

User satisfaction and workspace effectiveness: conditional effects of stress and workplace attachment

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, companies like IBM and Yahoo have ended the practice of encouraging employees' remote-work and reverted to getting workers back to the office. The reasoning behind this decision has been prompted by the findings of several studies showing that employees' face-to-face interactions are positively associated with creativity and performance. Nowadays, offices are not viewed anymore as a mere source of expenses, but as places where people come together to socialize, share knowledge, mentor others and work as teams. Therefore, one of the central issues in workplace management is the opportunity that workspaces offer for accumulating knowledge or intellectual capital. In this sense, office spatial arrangements that favour the development of such potentialities become a full company resource that supports the development of collective dynamics and lends meaning to a common project, a company business. Workspace research must consider employees' experiences, collaboration and the need for sensory and emotional engagement in the workplace (Gruber et al. 2015). Research on users' satisfaction with the office environment has generated extensive knowledge of workers' preferences relative to ambient and environmental conditions. However, limited research exists on how the workspace supports workers to perform their tasks (Visher, 2008; De Been & Beijer, 2014; Rolfö et al. 2018). To our knowledge, a limited number of studies focused on how employees' satisfaction with their workspace environment is related to workspace effectiveness. The workplace is a territory around which the whole organization social life is shaped (Fisher, 1997). Office-settings environments are supposed to generate positive dynamics such as employees' emotional connections with their workspace, collaboration, creativity, and performance. However, these dynamics engender negative outcomes unintentionally, one of which is stress. The aim of our study was to evaluate the relationship between employees' workspace satisfaction and workspace effectiveness through workspace attachment and stress. A web-based survey of 66 office employees working in different workspace settings was performed. Contrary to expectations, the results showed that satisfaction with workspace environment is not related to employees' perception of workspace effectiveness; instead, this relationship is moderated by stress levels, and, mediated to workspace attachment.

Purpose: To study the relationship between workspace satisfaction and workspace effectiveness.

Design/methodology/approach: A web-based survey of 66 white-collar functions employees working in a company on two sites and in different types of offices.

Findings: Controlling by office type, gender, age, the seniority in the company, and the time in the function, the results showed that the relationship between workspace satisfaction and workspace effectiveness is moderated by stress, and mediated by workspace attachment.

Practical implications: Our study shows that employees' positive evaluation of the workspace environment, while significant, is not a guarantee of workspace effectiveness. Instead, the perception of the workspace support for performing daily work is conditional on stress. When stress levels are low, the workspace contributes positively to performing daily work. When stress levels are high, the workspace contributes negatively to performing daily work. Workplace attachment mediates the relationship between workspace satisfaction and workspace effectiveness positively. Employees who **are** relatively more satisfied with their workspace tend to feel more attached to their offices, which in turn translates into a greater perception of workspace effectiveness.

Originality/value: This research helps to improve the knowledge of how the workspace supports workers to perform their tasks.

Keywords: workspace, office environment, workspace satisfaction, workspace effectiveness, stress, workplace attachment,

Disciplines presented in the paper: Corporate Real Estate Management, Workplace Management, Human Resources, Environmental Psychology.