtained through compliments or other alternatives.

A different support mechanism appears in relations between colleagues, than with a supervisor. Though, perceived colleague support also contributes to the perceived organizational support, as colleagues are part of the informal structure within the company (Hayton et al., 2011). Which can be due to the fact that the division between the colleagues and the organization is not that clear and decisive (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). However, Ng and Sorensen (2008) noted that it is important to distinguish between the perceived support from colleagues and from supervisors, as they have different consequences and antecedents. For a company, perceived colleague support can be as important as perceived supervisor support as

it increases the use of the employees' promotive voice (Xie et al., 2015). The promotive voice is important for, for example, change processes, improved work performance and team learning. Additionally, Henderson and Argyle (1985) found that colleague support from low intimacy colleagues, also helps to reduce work-related stress for the employee. In conclusion, for organizations to positively affect the employees work, they should also focus on the perceived colleague support and how this can be improved.

The importance of financial rewards

While receiving compliments or appreciation has a positive impact, long-tenured employees might deem financial rewards as being more important. Stefanovska–Petkovska and Bojadziev (2017) found that for long-tenured employees in the telecom industry, both financial and non-financial incentives play a role in job satisfaction. Interestingly, they found that the factor of salary itself determines whether a job was accepted. However, short-term financial rewards were less important than non-financial rewards, such as compliments. Kurtessis et al. (2015) explains that this preference is present in employees that feel supported by the company, as they are more likely to participate in a social exchange relationship, changing the employees focus on non-economic rewards. However, Kurtessis et al. (2015) notes that the fairness of the pay also plays a role in the social exchange relationship, which falls in line with Stefanovska–Petkovska and Bojadziev (2017) finding on salary importance. To summarize, although short-term economic incentives are not preferred by long-tenured employees, the long-term economic incentive of a good salary is at the base of a good employee-work relation. This research will try to find the importance of financial incentives for the long-tenured employees and whether they can indeed replace compliments.

Methodology

In this explorative study, qualitative research was done to find the answer to the research question: *How do long-tenured employees experience compliments on the work floor?*

Procedure

To find the answer to the research question, long-tenured employees were interviewed about their experiences. Before the interview, the participants were told that the interview would be about work culture and more specifically compliments. Additionally, they were told that there would be no questions about the company itself and that all the information will be anonymized. Overall, participating in the interview was voluntarily and no compensation has been given for participating.

At the start of the interview, the interviewer asked for consent to audio record the interview, when this was given, the interview started by orally confirming the consent. When the interview started, first, a job description was asked (see appendix A). Secondly, the interviewee was asked to give an insight into a day at work. During both questions, the interviewer asked follow-up questions to fully understand the job and to get the interviewees more comfortable, which could result in more honest answers further in the interview. Then, the participants were asked about the feedback culture within the company, with both supervisors and colleagues. After the feedback culture was explained, a link was made to the compliment culture at work. Which lead to asking the interviewee to elaborate about a positive or negative experience they had recently at work and/or with colleagues in regards to compliments.

These elaborations were part of the CIT (Critical Incident Technique) (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). The CIT is an interview technique where the interviewees are asked to describe (recent) experiences, leading to rich information for the analysis. Specifically, using this method, as

the long-tenured employees explain the situations that come to mind, only the incidents that had an impact on them will be mentioned (Urquhart et al., 2003). This is useful for this study as meaningful compliments can be observed to find their antecedents and consequences. With the found antecedents, the interactions can be replicated when they resulted in positive consequences.

During the CIT, the interviewer used probing techniques to get more insights on these situations. The techniques were used from Urquhart et al. (2003). An example is, whenever it was possible, the interviewer would not sit directly in front of the participant, to encourage evocation. Namely, evocation would help the participants to recall the situation they are describing, instead of being aware of the present. Moreover, the interviewer made sure to remain silent a bit longer after a question was answered, so the participant would elaborate more to fill the silence. Lastly, this technique allows for the researcher to gain more information as many probing questions can be used, thus the questions that fit the answer given the best, can be selected. This study used the probing questions from Urquhart et al. (2003), such as, “what was your reaction?”, “how did this make you feel?” and “(how) did your relation change after this interaction?” (see appendix A).

During the first two interviews, the interviewer realized that a few specific questions should have been added as they can provide a lot of information. Especially in the prospect of comparing opinions and situations between interviewees, it was important that they mentioned the same topics. The interviewer then proceeded to ask these additional questions in all of the following interviews. Examples of the additional questions are: “Do you notice any change in the compliments that you receive over the years?”, “How else do you experience appreciation, apart from compliments?” and “What would have to change to make you leave your job?”. (For all of the additional ‘standard’ questions, see appendix A).

When the interviewee had described a few incidents, the interviewer focused on more specific questions about compliments. Namely, whether the interviewee felt like they gave as many compliments to their colleagues as they want to, and whether they give as many compliments as they would want to receive personally. Then the interviewer told them about the phenomenon of compliment underestimation (see appendix A). This phenomenon was added, as Zhao and Epley (2020) found that participants were more likely to give compliments when they have been made aware of this phenomenon. This way it could be analysed after the interviews whether participants were indeed more likely to give compliments after explaining the phenomenon. Lastly, the interview was closed with the question whether the participants were satisfied with their job and whether they go to work with pleasure every day.

After the interview recording stopped, the interviewer gave the participants the opportunity to ask questions they had. Finally, the interviewer asked whether it was possible to contact them again, when they had additional questions after the interview. As well as, whether the previously used method of contacting would suffice for this. The choice was made to leave it unclear whether indeed follow-up questions would come up, as participants may otherwise ask what kind of questions they can expect. This way, the participants were likely to respond to the follow up questions when they receive them, while not providing them with more information that could alter the findings.

A or two week after the interview, the researcher contacted the participants again, asking them to shortly answer two additional questions. The purpose of these follow up questions was to investigate whether the interview had changed the compliment behaviour of the participants. Therefore, the participants were asked: “were you more aware of compliments given to you after the interview?” and “has there been a change in giving

compliments after the interview?”. All of the participants replied to the message with their answers.

Sample composition

In the study 15 long-tenured employees took part. The participants had to fit the requirement of working at the same company for more than 5 years. However, this does not mean they had to have the same job for more than 5 years, for example if they switched between departments or got promoted. Additionally, the interviewee had to work full-time at the company (at least 36 hours per week), because full time employees have a different experience from part time employees. Specifically, due to part time employees having a lower psychological contract with their work, they have different work attitudes, such as lower job satisfaction (Conway & Briner, 2002; Miller & Terborg, 1979). There were no age restrictions or preferred field of work, as the intention was to have a variety of employees from different working fields and companies. The plan to have variety was achieved and in the end some of the included jobs were: University teacher, middle school teacher, product manager, technical commercial advisor, auditor, interface coordinator and researcher.

To find participants, the personal network of the interviewer was used. The participants were either asked for the interview in person or via an online message. Two of the participants were then collected via a snowball effect, namely colleagues from the interviewees. From the participants, eight were women and seven men, resulting in a balanced distribution. The average time working at the same company was 25 years (SD = 11.2 years). See figure 1 for the age division of the sample.

Table 1

Age division of the sample

n

%

21 – 30 years	1	6,67
31 – 40 years	1	6,67
41 – 50 years	0	0
51 – 60 years	12	80
61 – 70 years	1	6,67

Data collection

All the interviews took place between the 23th of April and the 6th of May. The interviews took between 25 and 45 minutes, with two outliers of an hour and ten minutes. Of the interviews, 13 were held in person, either at the company in a private room (6) or at the interviewees house (7). For both situations, it was made sure that other people were not able to listen to the interview or interrupt, as this would impact how free the interviewee would feel to speak about their experiences. The other two interviews were held online, with a video connection. Although this was not the preferred method, due to time and geographic location restrictions, the choice was made to hold the interview online. Furthermore, the interviews were either held in Dutch (14) or English (1). The choice was made to hold the interviews in Dutch when the interviewee's first language was Dutch, to make it easier and more comfortable for the interviewee. All the interviews were audio recorded to be able to transcribe the interviews in detail afterwards.

Data analysis

The aim of each interview was to gain insights in a minimum of 3 incidents. In the end 33 incidents were collected, thus averaging in around 2 incidents per interview. These incidents were then analysed using flexible coding to create a coding scheme by the researcher. This coding scheme consisted of 6 categories, in which more sub-category were under divided (see appendix B). For every sub-category two or three example sentences from

the interviews were written down. Additionally, the researcher wrote a short explanation about the sub-category. To test the validity of the coding scheme, a second coder was asked to code the example sentences. The second coder did this voluntarily and no compensation was given. Moreover, the second coder was both fluent in Dutch and English, which means that the sentences could be given in the language they were originally in, without needing translation. By keeping the sentences in their original language, it was made sure that no meaning was unnecessarily lost, so the second coder could properly analyse the answers.

To code the sentences, the second coder received a document with the categories and sub-category. The sub-categories had the short explanation, but the example sentences were removed. Moreover, a second document was given, which contained all the example sentences shuffled. The researcher explained to the second coder that they had to match the right sentences in the empty spaces from the sub-categories by using the explanations. However, the main six categories were also briefly explained, and it was added that in the 'types of compliments' category, the quotes would be critical instances, thus an explanation of a situation. Lastly, the researcher remained close to the second coder, in case questions arose, but never steered the coding or made any indication whether something was coded right or wrong. When the second coder finished categorizing all the sentences, the inter reliability score was calculated. All the quotes together reached an inter reliability of 68,2%. However, looking specifically at the categories, two were coded exactly the same, two were coded around 60% and two had a reliability of only 50%.

This was rather a low inter reliability, therefore some changes were made to the coding scheme. These changes were both in the quotes used as well as the coding scheme. Namely, the quotes were given more context where this was necessary and possible. This was done by either adding more of the original sentence to the quote or adding the question asked by the researcher when the quote was a short and direct response. For example, the following quote:

“I think in terms of education, yes, those are just not the kind of people that will go crazy from enthusiasm like oh I like this so much, because it remains education.”, had an unclear start, thus the interviewees start of the interview was added: “I am definitely a fan of that and..(rest of the quote)”.

Secondly, the second coder stated that the flawed Dutch and English in the quotes was rather difficult to understand. Therefore the quotes were lightly changed to be grammatically correct as long as it did not change the meaning within the sentence (Lingard, 2019). For instance, “Like that people also said: Geeh and lot of effort have done put it all together in that period.” was clarified by changing the grammar to “Like that the people also said: Geeh, (you have) done a lot of effort to put it all together in that period.”. Additionally, double words that were part of the speech due to hesitation, were removed as it did not change the meaning of the sentence. Other language mistakes, such as sentence structure mistakes were decided to keep in the quotes, in order to remain as close to the original quote as possible.

Moreover, the categories were updated. This was done by improving the explanations of the categories and sub-categories, so they became more clear. For example, the explanation of trust (see table 5) was changed from “the employees felt trusted at their job” to “the employees feels that they are trusted by others”.

Lastly, the sub-category of ‘negative opinion’ was removed in the category perception on compliments. The reason for this was that the difference between negative opinion and no need for compliments was too small. It was decided to add the negative perception to the no need for compliments perception, as having a negative attitude towards compliments also means that you feel no need to receive them.

