

A Mixed Methods Study on the Impact of the Perceived Aesthetics of a Workplace

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Interventions which change the visual appearance of the work environment to positively impact employee and organizational outcomes are becoming increasingly common. For example, environmental interventions such as adding indoor plants, changing the color of the walls, and increasing the amount of artwork within a workplace can lead to reduced stress levels, anxiety, fatigue, and sick leave (Dijkstra, Pieterse, & Pruyn, 2008a; Dijkstra, Pieterse & Pruyn, 2008b; Nejati, Rodiek, & Shepley, 2016).

However, more research is needed to discover exactly why changing the appearance of work environments have a positive effect and what factors may influence the effectiveness of these interventions. There is theoretical and empirical support for the notion that the benefits of these interventions are in part due to the increased aesthetics of the environment. For example, Maslow (1954) wrote of a need for aesthetics, Kaplan & Kaplan (1989) argued that the aesthetic component of an environment can help individuals recover from mentally draining experiences, and Dijkstra, Pieterse, & Pruyn (2008) found that adding indoor plants to a room had positive psychological benefits due to the increase in the perceived attractiveness of the room.

In this study, we seek to examine the impact that the perceived aesthetics of a workplace and the prevalence of aesthetic elements have on full time adult employees' post work recovery needs, turnover intention, and job satisfaction. Additionally, we seek to examine if individual's need for an aesthetically pleasing workplace and mindfulness levels moderate these relationships. Our ultimate goal with this work is to offer a model and methodological approach that can be useful to those interested in studying the impacts of the appearance of a workplace on employee job satisfaction, stress, and intention to stay at their job. A better understanding of this relationship will allow organizations to more effectively change the workplace to have greater positive impacts on employees' health and happiness.

The sample will consist of adults (18 years of age and older) who work full-time (i.e., at least 35 hours a week). This study has been designed to be applicable to both office and non-office workers. This research comprises of two phases. First, participants complete an internet-based survey that measures relevant variables such as mindfulness levels, need for an aesthetically pleasing workplace, job satisfaction, turnover intention, individual differences (e.g., personality, positive and negative affect, demographic information), need for recovery, participant's physical work conditions (e.g., extreme noise in the workplace), and the degree an individual has control over the appearance of their workspace. In this survey, the aesthetics of a workplace will be measured via an author made six item measure as well as questionnaire that asks them to identify if specific visual elements that have been demonstrated by previous research to impact the aesthetic quality of an indoor space (e.g., plants, artwork, colorful walls).

To complete phase two of this study participants will upload three photos of their workplace. Participants are asked to upload one photo of the view they normally see (e.g., their computer screen), their personal workspace (the area of their workplace they spend the most time working in; e.g., their cubical), and a picture that captures their broader work environment of which

their workspace is a part of (e.g., the room their cubical is in). These photos will be thematically coded to identify what elements are frequently present in environments that are rated as aesthetically pleasing.