

Influence of the physical work environment on work engagement and performance

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76 Influence of the Physical Work Environment on Work Engagement and Performance

In recent years, companies have made effort to adjust their offices to be more flexible and to support the activities and needs of their employees. The aim of these concepts is to increase employee satisfaction, leading to higher productivity, and at the same time save expenses due to flexible use of the workspace. In the literature there is no consensus on which aspects of the office work environment are most likely to stimulate an optimal productivity apart from the fact that the behavioral environment cannot be seen separately from the physical environment.

Moreover, there is hardly any literature on workplace nudging, meaning an adjustment of the physical work environment aimed at steering behavior of people in a certain desired direction. Many buildings of governmental institutions in The Netherlands use this strategy and have created a so called hub, a centrally located flexible workspace in which employees can work and have meetings with coworkers or customers. The aim of this study is to measure and predict the relationships between workspace characteristics and work engagement and performance of employees in hubs in governmental office buildings.

A conceptual model was developed based on literature research. To test this model data was collected using a survey among 236 employees at hubs in 4 different governmental institutions in 2016. Questions were asked about the visit and activities performed in the hub, assessment of the characteristics, satisfaction with work related needs, work engagement, performance and socio-demographics.

A path model was estimated including all proposed direct and indirect relationships simultaneously. A model generating approach was used to construct the final model, for which the goodness-of-fit was adequate and all parameter estimates for the relationships in the model statistically significant.

The model estimated confirms the theoretical model, however, some more detailed relationships are found. All variables from the physical environment have an effect on the behavioral environment. The behavioral environment directly influences work related need satisfaction and indirectly work engagement. The more employees have their work related needs satisfied, the higher their work engagement is. At the same time, there is a positive effect between work engagement and performance. The results can be used to inform real estate and facility managers on how to improve the work place nudges in governmental buildings.

KEYWORDS: office work environment, work performance, workplace nudging, path model, work engagement