The answers from the follow up questions were only coded by the researcher, using four categories: the interview changed the compliment behaviour or did not change the behaviour and the interview made the participants more aware of compliments or there was

no change. For this category, there was not a second coder, as the responses contained either a clear change or a clear statement that there was no change.

Ethical consideration

To reduce the risks and burdens, the ethical implications of the study were considered. Firstly, the participants all participated voluntarily without compensation. At the beginning of the interview, they were informed that they may stop the interview or not answer a question, if they wish to. Additionally, they are informed that they may always contact the researcher, if they have questions or objections.

Since the participants are talking about incidents at their work and with colleagues, all the data that was collected was anonymised. This was done by removing the names that were mentioned, and making sure that the data cannot be tracked back to them. Additionally, for the security of the data information, the interviews were only recorded on the personal mobile device from the researcher. Moreover, these audio files were only transferred to the researcher's personal laptop. Both of the devices were always locked and could only be accessed by the researcher.

Results

From the 15 interviews, six topics in regard to the research question arose. Each topic contains multiple sub-categories. The first topic is focused on the factors that create the context, as this could influence the compliment interaction. Then, the different types of compliments are discussed that the interviewees received. However, the interviewees also mentioned many alternatives to receiving compliments, creating the third topic. Furthermore, the consequences of receiving compliments were under divided in two topics, namely the direct reaction and the (long term) result of receiving compliments. The perceptions from the interviewees on receiving and giving compliments is the last sub-category. Next to the six topics about the compliments, the replies of the interviewees on the two additional questions about the interview, are coded in table 8. (See appendix B for the quotes in their original language.) Table 2 provides an overview of the categories discussed.

Table 2

Overview of the categories found in the data

Category	Explanation
Factors that create context	Which factors influence the compliment interaction
Types of compliments	Which kind of compliments did the participants receive
Alternatives of (verbal) compliments	What were the alternatives to the compliments that the participants received
Direct reaction of the compliment	What was the direct reaction of the employee when they received a compliment at work
Result of the compliment	What were the long-term results of receiving a compliment for long-tenured employees
Perception on compliments	What is the perception on receiving and giving compliments from the long-tenured employees
The interview as an intervention	What was the result of the interview working as a compliment intervention

Factors that create context

The interaction between the receiver and giver of a compliment are within a context. To properly analyse the interactions, the context should also be taken in consideration. In the interviews six different factors were mentioned that create this context and influence the interactions. (See table 3.)

Table 3

Results of factors of the context

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Personality	Compliments are given differently depending on the personality of the receiver or giver	I find it easier to give a compliment, than to give one. And I also do not really think when I give them, while I do really think about it when I receive them. So that is maybe also the way, how I am.
Gender	Compliments are given differently depending on the gender	That is not my thing. I do have colleagues who do do that. In general they are the female colleagues in that team. They are nicer than the average men in our team.
Culture background	Compliments are given differently depending on the cultural background of the employee	I am in a particular department where many developers are also in, there is a lot of diversity there and, in this case, there a lot of women from, for example, India, or thus, they also bring a culture with them that they give someone a compliment. So it also depends a bit on the background of those people.
Company culture	Compliments are given differently depending on the culture of the company	That culture is always like that and it is a pretty horizontal line in terms of management and everything. And everyone is approachable, so you feel you, except our supervisor, but you feel quite safe to also say yeah, sorry I made a mistake.
Type of work	Compliments are given differently depending on the type of work	But I also think it is a bit the branch from the software world, it is just more than half of the organization, is very nerdy and modest, or even a bit on their own. Yeah, you must get the compliment from the sales people and the marketing department.
Tenure	Compliments are given differently	I do think when I had your age, (I) was much more goal orientated and on the checkmarks and the pats

depending on how long the employee has worked at the company

on the back yes, and now I have it much, I am much more about the collegiality and the, but that has, yeah, that just has to do with the phase in your live and your and your career.

Personality

One of the factors that influences the compliment interaction is personality. More specifically, participants noted that personality influenced more whether compliments were given at all, such as: “So indeed, yes, the room for compliments is definitely there. It has to be something personality dependent then, I think then. (1A)”. She stated that the lack of compliments from her supervisor has to do with their personality, as other colleagues were able to give compliments easily. A few of the other participants also mentioned that they simply do not give many compliments, due to their personality.

Gender

The gender of either the receiver or giver influenced the interaction of giving a compliment. Moreover, not only did gender play a role in the interaction, it also influenced whether a compliment interaction were to happen at all. For example, one interviewee explained that she decided to not give a compliment considering her gender: “When you are then in a room full with men, than you also do not want to be the women who then gives something like that a compliment, because that is, in a manner of, that is then again such a softie woman who, in a manner of speaking, has to give a compliment on everything. (1B)”. The belief that women are more likely to give compliments was also noted by one of the male interviewees.

Cultural background

The cultural background of the employees influences the amount of compliments that are given. “Because there are just well, black and white speaking, nice Dutch people who will not give compliment so easily. (1C)”, this quote illustrates that Dutch people tend to not give

compliments easily, while employees with other backgrounds, such as Indian, are perceived to give compliments easier and thus more often.

Company culture

The environment in which you work in, also influences the compliment culture with your colleagues. This environment is partially shaped by the company culture, namely whether it has a hierarchical culture, open culture and/or flat culture. Moreover, the interactions can also depend on whether there is a compliment culture at the company, as one interviewee said: “I think so, yes, I do not think that there is being said the whole day, but there is an ambience of when you do something well, that it will be said. (1D)”. Overall, the interviewees that worked in a company with a culture of giving each other compliments, indeed received and gave many compliments. Additionally, participants that worked in a company with a hierarchical structure received fewer compliments than the other participants that do not work in such a structure.

Type of work

Another environmental influence is the type of work you are in. A few interviewees mentioned how the more ‘human oriented’ work, also has more complimentary people, while more ‘computer oriented’ work, has less social people which are less likely to compliment others. Also other work fields are noted to have an impact on the amount of compliments given, for example: “I am definitely fan of that and I think in terms of education, yes, those are just not the kind of people that will go crazy from enthusiasm like oh I like this so much, because it remains education. (1E)”.

Tenure

Lastly, how long an employee has worked at the company also influences the compliments and compliment interactions. One interviewee said that he tends to give new people (more) compliments: “At work I also do that barely. When I do it, it is mostly to the

younger people, because I think then sometimes, maybe honestly said, you underestimate or something, and then they surprise you positively. And then I do want to give them a compliment sometimes. (1F)". Thus the employees that have a short tenure, receive more compliments than his long-tenured colleagues.

When asked whether one of the interviewees thinks she receives different or less compliments than when she started working, she replied: "I do not know, and yes, I think maybe in the beginning, because I was also new in the project then, that content wise, other compliments but more like yeah, that you finished it. So then, yeah, everything went right. And now, that we maybe what more, that is normal that we just do what we have to do. And if you then take it just a step further, or thought about it better or come with a new idea once how we can do this of that, that will be more appreciated, maybe more in detail or so, because in the beginning everything was new. So we were very happy if finished an assignment at all and that it went well. I think that it changed maybe a bit, but in the quantity, (I) do not think so necessarily, no. (1G)". Thus, tenure did not change the number of compliments, such as the first quote portrayed, but tenure rather changed the type of compliments. Namely, when she just started working everything was complimented because it was finished well, now she is complimented when she takes an extra step.

Furthermore, one interviewee said that she herself was less focused on receiving compliments due to her tenure, however, she also says that it is a result of the phase in your life. Overall, most of the participants stated that they did not really notice a difference in compliments or cannot remember how it used to be, since many years have passed since.

Types of compliments

When analysing the incidents from the participants that came from the CIT, it appears that they receive varying compliments, such as personal matters or work-specific situations (see table 4).

Table 4

Results of type of compliments that the long-tenure employees receive

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Personal	A compliment about a personal issue or characteristics of the person outside of work	I asked about something and she (colleague) said: I find (that) so nice, of you, you really listen. I think oh, that is nice, I think that is really normal.
Work style	A compliment about how the employee works and their work style	That day and they (students) came to that barbeque explicitly to me and they said: yes, maybe we did not always think that all the lectures were as fun or useful, or but yes, we really got a lot out of it and we really thought it was nice and we were very happy with you.
Specific project	A compliment about how an employee worked on a specific project or task	And well for staff, what was there then, well a men of 30, 40, goes to speech and he thanks me very much in that speech, about my role, in that whole story.
Specific action	A compliment about a specific (short) situation that happened in regards to work	Also there was something with emergency and then you go the whole night till late, till an hour or one, and then you are decently at the company at 7 in the morning and then there is thank you said. So that. Or we just go.. I'll treat you on a coffee. It is free coffee, but then they treat you on coffee. That is kind.
Place in the team	A compliment on their place within the team	The management there indeed sees it also, in the past they mentioned it sometimes, thus that I am the cement between the rocks. Well, if you do not have cement between rocks, then you have a weak wall. That falls, thus, well, yes, I find that a compliment.

Personal

The first type of compliments the interviewees received were personal compliments. Meaning that they were complimented on personal characteristics or on personal circumstances. These kind of compliments are, for example, about their ability to listen to others, light up a room or as one interviewee said, about their ability to listen without judging

as well as being there for other people: “That she find it so nice that she could vent with me and that I did not have a judgement about it, yeah, and thus that I wanted to make time for her while my agenda was overflowing yes, thus actually how nice that you saw me for a moment and on the moment I needed it. (2A)”. These kind of compliments are often about a situation between two individuals, rather than a work situation.

Work style

On the other hand, the participants also receive compliments that are about their work style. They get a compliment specifically about their way of working, for example: “An evaluation conversation ...there I had an above-average result. Well yes, that was for me already, I think oh. Well, that is a compliment, like that was, that was a good compliment. (2B)”. In these situations, their work ethic or work style are either complimented in person or through an evaluation.

Specific project

Differently from work style, which is focused on how one works, the interviewees also mentioned getting compliments on a specific project or task they are working on. “The one who I am training, he often gives me compliments that he then really, well, happy is with me how I train him and how I guide him and stuff. So that it very nice. (2C)”. In this quote it shows how the tasks of guiding a new employee, was complimented. But also big projects that were finished well and complimented, fall under this category. Compliments on specific projects were the most often mentioned in the interviews.

Specific action

Furthermore, some of the compliment incidents described were about really specific situations, where someone handled something well, such as: “And then I had to remain very calm. That is quite difficult sometimes, she (client) annoys you very much. But yes, that, that went quite well and then you hang up for example and then (name) says, you handled that

well, good job. (2D)". Moreover, times where the participants had put a lot of effort in something or working late to finish a task, were also complimented.

Place in the team

One interviewee described a compliment he received about his place in the team at work: "With my supervisor (name), then I always do get that back, that he is happy with me and that he is happy, the way I am placed in the group and how I do my work and help others. (2E)". These type of compliment are more focussed on the person in relation to others, rather than only the qualities of that person.

Alternatives of (verbal) compliments

Apart from receiving verbal compliments, the interviewees also mentioned many other alternative ways in which they felt complimented at work. Some of the alternatives are non-verbal interactions, such as a financial reward. See table 5 for all the alternatives found.

