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Employees' experiences with new workspace layout: a user-centred approach

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have shown that the office workspace environment can have an effect on employees' performance, satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, and other such factors. As such office workspace design has gained more traction in international research and amongst organisations globally. The office space is an organisation's second largest expense, it is therefore pertinent that organisations, who have chosen to focus on the office to enhance employee wellbeing, choose the most appropriate and optimal environment for their employees. One of the methods to ensure employees are satisfied with the space is to utilise a user-centred approach that allows employees the opportunity to comment on the space and to communicate their needs for the space. A South African organisation that has chosen to develop its space was a health insurance company that was undergoing a workspace redesign for their new buildings. The aim of this research report was to make use of a mixed method design that may have assisted the company, and the other parties involved, in gaining greater insight into whether the layout change had performed its functions effectively, as well as to ensure that the layout had accomplished the company's goals. The research report focused on the following variables: psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, work engagement, job satisfaction, perceived productivity (performance), satisfaction with the workspace layout, and collaboration/interaction. The study consisted of 158 participants. The results of the study had indicated that there was a main effect relationship between department/team groups and job satisfaction. Other results of the study had found that satisfaction with the workplace layout was related to psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, work engagement, and productivity. The results revealed that the higher the employees' satisfaction with the workplace layout, the higher their psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, work engagement and productivity. The qualitative component resulted in themes that were explored both theoretically and inductively. After analysis of the themes, four main themes were devised. Based on exploration of these themes it became apparent that satisfaction with one's workplace can be contingent on factors such as, noise and distractions, privacy, operational technology (e.g. it software/hardware/systems and WIFI), functional and up-to-date technical equipment, facility accessibility, honouring of commitments/meeting expectations of the space, personal feelings and attitudes towards change and flexibility, time consumption of activities surrounding flexibility, storage facilities that are accessible, territorialism or sabotage, and interaction/communication.