Public Abstract

First Name:Natalie

Middle Name:D.

Last Name:Ellis

Adviser's First Name:Ronald

Adviser's Last Name:Phillips

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF WORKPLACE ATTRIBUTES: ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCE INDEX EXAMINED THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM PREFERENCE TYPOLOGIES

Creating an effective workplace to fit each setting can be useful in changing social cognitive behavior, increasing employee retention, providing effective work environments, increasing company profits, and attracting new employees. Corporate businesses are in a heightened pressure state to adapt to changing world economies. The margin for error of a faulty space plan grows increasingly all the while the cost of doing business skyrockets. Businesses are being asked to adapt, realign, and alter their practices in order to promote greater profits and maintain a stable workforce. Traditional planning methods are being found ineffective in today's changing environment. Most space planning practices use past ideas and intuitive guesses to create what is needed for a satisfactory space plan. A deeper level of understanding is needed that capitalizes on management decisions and promotes employee satisfaction. The level of understanding would benefit from the development of a precise manner for determining workplace environmental preferences.

It is a common understanding within the architectural and business research fields that office employees are highly affected by the setting in which they conduct their work (Becker & Steele, 1995). The integration of two scaled indices to ascertain environmental preferences is an important area of study for today's research, design practice, and educational training which provide the opportunity to create patterns for creating environments that truly support the unique set of workers found within.

The Environment Preference Index (EPI) measures an office worker's built environment preferences which include the physical facility, furniture and equipment, the opportunity to control their surroundings, the organizational culture's integration into the surrounding built environment, and the amenity spaces provided within the space. The Organizational System Assessment Scale index provides the ability to determine the organization's unique work type as a group or individual. The index provides the fundamental understanding to categorize all the workers within the studied organization by the way the worker views its current work setting and also their ideal way to work.

The final integration between the two indices provides insight to contribute to future research seeking to create work patterns to improve design and space planning. The need for this type of planning precision is profound and while many ideas seem to be common sense, many of the white paper resources currently available have not had formal testing that would lead to causal theory application. The research also has the opportunity to create a unifying bridge between different university colleges such as organizational studies found in the nation's business schools and architecture and design college institutions. Shared information would also be made available to further the link between education/research and private design planning practices.

The University of Missouri convenience study with a sample size of 411 respondents provides the opportunity to test out previously developed scaled indices, create a process to collect, study, and analyze survey data. As the University of Missouri Extension group sought to understand its workforce, they felt it important to know what areas in their overall physical structures could be enhanced to create a better work experience for its staff and faculty. The outcome for the study provides valuable insight into the organization's aggregate that previously would have been unavailable to researchers and practitioners alike as well as providing the opportunity for the contribution of improving the person and environment congruency. The research findings concluded that when considering the eight demographic variables, the results create a sample profile – the typical individual would be a 50 year old female who has worked for the

University of Missouri Extension for 13.5 years on the Columbia campus in the same office for the past eight and a half years, working through Human Environmental Sciences under the current title of Specialist and has either moved only once and more commonly never has moved. Survey results also concluded that the organization comprised the highest mean group of open and that the EPI pattern connections were aligned with the constructs of the physical facility and the culture construct. In a climate of cultural change on the campus of the University of Missouri, this is a significant outcome for future design and business studies.

The study's conclusions are significant as the design profession seeks ways to effectively manage and predict the link between employee engagement, attraction, and retention. With a process and beginning pattern development that can be associated between people and the built environment, architects, interior designers, and organizational analysts can more fully consider the connection for buildings and people as they seek to create future healthy building projects.