Table 5

Results of alternatives to compliments that the participants receive

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Financial reward	The compliment was given in form of a financial reward	And also a financial reward. On the opposite yes, that, that is also not necessary, but I did get it then as a sort of bonus. Thus that, that is nice, that is not only in words, but also in acts.
Asking for help/questions	Other employees asking them for help was perceived to be a compliment	I coincidentally had one of the men who asked if I could quickly read along with a letter which he wanted to send to one of his colleagues. About extra-curriculum activities. So I think well, then he appreciates my opinion at least, otherwise you would not have asked that.
Satisfaction from work	The employees saw finishing work or good results as a compliment due to personal satisfaction	Look, if a client writes, I had this problem and now I can continue again. That, I get my energy from that.

Appreciation	The employees felt appreciated by others	So you don't always need to get compliment on the moment that you feel you are appreciated, (it) is also already enough. They do not even have to, let's just say, express it. But you often notice it in someone that they are appreciated, what that, they appreciate what you do. So I think that, already, I think already (is) a compliment.
Gesture	The employees received a gesture in the form of material goods as a compliment	My one colleague, direct colleague, they had written a card. With merry Christmas. Thanks for all your commitment from the past year, with a super tasty chocolate as well. I find that very nice, that was, I found that really sweet, of her.
No negative feedback	By not receiving negative feedback, the employees felt complimented	There the feedback might be no feedback, good feedback or something like that. That is a Twente's saying, no message, good message.
Trust	The employees feels that they are trusted by others	My supervisor he stated that I ... am the father of the department in a way. ...Maybe that has to do with that people dare to confide in me and want to. ...so that we dare to confide in you, more that sort of things, I think that is a compliment then.

Financial reward

A 'monthly' compliment, as one interviewee called it, meaning the salary is seen as a compliment. Moreover, some interviewees explained that due to their (high) salary, they do not expect compliments, as it is a compliment already. But apart from a (high) salary, bonuses for hard work or extra-curricular committees are received as a compliment too. Though one interview called receiving the bonus "not only in words, but also in acts", favouring the financial reward over only receiving verbal compliments. However, most of the interviewees did not mention financial rewards at all. One interviewee even said that he would

not work somewhere else for more money, which means that financial rewards are not his priority at work.

Asking for help/ Asking questions

As long-tenured employees have worked for a long time at the company, they can expect some questions from colleagues, but also from new employees that still need some help. When others come to ask for help or to ask questions, the long-tenured employees perceive this as a compliment, such as one interviewee explained: “That people contact you like I have questions for you and sometimes I think: way do you think I know that? But I am flattered that you come to me. So yeah, that I think also. In a way it is also a compliment that they come to you then. (3A)”. In these interactions, the participants were not rewarded for their work, but rather rewarded by the implication that they are good at what they do.

Satisfaction from work

Another alternative to receiving compliments from others, is finding satisfaction in finishing your own work well. This is illustrated by the following quote: “The best compliment would be that everything just runs smoothly and that I think oh I did not receive complaints. (3B)”. Moreover, helping others, such as clients or colleagues further by doing your work, also gives the interviewees the satisfaction as an alternative to compliments. One interviewee mentioned that he believes he does his work well, and gets satisfaction from that and thus compliments himself for the work well done.

Appreciation

What is more, is the feeling of appreciation, by colleagues, supervisors or clients. A few interviewees explained that you can feel when you are appreciated by others around you. When you feel that you are appreciated, you do not need compliments, or other big gestures, as one of them explains: “Sometimes it is the very small, small words where it is, not in the big gesture, it is not in the gift cards and flowers and those kind of things, but in the constant

appreciation of the team and the individuals of the team. (3C)". Overall, the interviewees state that the feeling of appreciation surmounts frequently receiving compliments.

Gesture

The difference between a financial reward and a gesture, is that a gesture does not need to have (high) monetary value. A small gift, food, or coffee (as often mentioned) was seen as a nice gesture from their colleagues or bosses, and perceived as a compliment. The following quote illustrates this perfectly: "Look, here we receive cake from (company) when we are the education course of the year again. That is of course a compliment. (3D)".

No negative feedback

Sometimes silence shows to be a good compliment as well. As a few participants explained: "no feedback is good feedback". Thus, by not receiving negative feedback, or feedback at all, the interviewees perceived their work to be good and thus had a feeling of being complimented. However, one of the interviewees also illustrated that she did received a positive evaluation, but nothing alongside it: "I think I received a very good evaluation eight years, and you hear nothing about that. So, I am already something like if I hear nothing, it is good. ...it is a silent compliment if you know what I mean. So the compliment is not given, but by receiving a good evaluation, you think, they do appreciate me. (3E)". This also fits within this category, because although the evaluation was positive and thus a compliment, the fact that she received no (negative) feedback with it, meant that she thought it was quite complimentary.

Trust

The least often mentioned alternative of a compliment, is feeling trusted. One interviewee highlighted that since his colleagues feel like they can come to him, because they trust him, he feels complimented.

Direct reaction of the compliment

The direct reaction on receiving compliments of the interviewees were either to react evasive or react accepting to the compliment (see table 6).

Table 6

Results of the direct reaction of the participant when they received a compliment

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Evasive	The participants reacted evasive when they received a compliment	...it is often difficult to say thank you after a compliment. You would often faster say, we did not do it alone, maybe also just thanks.
Acceptance	The participants accepted the compliment they received and reacted non-evasive	In any way also thank (them) for the compliment, I think that is important anyway. Because you also (want) that part of communication, yes, where you have actually been busy with the whole day, to go the right way anyway.

Evasive

When the interviewees received a compliment, they sometimes reacted in an evasive manner. For instance, one of the interviewees avoids receiving compliments, and when he does receive them, he reacts evasively: “I avoid that a bit. Yeah, that it logical right, you know, and then I just continue. (4A)” However, only this respondent reported this active avoidance behaviour. The other evasive reactions described by some of the participants were minimalizing their own role in the project or highlighting that it was rather the work of the team. For example, one interviewee said: “Yes, I find that difficult, because then I say: yes, that is my, you have colleagues for that. Yeah, but I would not so quickly say thank you: thank you for this present, for this feedback that, but I think that, because I find it difficult myself, because I think it is very normal that you do that. (4B)”. She also mentions how she would not thank the compliment giver as she considers her actions and work as something she should just do, which is an evasive behaviour that is also described by a few other

interviewees. Lastly, one interviewee explained that receiving a compliment made him feel awkward, making him react evasively. The evasive reactions were mostly given by participants that mentioned not receiving and giving a lot of compliments at work. This could mean that reacting negatively reduces the amount of compliments one will receive, perhaps resulting in giving less compliments themselves.

Acceptance

On the contrary of the evasive reaction, many participants reacted positively to the compliment given to them. They either replied with a simple thanks for the compliment, such as: “Yeah. I said thank you. I thought it was amazing. I was just, uh, speechless.”. Or they replied with more words, which could be perceived by the compliment giver as a compliment back. An example of this is: “Then I thank her of course that I find it very thoughtful, very nice and really appreciate. (4C)”. Here the compliment receiver’s reply included the note that the giver was thoughtful.

Contrary to evasive reactions, the participants that mentioned reacting positively, also received and gave many compliments. Additionally, these participants work in companies that have a compliment culture. Thus, evident is that reaction positively to the compliments you receive, will likely increase the amount of compliments you receive as well as the amount of compliments you give away. This increasement of compliments often influences their whole department, starting a culture of giving compliments.

Result of the compliment

Long-term results of receiving compliments or working in a company with a compliment culture were either present or not present for the participants (see table 7).

Table 7

Results of receiving compliments for the long-tenure employees

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Feeling of recognition	The employees felt recognised by others for the work they put in	Well, I am not going to burst into tears or something, but no, but that is that, that is definitely something what you then think oh, it is nice that it is being said and that it is seen. Like that the people also said: Geeh, (you have) done a lot of effort to put it all together in that period. So that, yeah, that I do like that.
Change in motivation	There is (not) a change in motivation to work after receiving a compliment	It is not like, let's say, that I only get motivated because I receive compliments, because that would not be so great, I think, because then I must get compliments every day and otherwise go sick to work.
Impact on relationships	Receiving compliments has an impact on	Interviewer: Did it maybe change also your relationship with him? Interviewee: Maybe a bit, yes. It's because, you know, then you know that this person appreciated it. It is important to note from your manager.
Overturn	Participants stay at the same company with considerations to the company culture	Yes actually quite important, just direct colleagues I find it very nice to work with. (That) was sometimes different and then I noticed directly that I did not like it anymore. That is also why I quit the first project.
Enjoying work	The participants expressed (not) enjoying their work	Yes, it does not happen a lot that I do not feel like it, but that are really really big exceptions. That, yeah, I do it with a lot of pleasure, you probably notice it in the way that I talk about it and it just remains fun.
Reciprocity	Receiving and giving compliments were part of a reciprocity trend	No, I think that because I give little, that I also do not receive as many. That is of course a reciprocity if I would generous with compliments the whole day, people would, I think do it much more to me as well.

Feeling of recognition

An often-mentioned result of getting complimented from the interviewees was that they felt recognized for their work. Especially when they have worked hard or long on a project, this feeling of recognition is important, as can be illustrated by the following quote:

“Yes, then you know okay, that is what I did it for. I worked my ass off, but okay, they do see that it was extremely hard work. (5A)”.

Change in motivation

Whether receiving compliments changed the motivation to work (harder), was quite divided in the interviews. Namely, some people mentioned something along the lines of this quote: “I can hardly say for myself that I was more motivated afterwards to work hard, because I, the compliment was not needed for that. (5B)”. Thus, they did not feel more motivated to work harder. However, on the other hand some people mentioned that they indeed felt more motivated to work harder, such as: “Well that day you do have a moment of: yes, we did that! Yes, and that does sometimes change, yes, at least I always do have that, because it is just like you want to go a bit harder. (5C)”. Additionally, a few interviewees mentioned how they were more motivated to work harder in general, when they had a supervisor who gave many compliments, opposed to a supervisor that did not.

Impact on relationships

Another change that compliments could account for, is the relationship between the compliment giver and receiver. As one interviewee explained, her relationship with her supervisor changed positively, after receiving an incredible compliment. However, most interviewees stated that their relation did not change with the compliment giver after the compliment interaction.

Overturn

Being in an environment where compliments are (often) given, also reduces the chances of an employee leaving the company. Because: “Well and when do you work long at a company? The moment you are enjoying it. (5D)”. Thus, working at a company you do not like or colleagues with whom you have no ‘click’ or complimentary relationship with, makes you more likely to leave.

Enjoying work

To the question, whether they enjoyed their job, every interviewee said yes. They all found pleasure in doing their work, though many mentioned that there are also times in which it is less fun or more difficult. One of the responses was: “Yes, yes, I sometimes enter the department and then the supervisor says, they say then oh, there she comes, smile on her face. Yes, I think that, I think, I think it is just very fun, nice work, nice colleagues! (5E)”. Showcasing that she enjoys her job and colleagues. As all the interviewees explained to enjoy their job, it cannot be concluded that the amount of compliment a long-tenured employee receives has an impact on their enjoyment at work.

Reciprocity

Lastly, an important result of receiving compliments, is the effect of reciprocity, which means that employees that give a lot of compliments, receive many back and employees that give little compliments, receive few back. A few interviewees mentioned during the interview, that they were aware of this effect, but do not optimally use it, for example: “It would be good if I use it more to my advantage, because I just know that if you are also other people and other people complimentary, that that also will come back. (5F)”.

Perception on compliments

Between the participants there were a varying perceptions on receiving and giving compliments. Table 8 shows these different perceptions with the needs and opinions.

