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User Satisfaction and Preferences in an Activity Based Flexible Office: A multi-method case study

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Literature has focused on the impact of office environments on employee satisfaction, productivity, and communication. Nevertheless, design strategies to achieve these organizational goals are not well established. This study aimed to determine how the spatial qualities of a renovated combi-open plan office may impact user satisfaction and preferences, potentially developing into office design guidelines.

The office included unassigned workstations and varied collaborative and individual alternative workspaces (AWS). After internal approvals, self-reported questionnaires were completed by 82 office users. Further, regression and content analysis approaches evaluated the findings.

The results indicated that workplace satisfaction was significantly predicted by enjoying the workplace and the perception of being productive. Enjoyment of workplace was achieved through a perception of a relaxing environment that promotes communication, learning, and sense of belonging. Users perceived to be productive when being attentive, plus satisfied with their communication patterns. Supporting prior research, noise distraction and visual privacy were continuing concerns in the open office.

The availability of appropriate AWS supportive of task requirements enhanced employee perceptions of a more supportive work environment. Workplace and workstation satisfaction differed among distinct departments, indicating the importance of flexibility and adaptability of open plan offices for diverse user needs. Balancing the noise effects of the open environment, the availability of AWS around unassigned workstations enabled users to focus and collaborate in different enclosed and semi-enclosed rooms.

These findings suggest the availability of a variety of open and enclosed spatial zones that accommodate diverse user requirements for privacy, collaboration, and communication. Designating quiet zone workstations, and providing efficient and adjustable acoustical privacy panels for audio and visual privacy are recommended for enhanced user satisfaction.

Learning objective

1. Include diverse workspace zones to address different privacy and collaborative needs
2. Emphasize on sub areas that encourage focused work and provide audio privacy
3. designing non-assigned workstations that promote face to face interaction
4. Creating flexible and adaptable furniture options to enhance user’s control of the ambient environment.