Table 8

Results of the perceptions on compliments

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Need for compliments	The employees expressed having a need for receiving compliments and they expect it	Yes, except what I just said about the supervisor, then you do expect something. That is a bit stupid to say, but that, yes, that is like that at a bigger thing which just went well. Then you do somewhat just expect a

		thanks or just shortly, does not have to be extensive, because I am not a fan of that at all.
No need for compliments	The employees expressed to not have a need for receiving compliments	Yeah, receive zero and give very little, yeah sorry that that it is. That is what it is. No I actually never receive compliments. I also do not need them. That is also not something I look for
Work is work	The employees expressed that compliments are only an extra, as they should do their work regardless of receiving compliments	Then you have to get compliments for that? No it is my work. I am paid for it, so simply, and I should just do it in a fun way. That is important.
Authenticity	The employees highlighted the need for the compliment to be authentic	Being complimentary also has to be authentic, and that is often very difficult.

Need for compliments

For a few of the interviewees, receiving compliments is needed on the work floor, as one participant said: “Well, you do not hear about it often then. They know that there is something. Well, yeah, that there was a problem or something or that you solved it. Yeah and the one time, then you do sometimes hear something about it and the other time mention, yes, no, or on the work floor, I do think that, then it can be a bit more sometimes. (6A)”. The other times in the interviews when a lack of compliments was described, it was also about their supervisor, never about their colleagues. One interviewee even explained: “But yeah, what you if you talk about compliment and stuff, then I do think that that also belongs a bit to a supervisor role, to sometimes be able to give that.”. Thus, the supervisors should give (more) compliments, as it is an integral part of the function. As the ability to give compliments is expected from the supervisor, it is not surprising that the lack of giving compliments was only mentioned in regards to supervisors.

No need for compliment

On the other hand, some interviewees stated that they don't feel a need to either receive (more) compliments: "I would not want more compliments, it is enough. (6C)" Or give (more) compliments to others: "But I am not going to write down like with name, like: Geeh, I am so happy with you? I think that is tacky. I would really never do that. (6D)". Their view to compliments could even be considered to be negative, as compliments are too 'tacky'. These interviewees did not expect compliments from anyone, and also did not end up in situations where they were disappointed about a lack on compliments, which is logical as they express not having a need for them.

Work is work

During the interviews, multiple people stated that they considered compliments to be an 'extra'. They do not need it, nor do they actively not need it, as they do consider it to be a nice 'bonus'. The following quote from one of the interviewees shows this way of thinking, namely, as it is his work, they can expect good work from him: "Yes, that is nice to hear. I do am like: yes, I am also doing my work, and yes, hearing that you do your work well, is nice to hear and fine. But I also think that that is a part which they should expect from me. So yeah, you are not immediately going to pride yourself. (6E)". Though, he is happy to receive compliments, regardless.

Additionally, one interviewee mentioned: "But yes, I do say jokingly do you know how much you get paid, (I) hope that you do your work well. Well, yes, that is a bit of a joke, but in every joke there is a bit of the truth. Yes, I also think that, well, I do notice that. The younger generation, they are more sensitive for compliments, then I think, yeah, you just have to do your work, just do your work. (6F)" In conclusion, they think work is work, regardless if they receive compliments for it.

Authenticity

‘Just’ giving (more) compliments is also not the answer, as authenticity is also an important factor to consider, according to the interviewees. “Yeah, I think if you if you give compliments and you don't mean it then it's different energy. But if your intention is good you really appreciate somebody and then give compliment. Then it's really nice.” This quote shows that it is quite easy to feel this inauthenticity and it could even work averse. Hence, authenticity should be considered when it decided to give compliments to long-tenured employees.

The interview as an intervention

A week or two after the interview, the participants received a message where they were asked whether they were more aware of the compliments received and whether there was a change in giving compliments. This resulted in four categories as the factors either changed or did not (see figure 9).

Table 9

Results of the participants' answers to the additional questions

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Change in receiving	The participants stated to be more aware of the compliments they received	Yes I am more aware of the compliments that are given.
No change in receiving	There was no change in how aware the participants were in receiving compliments	I am not more aware of the compliment of the compliments that I receive after the interview.
Change in giving	The participants stated to be more aware of the compliments they give or gave more compliments	As for giving compliments I did become more alert on this after our talk. I did also apply it more emphatically in the evaluations of the assignments with students.
No change in giving	There was no change in how much compliments the participants gave or how aware they were when they gave one	I personally do not have a difference in giving compliments.

Change in receiving

Eight of the participants noted that they were more aware of the compliments they received, due to the interview. For example: “After the interview you are more consciously working on it with both giving it and receiving of a compliment. (7A)”. However two respondents noted that: “...yes, in the beginning I was more aware of it. (7B)”. And more specifically: “In the days after the interview indeed, then I noticed it more. After that it became less again. (7C)”. Which means that right after the interview there was a change, but it decreased after a while. In conclusion, a bit more than the half of the respondents benefited from being reminded of compliment culture, but the effect wore off after a while.

No change in receiving

Seven of the participants noted that they didn't note a difference, for example: "I can answer both questions with no. Thus no difference. (7D)". However, two of the respondent noted that they hadn't received a compliment after the interview. For this reason, they haven't noticed a difference: “As for receiving compliments I do not notice a difference... Or in other works, I did not receive any compliment since our interview... (7E)”. However, a few of the interviewees also mentioned in their interviews, that did not have a need for compliments. Thus, for them being more aware of when they do receive compliments was not of added value.

Change in giving

Next to the awareness of receiving compliments, the participants were also asked whether there was a change in the compliments they gave. Seven respondents said they gave more compliments due to the interview: "I now also give more often a compliment if for example something went well or something alike. (7F)". One respondent said: “I was more aware of the fact that I gave compliments while this happened more unconscious(ly) before.

(7G)”, which falls in line with what two other respondents said. Hence, the participants did not necessarily give more compliments, but they were more aware when they did.

No change in giving

On the other hand, six respondents noted that they did not give more compliments after the interview nor were more aware of when they did. However, one respondent did mention: “I also do not really notice a difference in the giving of compliments. I think that I already do that consciously and will keep doing. I did have to think today (coincidence or not) about you when I gave someone a compliment. (7H)”. Thus, nothing changed, but she did think about the interview once. Moreover, two of the six said to not notice a difference due to the fact that they were on vacation after the interview and thus had no possibility of experiencing this difference on the work floor.

Discussion

This research paper tried to find the answer to the question: “*How do long-tenured employees experience compliments on the work floor?*”. To answer the research question, this paper focussed on multiple sub questions. To start: *which complex aspects surround the ‘simple act’ of giving a compliment?* The answer to this question lies in multiple categories that were found. Foremost, there seem to be various factors that create the context in which the compliment is given, such as personality, cultural background and tenure. These factors either played a role in how a compliment was given or whether a compliment was given at all. Additionally, the direct response to the compliments influences the compliment interaction, as a negative reaction can make the compliment giver change their initial given merit and it will decrease the likelihood that the compliment giver will give another compliment (Morton et al, 2020). Lastly, the perception of the compliment receiver can also change the interaction, as the perception is interwoven with the direct reaction on the compliment. Employees that feel no need for compliments or even have a negative perception on compliment, will likely react negatively upon receiving a compliment. In conclusion, there are many various factors that surround the compliment interaction which need to be considered when analysing the interaction itself.

As the paper focusses on the experience of compliments for long-tenured employees, the interviews also focussed on: *What is the effect of tenure on the compliments given?* Firstly, a few participants mentioned that tenure of their colleagues plays a role in whether they give them compliments. This means that tenure does indeed play a role, as it decreases the amount of compliments employees will receive the longer they work at a company. Furthermore, one interviewee stated that the amount did not change, but rather the type of compliments. In conclusion, tenure can have two different effects on compliments, either reducing the amount of compliments given or changing the type of compliments. However,

the majority of the participants explained that tenure did not have any effect on their experience.

Moreover, many sub questions focussed on the alternatives of compliments for long-tenured employees, which can be answered with the results within the ‘alternatives to compliments’ category. Firstly, *are there alternatives for compliments and are these preferred?* This study found many alternatives for compliments, for example, a gesture, a feeling of trust or the act of asking for help. Whether long-tenured employees prefer these alternatives above compliments is difficult to answer, as every participant had a different preference. Secondly, *do long-tenured employees feel supported, even without constant confirmation?* Some participants explained that they do have a need for compliments to feel supported and they view the ability to give compliments as a necessary skill from the supervisors. On the other hand, the other participants expressed that they have no need for compliments. However, it appeared that they simultaneously received support through other ways, particularly, the found alternatives. Overall, most long-tenured employees thrive with a constant confirmation, but this does not necessarily have to be verbal compliments, other gestures and non-verbal communication also suffices, depending on personal preferences. Thirdly, *how important are financial incentives and can they replace compliments?* For this question, there was a clear division in opinions, particularly, most participants did not prefer financial rewards, while on the other hand, the minority considered these rewards to be more fulfilling than compliments. Nonetheless, replacing compliments all together, was not supported by either side. Overall, this means that the preference between compliments and financial rewards is a personal preference, rather than a result of tenure.

The last sub question that needs to be answered is: *is the same mechanism for compliments at play in a work place setting with professionals?* This question aims at the mechanism described by Zhao and Epley (2021). Namely, when the participants are made

aware that focussing on the warmth of a compliment rather than its competence causes people to give less compliments, they are more likely to give a compliment themselves. To analyse the effect, the study used the interview as an intervention. It was found that for half of the participants, it indeed helped to highlight the importance of the warmth of a compliment. However, this effect wore off after a while and for the other half of the participants there was no effect at all. To conclude, in a professional setting more is needed to positively change long-tenured employees compliment behaviour, as their prior perceptions on compliments have a large influence on their will to change.

Through the answers of these sub questions and analysing the other result, this paper aimed to answer the research question: “*How do long-tenured employees experience compliments on the work floor?*”. As the participants varied in tenure, gender, perceptions and type of work, so did the findings vary in terms of what their experience of compliments are. Namely, the participants received different types of compliments, but also explain how other types of non-verbal rewards made them feel complimented. Furthermore, although there are many positive consequences to receiving compliments, long-tenured employees do not necessarily have a change of motivation after receiving a compliment. Thus, long-tenured employees motivation does not change over the years when they might receive less compliments. Nevertheless, this study found that tenure does not result in receiving less compliments. Lastly, the perception of long-tenured employees on compliments shapes their experience, as employees with no need, do not experience negative consequences from a lack of compliments. While on the other hand, employees with a need for compliments, expect compliments, which results in negative consequences when this need is not met by supervisors.

As the research question has been answered, each specific category will be discussed whether it falls in line with what other researchers have found. The last category will be

discussed to see whether the interview worked as an intervention and changed the compliment behaviour of the participants. After discussing the results of the research, the limitations of the study are explained. Lastly, the future implications of the study are discussed, so future research can be added in finding the answer to the effects of compliments, specifically for long-tenured employees. As well as, practical implications which can be used by organizations that aim to improve sustainable employment.

The experience of long-tenured employees of compliments

Factors that create context

This research found that certain factors shape the compliment interaction. In the model from Morton et al. (2020), they also discuss that there are factors influencing the interaction. They divide the factors in characteristics of the receiver and giver and the context of the compliment itself and this research found the same division.

To start, the characteristics of gender and personality showed to influence whether a compliment interaction were to happen. However, this study only found evidence that these characteristics influenced the pre-compliment phrase from Morton et al. (2020). Other researchers have found that gender play a role in different parts of the interaction as well. For example, women had more intrinsic motivation when they were not complimented than when they were, while for men this was the opposite (Koestner et al., 1987) and men and women react differently on compliments based on their gender roles (Tang, 2020). These differences between the genders were not found in this study, which could be due to the Netherlands having less inequality between men and women compared to other countries, meaning that there are less strict gender roles (*Gender Equality Index*, n.d.).

On the other hand, personality was theorized to influence the pre-compliment phase with the reasoning that extravert people will give compliments more spontaneously (Morton et al., 2020). Although this study did not measure extraversion, the participants who

highlighted the importance of good relationships on the work floor and who mentioned being friends with their colleagues indeed gave more compliments, than the other participants.

Furthermore, a few participants explained that the cultural background as a characteristic of the receiver moderated the interaction, for example, Indian colleagues gave more compliments than Dutch colleagues. This falls short compared to Morton et al. (2020) statement that culture influences ‘the whole course of the compliment’. This statement is proved by the findings that culture impacts the reaction to compliments (Tang, 2020), as well as, plays a role on what is complimented (Nelson et al., 1993), how frequent compliments are given (Barnlund & Araki, 1985) and in which situation compliments are appropriate (Wolfson, 1981). Unfortunately, this study did not find any evidence on cultural differences, as almost all the interviewees were Dutch, working in the Netherlands, thus limiting the differences due to sharing the same cultural norms.

This study found two additional influences on the whole compliment course, namely type of work and company culture. These are not found in the model from Morton et al. (2020), which is due to this study focusing on a work setting. The relation between type of work and compliments and between company culture and compliments has not found to be researched, thus future research is needed to confirm that these factors indeed influence the compliment interactions long-tenured employees have.

Interestingly, tenure is an important element in this study, while other compliment literature does not consider this aspect. Namely, in the model from Morton et al. (2020), tenure is not discussed as a characteristic, which is likely due to tenure being highly work-related and not indicative to other social interactions. In this study, tenure was found to indicate whether a compliment interaction would take place, as one interviewee explained that he tended to give new employees compliments, while he gave very little to high other long-tenure colleagues. Thus, while tenure is a characteristic of the receiver, it seems to influence

the merit of the compliment more greatly, namely whether the receiver deserves the compliment. On the other hand, another interviewee explained that tenure did not impact the quantity of compliments, but rather the type of compliment she received. Thus, the characteristic did not impact the merit, namely whether she deserves a compliment, but seems to be rather the context of the compliment, which influences the object and formulation of the compliment (Morton et al., 2020). In conclusion, tenure, which is a personal characteristic, seems to influence both the merit and the context of the compliment. Tenure is a new aspect in the compliment model which is important to consider in professional context. Thus, future research should analyse further whether the tenure influences the interaction more as a merit or if it is simply part of the context.

Type of compliment

This study found 5 different types of compliments: Personal, work style, specific project, specific action and place in the team. Literature on the different types of compliments differentiates compliments as process-focused praise or person-focused praise (also named ability-focused praise) (Kakinuma et al., 2020b; Zhang et al., 2020). Process-focused praise is aimed at the use of a good strategy or effort, while person-focused praise is more focused on the abilities or traits from a person (Haimovitz & Corpus, 2011). Observing the categories from this study, the personal and place in the team sub-categories fit within the person-focused praise, while work style, specific project and specific action are process-focused.

There has been much research done on the effectiveness of these different praise forms. For instance, Kakinuma et al. (2020) found that ability-focused praise decreased intrinsic motivation in students. To add on this, Zhang et al. (2020) found the same relation, but also discovered that process-focused praise increases intrinsic motivation. Additionally, process-focused praise increases task persistence (Droe, 2012), increases perceived

competence (Akbar & Al-Gharabally, 2020) and decreases negative reaction to failures (Skipper & Douglas, 2011).

Moreover, the preference for process- or person-focused praise appears to be related to study tenure (Haimovitz & Corpus, 2011). Particularly, students that were in the middle of their study years had decreased motivation after person praise and students that were near the end of their studies had increased motivation after process-focused praise. Whether tenure for professionals in a work setting has the same relation as students to the different types of praise, was not found to be researched. Overall, this study found no differences in preference for process- or person-focused praise. This is not surprising, however, as compliments can both improve well-being and self-esteem, regardless of their focus (Bak & Leśniak, 2020).

A few of the participants explained that they did feel more motivated after receiving a compliment. In this study, there was not a strict division whether the motivation increased after a process- or person-focused praise. Rather, the perception on compliments shows to be linked to the increased motivation. Thus, person-focused praise did not decrease the motivation as was found by Kakinuma et al. (2020). This could be a result of that the personal compliments were focused on qualities of the employee unrelated to work, and rather focused on a personal quality in relation to social interactions (for example, listening to others). However, the compliments regarding their place in the team, could be theorized to affect their motivation, as place in the team is work related. From the interviews, however, the place of the team compliments were instead increasing their motivation to work as they felt appreciated by their colleagues and felt like they belong.

In conclusion, this study found no evidence on whether person- versus process-focused praise changes the motivation to work for long-tenured employees. The change in motivation in a work setting seems to be rather from the employees perception on compliments, namely whether they feel a need to receive them or not. However, as literature

falls short on the effects of different types of praise in a professional setting, more research is necessary to conclude this finding.

Alternatives to compliments

Long-tenured employees were found to receive seven different types of positive confirmation which were not compliments. Firstly, some long-tenured employees received financial rewards for their work, in form of a bonus. However, this study aimed to find whether these financial rewards were preferred over compliments and whether they could even replace compliments. To start, Beck (2016) found that 1 in 4 employees prefer receiving a bonus over other types of rewards. Although there were a few interviewees that indeed expressed enjoying the financial reward and even preferring it, it was clearly a lesser minority. Enjoying receiving financial incentives is not a surprising finding, but consistent with Stefanovska–Petkovska and Bojadziev (2017) finding that long-tenured employees enjoy both financial and non-financial rewards. However, other participants actually had a preference for compliments or appreciation over monetary compliments. To conclude, long-tenured employees either have a clear preference for financial rewards or non-financial rewards. However, both sides still appreciate financial rewards and agree that it cannot replace compliments.

Secondly, being asked for help or asked questions was perceived by the long-tenured to be a compliment. This is surprising as they are not direct rewards for their work or behaviours, but rather a sign that their work has been good throughout the years. However, only few participants mentioned this alternative and there is little research on this topic, thus, more research is needed to precisely find the importance of these interactions on long-tenured employees.

Thirdly, many interviewees mentioned that they receive satisfaction from doing their work well and thus do not need external confirmation to work, consistent with the statement

from Ng and Sorensen (2008) that long-tenured employees do not need constant confirmation. Moreover, receiving no negative feedback was found to be perceived positively as a ‘silent compliment’. Although much research is dedicated to the different effects of different praise and feedback, this finding is rather surprising (Skipper & Douglas, 2011). Only a few participants mentioned this alternative and explained that they do not mind the lack of positive feedback, they have instead found confirmation in the silence. Both alternatives are a contrast to the other alternatives found, as the other alternatives are a clear replacement of the verbal confirmation from compliments, but personal satisfaction and no negative feedback truly represent a lack of constant confirmation.

Fourthly, the alternative of appreciation was most often mentioned in the interviews. The feeling of being appreciated can be achieved through many ways, such as, expressing interest, showing support and assigning responsibility (Stocker et al., 2014). It is therefore not surprising that all the interviewees have experienced a feeling of being appreciated at work. Moreover, Stocker et al. (2014) found that showing trust also resulted in feeling appreciated, which are found to be two different categories within this study. However, as this study focused on finding alternatives to compliments, the relationship between the alternatives were not specifically analysed, thus making the relation as described by Stocker et al. (2014) more likely.

Direct reaction to compliment

As is discussed in the model from Morton et al. (2020), the direct reaction on the receiver, influences how the complimenter perceives their initial given merit. This study therefore also asked the participants what their direct reaction to the compliment they received was. Both evasive (negative) and accepting (positive) reactions were found to be given. The evasive reactions often included minimalizing their own effort, and rather highlighting the team effort, which falls in line with the category reassignment of Herbert and Straight (1989).

Moreover, this study also found that some people evade compliments, because they truly do not like receiving compliments, which could be categorized under ‘no acknowledgement’.

On the other hand, many participants reacted accepting to the compliment. Either by giving them an appreciation token (Herbert & Straight, 1989) in the form of a thank you, or by returning a compliment. This positive returning, however, is not noted in the categories from Herbert and Straight (1989). Morton et al. (2020) do mention this reaction in their model. Namely, that it a case of paying off a debt to compliment receiver, otherwise they would have to remain in an uncomfortable situation where ‘own them’ something.

Result of the compliment

Receiving (frequent) compliments has many impacts long-term, of which this study found 6 changes. Firstly, receiving compliments gave the participants a feeling of being recognized for their work. This finding is not consistent with other research, as recognition and compliments are often used interchangeably. For instance, Montani et al. (2017) used appreciation, acknowledgement and congratulating to measure the level of recognition, while these could also be viewed as receiving compliments. On the other hand, Brun and Dugas (2008) explored the many different types of recognition which exist in a professional setting. They showcase that thanking an employee or saluting them after the job is done well, gives the employee a feeling of recognition. However, they also include non-complimentary cases such as financial bonuses, consulting the employees or encouraging peer feedback as a way to initiate a feeling of recognition.

This study found a relation between compliments and a feeling of recognition, as long-tenured employees that received a compliment mentioned that they felt recognized for their (hard) work. Nevertheless, participants that described interactions that are different from verbal compliments, such as gestures, also felt recognized and appreciated through these

interactions. This means that Brun and Dugas (2008) scope on recognition is closer to the reality of long-tenured employees.

Secondly, receiving compliments may change the motivation to work for long-tenured employees. For instance, Bear et al. (2017) found that the intrinsic motivation of students increased after receiving praise and rewards. The same results were found when students received positive feedback, which can be perceived as compliments (Martinez et al., 2024). Although students seem to have an increased motivation after receiving praise, this study cannot conclude that long-tenured have an increased motivation, as more than half of the participants explained that they felt no change after getting complimented. This contrast highlights the importance of researching compliments in relation to tenure in professional, as students do not follow the same mechanisms.

Thirdly, receiving compliments from your supervisor, can change the relationship. This study indeed found that receiving compliments, or not receiving compliments from your supervisor changes the relationship for long-tenured employees. This is supported by Rooney et al. (2009), as they explain that the perceived supervisor support communicates to the employees how they are perceived by their supervisors. Thus, long-tenured employees which receive many or frequent compliments from their supervisors, have an improved relationship, compared to those who receive little compliments.

Fourthly, it was theorized that the intention to turnover was related to the frequency of compliments. This relation was found with both the perceived support from the supervisors (Rooney et al., 2009) and social support from colleagues (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, in regard to compliments, this relation does not seem to take place, as the participants did not have an intention to turn over, whether they received compliments or not. This falls in line with the finding from Ng and Sorensen (2008), namely that long-tenured employees do not need constant confirmation to feel supported. Additionally, long-tenured

employees would have left already if they felt dissatisfied (Trimble, 2006). On the other hand, a few of the participants explained that the reason they stayed for so long at the company, was largely due to their colleagues and company culture. These participants all worked in an environment where compliments were frequently given. However, this finding does not necessarily conflict with the previous conclusion, as employees have a long tenure when they work in a company culture that suits them the best. Thus, for the participants in companies that have a compliment culture, they would not turn over as they enjoy the environment. While participants that were in companies with a lack of compliments, expressed that they felt no need for compliments, and indeed, have no intention of turnover.

Fifthly, enjoying work was theorized to have a relation with the compliments received. For instance, Joo and Lee (2017) found that the perceived organizational support was positively related to job satisfaction, high engagement and well-being. Perceived organizational support can be achieved through both perceived supervisor support (Ng & Sorensen, 2008) and perceived colleague support (Hayton et al., 2011). This means that receiving support at the company, for example through compliments, increases the enjoyment employees have at their work. However, this study found no relation, which is likely due to the same reasoning with intention to turn over. Particularly, long-tenured employees enjoy their work, as they are in the environment that fits them the best, whether that is with many or few compliment interactions.

Lastly, receiving compliments could result in a reciprocity trend, as people want to reward kind actions, thus complementing the complimenter (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006). However, Yang et al. (2020) note that there is a difference between direct reciprocity and pay-it forward. This difference is interesting with the combination of how the interview could work as an intervention. Namely, if the interview would work as an intervention to get long-tenured employees to give more compliments, they would in turn also receive more

compliments due to reciprocity. Specifically, if the interviewees reciprocity behaviour is to be directly reciprocate, only the relation between the interviewee and particular colleagues will be improved. However, if the interviewee instead follows the pay-it forward attitude, the whole organisation can benefit from a positive change in the compliment culture. To conclude which behaviour is likely to occur for long-tenured employees, more research is needed.

Perception on compliments

As the context of the compliment interaction is important to note, this study theorized that the perception of long-tenured employees is also valuable to analyse. Four main perceptions were found, specifically: no need for compliments, a need for compliments, work is work and authenticity. Firstly, a minority of the long-tenured employees expressed that they have no need for compliments. They felt appreciated or recognized without compliments, which follows the claim from Ng and Sorensen (2008). Most often they got recognition from themselves when they finished a job well or helped clients, thus colleagues or supervisors played no role in getting confirmation.

On the contrast, many participants did have a need for compliments and some even expressed that they expected compliments at out-of-the-ordinary moments. This is not surprising as receiving compliments from the supervisor is beneficial for an employee's well-being (Stocker et al., 2019). Moreover, in the study from Stocker et al. (2014) they question whether people expect appreciation from their supervisors as a part of their role. Additionally, they wondered whether employees are thus disappointed when they expect appreciation, but do not receive it. Within the group of participants that felt a need for compliments, these questions were answered. Namely, long-tenured employees indeed believe being appreciative in the form of giving compliments belongs to the role of being a supervisor. And when they did not receive a compliment, when this was expected, they felt disappointed, which negatively impacted the relationship with the supervisor.

In conclusion, the long-tenured employees either do not need compliments at all, or need and expect compliments. This contrast confirms the recommendation from Ilgen et al. (1979), for supervisors to take the individual preferences in mind when complimenting employees. Namely, while some employees need compliments to feel appreciated, other employees create their own sense of competence from past experiences.

Furthermore, the participants also had a third perception, which falls between the other perceptions. Namely, that work is work, which means that compliments are definitely appreciated and part of working, however they were not expected or needed. In short, compliments are a bonus. This perception has not been studied yet, which is likely due to it being close to the perception of having no need for compliments. An explanation for this particular perception is that long-tenured employees have worked at the same company for many years, which means that they are definitely not underperforming. Long-tenured employees are thus part of the two other categories described by Ilgen et al. (1979), namely: “(a) high performers with potential for growth; (b) adequate performers, who had settled into the job and would probably go no further;” (p.368). To expand on this, high performers only benefit from compliments aimed at their competence and personal growth, but they do not need constant compliments on their work. Additionally, adequate performers do not need compliments as they know what to do, and have showed to be reliable and steady at their job. To conclude, for long-tenured employees compliments are often an extra, as they do not need compliments to do their work well, but they can still benefit from appraisal.

Lastly, a few of the participants highlighted the importance of compliments being authentic. This is conform to the discovery from Beck (2016) that employees deem sincerity to be highly important in the compliments they receive. As some interviewees explained in the interviews, they can sense when a compliment is not authentic, which is not surprising, as people are very good at analysing the sincerity of compliments (Fish et al., 2017). Thus,

before supervisors start handing out compliments left and right, the compliments must be sincere in order to be perceived well.

The interview as an intervention

Around half of the participants were more aware of the compliments they gave and even gave more compliments. This result is consistent with the findings of Zhao and Epley (2021), that making people more aware of the warmth, rather than the competence of a compliment, increases the likelihood of them giving a compliment. Different from their study is that this study focused on a professional atmosphere and had a time interval between providing the information and observing the changed behaviour. This time interval showed that the effect sometimes wore off after a while for those that noticed a difference.

On the other hand, the other half of the participants did not note a difference in their compliment behaviour or awareness. This could be related to their perception of compliments. Namely, long-tenured employees that feel no need to receive compliments or even have a negative opinion on compliments will not give more compliments to others as they deem it to be unnecessary. In the light of the reciprocity trend, it is thus not surprising that they in turn did not receive more compliments themselves after the interview.

To sum up, half of the participants stated to be more aware of the compliments given and received, thus the intervention can be noted to have a positive effect. However, the positive effect often decreased after some time passed. Whether positively changing the behaviour of half the employees could still result in an overall change in the organizational culture, needs to be studied by future research.

Limitations

This research aimed to fill the gap in literature on the experience of compliments for long-tenured employees. However, the study had some limitations that are important to note for future research on this topic. Firstly, because the research is explorative, no direct

conclusions can be drawn about the results. For this, specific researches on particular antecedents and results of the compliment interactions are needed. Additionally, more participants are needed to draw conclusions about the general population. Furthermore, it was decided to include a variety of jobs in order to get a better representation of the general population. However, as it was found that the type of work is a factor that influences the compliment interaction, future research should decide whether they will focus on a specific working field or make sure to include a bigger sample size per work field, while being mindful of the impact from the type of work.

Moreover, though 15 participants were found as was intended for this study, one of the participants appeared to work only 30 hours a week, which is less than the requirement of this study. However, the interview was continued, and the results were included in the analysis. Future research should thus ask their participants clearly whether they work part time or full time, when this is a requirement. Overall, the difference is believed to be minimal in this case, as 30 hours still requires them to be working on most workdays, thus the company culture can have quite an impact on the participant.

Furthermore, this study used the CIT for the interviews. Researchers, such as Kemppainen (2000) and Zwijsze-Koning, K. (2016), have researched the relevance and usefulness of this method, and explain that the method can both be useful and useless. For this study the CIT has both been proved to be useful as well as not useful enough. It was useful, as it helped to find specific instances of when compliments were given to the participants. Otherwise, the participants would only mention vague compliments interactions where they received a 'thank you' or 'thumbs up'. The CIT helped to go in depth in interactions that display the antecedents and effects of compliments. However, at the same time, the CIT did not fully provide all the information that would be useful for this research. Namely, the participants mostly talked about positive interactions where they did receive a compliment,

while negative interactions were almost not mentioned. However, this was expected due to compliments being associated with positive interactions. Therefore, a different type of question has to be asked to get participants to describe a negative interaction. Another limitation of using the CIT was that not all the participants were able to come up with a minimum of 3 incidents, which resulted in an average of 2 incidents per interview for this study. Nevertheless, the reason why employees could not think of compliments could be due to the fact that they did not receive compliments (lately). In conclusion, the usefulness of CIT in future research should be considered, as it works well for specific positive interaction, but negative interactions or other antecedents such as culture and context are often not mentioned. This means that CIT should be combined with other questions in the interviews.

What is more, the additional questions after the interview that were sent, presented two limitations. Firstly, two of the respondents went on vacation one day after the interview and were still on vacation when they received the additional questions. They both answered to not have noticed a difference in giving or receiving compliments, but as the time frame for the observation accidentally became one day, it could be concluded to be logical that not much difference was noted. Thus, future research should make sure to be aware of the (public) holidays and plan the intervention time frame around it as to not have meaningless answers. Secondly, the time frame between the interviews and sending the message should be a decided set of time. The difference between when the messages were sent in this study, could have impacted the answers given as more observation time passed. Though, for this study it appeared useful as some participants mentioned noticing a positive difference after the interview, but explained that after some time the effect wore off. Thus, future research should decide whether they want a short interval or a long(er) interval to observe the effect of time passing, but the amount of time should be the same for each participant.

Future research

This study presented many findings that need to be confirmed with non-explorative research, as present research is lacking in the subjects of compliments and tenure. Namely, as Morton et al. (2020) expressed, much of the current praise literature is focused on education. While these studies can help to get an idea of the broad concept that is compliments, this study found evidence that professionals in a work setting clearly have different mechanisms from students. To really understand the compliment interactions, antecedent and consequences that are specific to employees and long-tenured employees, future research should aim to focus on the work place environment.

Moreover, the study focussed too much on the CIT at the start of the interviews. Questions that would have portrayed more clearly the context of the compliments as well as the cultural implications should have been added in the original questionnaire. Thus, future research can use these added questions as a base line but should also make sure to broaden the questionnaire before the interview process starts.

Lastly, for the sample composition within this study it was decided interview employees that have worked a minimum of 5 years at the same company. However, tenure in other researches has many different definitions and a range of years. Using relative tenure may portrait the general experience more precisely, as working a number of years at the same company may have a different progression rate for each employee. Furthermore, the decision to use a variety of jobs in this study, made a relative tenure minimum difficult to pinpoint, as not every job progresses the same way. To conclude, future research should look into the possibility of using relative tenure, however, this can likely not be done while having a broad participation pool, thus a specific type of work should be decided on.

Practical implications

This study found that long-tenure does not necessarily mean that the employees have no need for compliments (anymore). Instead, managers should clearly note whether their

long-tenured employees show to have a need for compliments or do not have a need for them. This is beneficial as long-tenured employees that have a need for compliments expect compliments from their supervisors. Namely, a lack of compliments is perceived as a lack of supervisor support, and as well organizational support (Ng & Sorensen, 2008). Thus, for the employees that show to have a need for compliments, supervisors should aim to give compliments frequently. Though, authenticity remains important, thus only meant compliments should be given.

Furthermore, as half of the participants stated to be more aware of the compliments given and received after the interview, companies should look into an alternative to the interview as an intervention. For example, a lunch lecture or flyer that makes their employees aware of the untrue preconceptions of giving compliments, will make them more conscious about the future compliments they give and receive, as well as make them more likely to give compliments. If a few employees start with giving more compliments, the effect of reciprocity could take place, changing the company culture to be more complimentary.

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Appendix

A: Interview structure and questions

Consent talk:

I am currently in my third year of my studies in Communication Science, thus I am quite busy with my thesis. For my thesis I am researching work culture and compliment through interviews.

I would like to record this interview, to be able to look back what was precisely said. The data will be anonymized, every name you mention and the business names will be removed, so nothing can be traced back to you. The data will then only be viewed by me, my supervisor and a second coder. After the summer holiday everything will be deleted.

Furthermore, participating in this interview is voluntary. Thus you may decide to stop the interview if you want and you do not have answer a question if you do not want to.

Additionally, if after a week of this interview, you want to remove somethings you said, just let me know! You have my email address/ phone number, so you can always message me.

Lastly, there are no right or wrong answers, I am interested in your experiences and opinions, so let me know what you think.

Do you have any questions for me before I start the interview?

Do you give permission to audio record / consent?

Introduction:

How long have you worked at the company that you are currently working for?

What is your job/function?

Could you describe an average working day?

What is it like working here?

How is the feedback culture with your (direct colleagues)? How do you give each other feedback and what is the reaction of others?

And how is the compliment culture?

CIT: (3 times)

Can you recall an events that represent a positive or negative experiences regarding compliments?

What exactly happened? Who was involved? What were the consequences of the incident?

Additional probing questions:

- Who gave the compliment?
- What were you thinking when this happened?
- What was your reaction?
- What was their reaction?
- What was the reaction you expected/ did the reaction line up with your expectation?
- (How) did your relation change after this interaction?
- How did this make you feel?

Final questions:

Do you enjoy working at the company?

Do you believe you give as many compliments as you would like to receive yourself?

Do you give as many compliments as you want to give?

Research has found that people often underestimate the effect of compliments on others.

While you may be more focused on whether the compliment will help, and think that it will create an awkward situation. The receiver is often very positive and focuses more on the warmth of the message.

Do you recognize yourself in these findings?

Thank you for the time!

Can I send you an email/text if I have a few additional questions?

Email/text questions:

Hi (name),

From my interview last week I have 2 questions left. Could you answer them shortly? If you have any questions for me, please let me know!

Were you more aware of compliments given to you after the interview?

Has there been a change in giving compliments after the interview?

Additional standard questions:

Do you notice any change in the compliments that you receive over the years?

Did the amount of compliments change?

How else do you experience appreciation, apart from compliments?

What would have to change to make you leave your job?

Do you go to work with pleasure every day?

B: coding scheme in the original language**Table 3***Results of factors of the context*

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Personality	Compliments are given differently depending on the personality of the receiver or giver	Ik vind het makkelijker om een compliment te geven, dan om te ontvangen en ik denk er ook niet echt heel erg bij na als ik ze geef, terwijl ik er wel heel erg bij nadenk als ik ze ontvang. Dus dat is misschien ook de wijze, hoe ik in mekaar zit. Dus inderdaad, ja, die ruimte voor complimenten is er dan wel zeker. Het zal wel iets persoonsafhankelijk zijn dan, denk ik dan (1A)
Gender	Compliments are given differently depending on the gender	Dat is niet mijn ding. Ik heb wel collega's die dat wel doen, hoor. Over het algemeen zijn dat de vrouwelijke collega's in dat team. Die zijn veel vriendelijker dan de gemiddelde mannen in ons team Als je dan in een kamer vol met heren zit, dan wil je ook niet de vrouw zijn die dan zoiets het compliment geeft, want dat is weer, bij wijze van, dat is dan weer zo'n softie vrouw die, bij wijze van spreken, overal een compliment op moet geven (1B)
Culture background	Compliments are given differently depending on the cultural background of the employee	Ik zit een bepaalde afdeling waar veel developers bijvoorbeeld zitten, daar zit heel veel diversiteit bij en er zitten ook in ieder geval veel dames uit bijvoorbeeld India, of dus, die brengen ook al een cultuur mee dat ze iemand een compliment geven. Dus het hangt ook een beetje vanaf de achtergrond van die mensen.

Want er zitten ook gewoon nou, zwart-wit gezegd, lekkere hollanders bij die niet zo snel een compliment zullen geven (1C)

Company culture	Compliments are given differently depending on the culture of the company	<p>Net die cultuur is er altijd zo en het is een vrij horizontale lijn qua management en alles. En iedereen is benaderbaar, dus je voelt je, behalve dan bij onze afdelingsleider, maar je voelt je redelijk veilig om ook te zeggen van ja, sorry ik heb dit fout gedaan.</p> <p>ik vind dat het wel, ja, ik denk niet dat er de hele dag door gezegd wordt, maar er is wel een sfeer van als je gewoon iets goed hebt gedaan, dat het wel wordt gezegd. (1D)</p>
Type of work	Compliments are given differently depending on the type of work	<p>Maar ik denk dat het ook een beetje de branch is in de software wereld, is gewoon meer dan de helft van de organisatie, is heel nerdy en ingetogen, of zelfs een beetje op zichzelf. Ja, de complimenten moet je van de sales mensen krijgen en de marketingafdeling. Daar ben ik sowieso wel van en ik denk qua onderwijs, ja, het zijn nou niet mensen die compleet uit hun plaat gaan van enthousiasme van oh ik vond dit zo leuk, want het blijft onderwijs. (1E)</p>
Tenure	Compliments are given differently depending on how long the employee has worked at the company	<p>Ik denk wel toen ik jouw leeftijd had, veel meer resultaat gericht was op de vinkjes en de schouderklopje ja, en nu heb ik het veel, ik heb nu veel meer op de collegialiteit en het, maar dat heeft ja, dat heeft echt gewoon met de fase in je leven en je en je carrière te maken.</p> <p>Op het werk doe ik dat ook nauwelijks. Als ik het doe, is het meestal naar de jongere mensen, omdat ik denk dat dan nou soms, misschien eerlijk gezegd onderschat je of wat dan ook, en dan verbazen ze je positief. En dan wil ik nog wel eens een compliment geven. (1F)</p> <p>Weet ik niet, en ja, ik denk misschien in het begin, omdat ik dan ook nieuw was in het project, dat het inhoudelijk gezien, andere complimenten maar meer zo van ja, dat je het af hebt gemaakt. Dus dan, hè, alles is goed gegaan. En nu, dat we misschien wat meer dat is normaal dat we gewoon doen wat we moeten doen. En als je dan net een stapje verder doet, of beter over nagedacht of een keer een nieuw idee aandragen hoe kunnen we dit of dat dat meer gewaardeerd wordt, misschien meer in het detail of zo, want in het begin was alles nieuw. Dus we waren heel blij als we überhaupt een taak hadden afgerond en dat goed was gegaan. Ik denk dat dat een beetje</p>

misschien veranderd is, maar in de hoeveelheid, denk niet per se, nee (1G)

Table 4

Results of type of compliments that the long-tenure employees receive

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Personal	A compliment about a personal issue or characteristics of the person outside of work	Ik vroeg naar iets en zei ze (collega): vind ik nou zo leuk, van jou, jij luistert echt. Ik denk oh, dat is wel leuk, ik vind dat heel gewoon. Dat ze het zo fijn vond dat ze even der hart bij me kon luchten en dat ik geen oordeel daar op had, ja, en dus dat ik tijd voor haar vrij wilde maken terwijl mijn agenda overstroomde ja, dus eigenlijk wat fijn dat je me even zag staan en op het moment dat dat ik het nodig had. (2A)
Work style	A compliment about how the employee works and their work style	Die dag en die (studenten) kwamen daar die barbecue expliciet naar mij toe en die zeiden: ja, misschien vonden we tijdens het colleges allemaal niet altijd even leuk of even nuttig, of maar ja, we hebben er echt heel veel aan gehad en we vonden het echt heel tof en we waren heel erg blij met jou. Een functioneringsgesprek ...daar had ik een bovengemiddelde beoordeling. Nou ja, dat was voor mij al, denk ik oh. Nou, dat is een compliment, zeg maar dus dat was, dat was een goed compliment. (2B)
Specific project	A compliment about how an employee worked on a specific project or task	En voor nou personeel, wat er toen was, nou man of 30, 40, gaat die speeche en bedankt hij mij heel erg in die speech, over mijn rol, in dat hele verhaal Degene die ik inwerkt die geeft wel vaak complimenten dat die dan echt, nou ja, blij met me is hoe ik inwerk en hoe ik hem begeleid en zo. Dus dat is best wel heel leuk. (2C)
Specific action	A compliment about a specific (short) situation that happened in regards to work	Ook was er iets met nood en dan ga je de hele avond door tot laat, tot een uurtje of één, en dan ben je s'morgens om zeven uur weer netjes op de zaak en dan wordt er wel bedankt gezegd. Dus dat. Of we gaan even... Ik trakteer je op koffie. Het is wel gratis

koffie, maar waren dan trakteren ze op koffie. Dat is wel aardig.

En toen moest ik wel heel rustig blijven. Dat is soms best moeilijk, ze (klant) haalde je bloed onder de nagels vandaan. Maar ja, dat, dat ging verder heel netjes en dan hang je op bijvoorbeeld en dan zegt (naam) van, dat heb je netjes opgelost, heb je goed gedaan. (2D)

Place in the team	A compliment on their place within the team	<p>De leiding daar inderdaad ook zo ziet, in het verleden noemen ze dat wel eens een keer. Dat ik dus het cement was tussen de stenen. Nou, als je geen cement tussen steen hebt, dan heb je een hele slappe muur. Die valt dus, nou, ja, dat vind ik wel een compliment.</p> <p>Met mijn leidinggevende, met mijn teamleider (naam), dan krijg ik dat altijd wel terug, dat die blij is met me en dat die blij is, de manier waarop ik in de groep sta en waarop ik mijn werk doe en anderen help. (2E)</p>
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Table 5

Results of alternatives to compliments that the participants receive

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Financial reward	The compliment was given in form of a financial reward	<p>En ook een geldelijke beloning. Daartegenover ja, dat, dat hoeft ook niet, hè, maar die heb ik toen wel gekregen als soort van bonus. Dus dat, dat is fijn, dat is niet alleen in woord, maar ook in daad.</p>
Asking for help/questions	Other employees asking them for help was perceived to be a compliment	<p>Ik had toevallig één van die mannen die vroeg of ik even mee wilde lezen met een brief die hij naar één van zijn medewerkers wilde sturen. Over nevenactiviteiten. Dus ik denk nou, dan waardeer je mijn mening in ieder geval, anders had je dat niet gevraagd. Dat mensen (met) je contact opnemen van ik heb vragen voor je en soms denk ik: waarom denk je dat ik dat weet? Maar ik ben wel gevleid dat je naar mij toe komt. Dus vaak heb ik dan blijkbaar toch, of het juiste antwoord, of weet ik wie het wel weet. Dus ja, dat vind ik wel ook. In principe is het ook wel een compliment dat ze dan naar je toe komen. (3A)</p>

Satisfaction from work	The employees saw finishing work or good results as a compliment due to personal satisfaction	<p>Kijk, als een klant schrijft, hè, ik had dat probleem en nu kom ik weer verder. Dat, daar haal ik energie uit.</p> <p>Het beste compliment zou zijn dat alles gewoon soepel loopt en dat ik denk oh ik heb geen gezeur aan m'n hoofd gehad (3B)</p>
Appreciation	The employees felt appreciated by others	<p>Dus je hoeft niet altijd complimenten te krijgen op het moment dat je je gewaardeerd voelt, is ook al voldoende. Hè, ze hoeven het niet eens, laat maar zeggen, het te uiten. Maar je merkt vaak wel aan iemand dat die gewaardeerd is, wat dat, die waardeert wat je doet. Dus dat vind ik, al, vind ik al de complimenten.</p> <p>Het zit soms in hele kleine, kleine woorden waar het zit, niet in het grote gebaar, het zit er niet in cadeaubonnen en bloemen en dat soort dingen, maar in constant het waarderende van het team en de individuele leden van het team. (3C)</p>
Gesture	The employees received a gesture in the form of material goods as a compliment	<p>Mijn ene collega, directe collega, die had een kaartje geschreven. Met fijne kerst. Bedankt voor al je inzet van het afgelopen jaar, met een superlekker chocolaatje daarbij. Dat vind ik echt heel leuk, dat was, dat vond ik echt heel lief, van der.</p> <p>Kijk, we krijgen hier gebak van het (bedrijf) als we weer opleiding van het jaar zijn geworden. Dat is natuurlijk een compliment. (3D)</p>
No negative feedback	By not receiving negative feedback, the employees felt complimented	<p>Daar is de feedback misschien ook wel geen feedback, goede feedback of zo. Dat is een twentse uitspraak, geen bericht, goed bericht.</p> <p>Ik denk acht jaar een hele goede beoordeling heb gekregen, en daar hoor je niks van. Hè, dus ik ben al zoiets als ik niks hoor, is het goed. ...het is een stil compliment als je snapt wat ik bedoel. Dus het compliment wordt niet gegeven, maar door dan een goede beoordeling te krijgen, denk je, hè, ze waarderen me toch. (3E)</p>

Trust	The employees feels that they are trusted by others	mijn leidinggevende die gaf aan dat ik dus ...de vader als ware van de afdeling ben. ...Misschien heeft het te maken dat mensen mij dan in vertrouwen durven en willen nemen. ...dus dat we jou in vertrouwen durven te nemen, dat soort zaken meer, dat vind ik dan wel eens een compliment.
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Table 6

Results of the direct reaction of the participant when they received a compliment

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Evasive	The participants reacted evasive when they received a compliment	<p>...het is vaak moeilijk dank je zeggen na een compliment. Vaak zeg je eerder, we hebben het niet alleen gedaan, soms ook gewoon dankje.</p> <p>Ik ontwijk dat een beetje. Ja, dat is toch logisch, weet je, en dan ga ik weer door. (4A)</p> <p>Ja, dat vind ik wel lastig, hè, want dan zeg ik: ja, dat is mijn, daar heb je collega's voor. Ja, maar ik zou niet zo heel snel dank je zeggen: dank je wel voor dit cadeautje, voor deze feedback dat, maar dat vind ik, omdat ik dat zelf lastig vind, omdat ik het heel gewoon vind dat je dat doet (4B)</p>
Acceptance	The participants accepted the compliment they received and reacted non-evasive	<p>In ieder geval ook bedanken voor het compliment dat is sowieso denk ik belangrijk. Omdat je ook (wil dat) dat stukje communicatie, ja waar je eigenlijk gewoon de hele dag mee door mee bezig bent, toch ook op de juiste manier te laten verlopen.</p> <p>Yeah. I said thank you. I thought it was amazing. I was just, uh, speechless.</p> <p>Dan bedank ik haar natuurlijk dat ik het heel attent vindt, heel leuk en echt heel erg waardeer (4C)</p>

Table 7

Results of receiving compliments for the long-tenure employees

Category	Definition	Sample comments
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Feeling of recognition	The employees felt recognised by others for the work they put in	Nou, ik ga niet in tranen uitbarst of zo, maar nee, maar dat is toch dat, dat is zeker iets wat je dan denkt oh, dat is wel fijn dat het even gezegd wordt en dat het gezien wordt. Zeg maar dat mensen ook zeiden van: Goh joh, (je hebt) veel moeite voor gedaan om het allemaal in die periode voor mekaar te krijgen. Dus dat, ja, dat vind ik wel fijn. Ja, dan weet je oké, daar heb ik het voor gedaan. Ik heb de benen uit mijn reet gewerkt, maar oké, ze zien wel dat het kneiter hard werken was. (5A)
Change in motivation	There is (not) a change in motivation to work after receiving a compliment	Het is niet zo, laat maar zeggen, dat ik alleen gemotiveerd raak doordat ik complimenten krijg, want dat zou niet best zijn, denk ik, want dan moet ik elke dag complimenten krijgen en anders met de ziek naar het werk gaan. Ik kan moeilijk voor mezelf zeggen dat ik daarna nog gemotiveerder was om hard aan het werk te gaan, want ik, daar was dat compliment niet voor nodig. (5B) Nou die dag heb je wel even zoiets van: ja, dat hebben we even gedaan! Ja, en dat verandert wel, ja, tenminste dat heb ik dan altijd wel, want het is net of je soms een tandje harder wil. (5C)
Impact on relationships	Receiving compliments has an impact on	Interviewer: Did it maybe change also your relationship with him? Interviewee: Maybe a bit, yes. It's because, you know, then you know that this person appreciated it. It is important to note from your manager.
Overturn	Participants stay at the same company with considerations to the company culture	Ja eigenlijk wel belangrijk, gewoon directe collega's vind ik heel fijn om mee te werken. (Dat) is wel eens anders geweest en toen merkte ik meteen dat ik het niet meer leuk vond. Daarom ben ik ook gestopt met het eerste project. Nou en wanneer werk je lang bij een firma? op het moment dat je naar je zin hebt. (5D)
Enjoying work	The participants expressed (not) enjoying their work	Ja, het komt niet vaak voor dat ik er geen zin in heb, maar het zijn echt echt grote uitzonderingen. Dat, ja, ik doe het met heel veel plezier, merk je waarschijnlijk ook wel hoe ik erover vertel en het blijft gewoon leuk. Ja, ja, ik kom wel eens de afdeling op en dan zegt de manager, die zegt dan oh, daar komt ze eraan hoor, glimlach op het gezicht. Ja, ik vind dat, ik vind, ik vind het gewoon heel erg leuk, leuk werk, leuke collega's! (5E)

Reciprocity	Receiving and giving compliments were part of a reciprocity trend	Nee, ik denk dat doordat ik weinig geef, dat ik er ook niet zoveel ontvang. Dat is natuurlijk een wisselwerking als ik de hele dag heel scheutig zou zijn met complimenten zouden mensen, denk ik naar mij toe ook wel meer doen. Het zou goed zijn als ik het meer in mijn voordeel gebruik, omdat ik gewoon weet dat als je ook andere mensen en andere mensen complimenteaus bent, dat dat ook wel weer terugkomt. (5F)
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Table 8*Results of the perceptions on compliments*

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Need for compliments	The employees expressed having a need for receiving compliments and they expect it	Ja, behalve dan wat ik zei met de leiding gevende, dan verwacht je wel wat. Dat is een beetje stom om te zeggen, maar dat, ja, dat is dan toch zo bij een wat groter iets wat gewoon goed is gegaan. Dan verwacht je ergens wel gewoon even een bedankje of gewoon even kort, hoeft helemaal niets uitgebreid zijn, want daar ben ik helemaal niet van. Nou, je hoort er vaak dan niet zoveel over. Ze weten dat er iets is. Nou, ja, dat er een probleem of zo is geweest of dat je wat hebt opgelost. Ja en de ene keer, dan hoor je daar wel iets van en de andere keer noemen, ja, nee, of op de werkvloer, vind ik het wel, dan mag het soms wel eens wat meer (6A) Maar ja, wat je als je het hebt over complimenten en dingen, dan vind ik wel dat dat ook een beetje bij leidinggevende rol hoort, om af en toe dat wel te kunnen uitdelen (6B)
No need for compliments	The employees expressed to not have a need for receiving compliments	Ja, krijgen nul en geven bar weinig, ja sorry dat dat het is. Dat is wat het is. Nee ik krijg eigenlijk nooit complimenten. Hoef ik ook niet. Daar ben ik ook niet naar op zoek. Ik zou niet meer complimenten willen hebben, het is genoeg. (6C) Maar ik ga dat niet op zitten schrijven van met naam, zo van: Goh, wat ben ik onwijs tevreden met je? Dat vind ik kwijl. Dat zou ik echt nooit doen (6D)

Work is work	The employees expressed that compliments are only an extra, as they should do their work regardless of receiving compliment	<p>Dan moet je daar complimenten voor krijgen? Nee, het is mijn werk. Ik word ervoor betaald, dus simpel, en ik moet het gewoon op een leuke manier doen. Dat is belangrijk.</p> <p>Ja, dat is prettig om te horen. Ik heb wel zoiets van: ja, ik doe ook mijn werk, en ja, het horen dat je werk goed doet, is gewoon prettig en prima. Maar ik vind ook een stukje dat zij dat van mij mogen verwachten. Dus ja, je gaat dan niet gelijk naast je schoenen lopen. (6E)</p> <p>Maar ja, ik zeg al gekscherend weet je hoeveel je betaald krijgt, mag hopen dat je je werk goed doet. Nou, ja, dat is een beetje met een grapje, maar achter ieder geintje zit natuurlijk wel een seintje. Ja, ik vind ook dat, nou, dat merk ik wel. De jongere generatie, die is veel gevoeliger voor complimenten, dan denk ik, ja, je moet gewoon je werk doen, hè, doe gewoon je werk. (6F)</p>
Authenticity	The employees highlighted the need for the compliment to be authentic	<p>Complimenteus zijn moet ook wel authentiek zijn, en dat is vaak wel heel moeilijk.</p> <p>Yeah, I think if you if you give compliments and you don't mean it then it's different energy. But if your intention is good you really appreciate somebody and then give compliment. Then it's really nice.</p>

Table 9

Results of the participants' answers to the additional questions

Category	Definition	Sample comments
Change in receiving	The participants stated to be more aware of the compliments they received	<p>Ja ik ben me meer bewust van complimenten die gegeven worden.</p> <p>Na het interview ben je er wat bewuster mee bezig zowel bij het geven en ontvangen van een compliment (7A)</p> <p>...ja, de eerste tijd was ik me daar meer van bewust. (7B)</p>

		In de dagen na het interview wel, toen viel het me meer op. Daarna werd dit weer wat minder. (7C)
No change in receiving	There was no change in how aware the participants were in receiving compliments	Ik ben me niet meer bewust van de complimenten die ik krijg na het interview. Ik kan beide vragen met Nee beantwoorden. Geen verschil dus (7D) Wat betreft het ontvangen van complimenten merk ik geen verschil... Of anders gezegd, ik heb sinds ons interview geen complimenten ontvangen...(7E)
Change in giving	The participants stated to be more aware of the compliments they give or gave more compliments	Wat betreft het geven van complimenten ben ik wel wat alerter hierop geworden na ons gesprek. Ik heb het ook wat nadrukkelijker toegepast in nabesprekingen van opdrachten met studenten. Ik geef zelf nu ook vaker een compliment als er bijv. iets goed gaat i.o.d.* (7F) Ik was me meer bewust van het feit dat ik complimenten gaf terwijl dit eerder onbewust(er) ging. (7G)
No change in giving	There was no change in how much compliments the participants gave or how aware they were of this	Ik heb zelf geen verschil in het geven van complimenten. Ik ervaar ook niet echt een verschil in het geven van complimenten. Ik denk dat ik dat al bewust doe en ben blijven doen. Ik moest wel vandaag (toeval of niet) aan jou denken toen ik iemand een compliment gaf. (7H)

**Note.* the abbreviation was originally sent as i.o.d., however this does not mean anything significant to the rest of the sentence or in the context, thus it has been changed accordingly to o.i.d.