

THE IMPACT OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS IN SELECTED IT SECTOR-AN EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The workplace environment impacts employee morale, productivity and engagement - both positively and negatively. The work place environment in a majority of industry is unsafe and unhealthy. These includes poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting, excessive noise, insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies and lack of personal protective equipment. People working in such environment are prone to occupational disease and it impacts on employee's performance. Thus productivity is decreased due to the workplace environment. It is the quality of the employee's workplace environment that most impacts on their level of motivation and subsequent performance. How well they engage with the organization, especially with their immediate environment, influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and ultimately, how long they stay in the job. Creating a work environment in which employees are productive is essential to increased profits for your organization, corporation or small business. The relationship between work, the workplace and the tools of work, workplace becomes an integral part of work itself. The management that dictate how, exactly, to maximize employee productivity center around two major areas of focus: personal motivation and the infrastructure of the work environment. The paper presents the analysis of the working environment at different IT Sector Organizations and the research done to understand the performance level of the employees due to the work environment, and also aims at suggesting few interactions to provide better work environment at IT Sector Organizations.

Keywords: *Work environment, employee performance, workplace design, environmental factors, Motivation.*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business environment, organizations can no longer afford to waste the potential of their workforce. There are key factors in the employee's workplace environment that impact greatly on their level of motivation and performance. The workplace environment that is set in place impacts employee morale, productivity and engagement - both positively and negatively. It is not just coincidence that new programs addressing lifestyle changes, work/life balance, health and fitness - previously not considered key benefits - are now primary considerations of potential employees, and common practices among the most admired companies. In an effort to motivate workers, firms have implemented a number of practices such as performance based pay, employment security agreements, practices to help balance work and family, as well as various forms of information sharing. In addition to motivation, workers need the skills and ability to do their job effectively. And for many firms, training the worker has become a necessary input into the production process.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The work place environment in a majority of industry is unsafe and unhealthy. These includes poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting, excessive noise, insufficient safety measures in fire emergencies and lack of personal protective equipment. People working in such environment are prone to occupational disease and it impacts on employee's performance. Thus productivity is decreased due to the workplace environment. It is a wide industrial area where the employees are facing a serious problem in their work place like environmental and physical factors. So it is difficult to provide facilities to increase their performance level.

SCOPE & OBJECTIVES:

This research paper aims at suggesting few interactions to provide for a better work environment in the IT Sector which is the outcome of the in depth analysis of the work environment. This research paper seeks to fulfill the below listed objectives:

1. To understand relationship between the employees and their work environment.
2. To analyze workplace factors influencing employee performance.
3. To suggest measures to improve the working conditions for better performance.

The study presents a view of the working environment at different IT organizations and the research done to understand the performance level of the employees due to the work environment. Also, an attempt has been made to identify the motivational factors to attain

the target. For the study, one IT sector organization was selected as the sample. The organization selected employs more than 1000 employees and, practices all statutory and employee welfare measures within its environment.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the study involved both primary data and secondary data and is marked by prior formulation of research questions. For the purpose of the study the researcher used the stratified random sampling method. The total population of 1000 employees was divided into groups and samples collected randomly from 285 employees belonging to these groups, proportional allocation among three departments, viz., Engineering building, Administration building and Shop floor building, were made while selecting the sample size. A well-designed questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was carefully constructed and properly setup. The data collected was subjected to statistical techniques for analysis of the workers opinion towards the workplace environment and its impact on performance.

TODAY'S WORKPLACE

Interestingly, today's workplace is characterized by two opposing trends. On one hand, employees are given leeway in the way they dress and act. On the other hand, the management's tendency to micromanage has increased. Though the two are different aspects they are certainly related. The possible explanation for the increased tendency to micromanage is because of the fact that the young workers certainly do not present a picture as serious, dedicated workers in the way they dress, speak and act.

The management must take an active role to not only define the physical environment of the workplace and make it conducive for workers, but also alter the management style to suit employees. This refers to changing aspects like ethics, behavior, commitment, professionalism, drive and interpersonal relations in employees. Today's manager has to change his style of functioning in order to bring about effective changes in these aspects. He/she has to spend more time on controlling these factors of the work environment rather than micromanage. For this, he/she has to:

- Give adequate authority to employees
- Delegate responsibilities
- Increase their accountability
- Encourage teamwork

The manager must curb the tendency to micromanage and instead display that he/she has confidence in the ability of his/her team members and trust them to do their work efficiently. If he/she treats his/her subordinates as professionals then there is no reason that they should not behave in that way. Such an attitude promotes trust and loyalty among the employees and encourages better teamwork among them. Besides, developing a sense of ownership towards the company, creating a work environment in which employees are productive is essential to increased profits for your organization, corporation or small business. Principals of management that dictate how, exactly, to maximize employee productivity center around two major areas of focus: personal motivation and the infrastructure of the work environment.

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

Many managers and supervisors labor under the mistaken impression that the level of employee performance on the job is proportional to the size of the employee's pay packet. Although this may be true in a minority of cases, numerous employee surveys have shown by and large this to be untrue. In fact, salary increases and bonuses for performance, in many instances, have a very limited short-term effect. The extra money soon comes to be regarded not as an incentive but as an "entitlement". It is the quality of the employee's workplace environment that most impacts on their level of motivation and subsequent performance. How well they engage with the organization, especially with their immediate environment, influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and ultimately, how long they stay in the job. Many studies have revealed that most employees leave their organization because of their relationship issues with their immediate supervisor or manager. The most important workplace environment factors that either lead to engagement or disengagement are given below. There are also other factors that may impact on performance like environmental factors and physical factors. A close consideration of each of these factors is also very useful in ensuring that employees apply the skills they learn during training programs once they return to their workplace.

Factors affecting employee performance at the Workplace

1. Goal-setting

Employees are involved in setting meaningful goals and performance measures for their work. This can be done informally between the employee and their immediate supervisor or as part of an organization's formal performance management process.

2. Performance feedback

Information on how the employee is performing is fed back regularly to employees. This consists of both positive feedback on what the employee is doing right as well as feedback on what requires improvement.

3. **Role congruity**

The role that the employee is required to perform is consistent with their expectations on joining the organization and any subsequent training. The organization's role expectations are consistent with tasks allocated by the employee's immediate supervisor.

4. **Defined processes**

The organization constrains the variability of how work is actually performed through documenting processes and communicating such expectations to employees.

5. **Workplace incentives**

The organization determines what motivates its employees and sets up formal and informal structures for rewarding employees behaving in the way required.

6. **Supervisor support**

Immediate supervisors act as advocates for employees, gathering and distributing the resources needed by the employees for them to be able to do a good job and providing positive encouragement for a job well done.

7. **Mentoring/coaching**

Skilled and respected people are available to employees to help them perform better in their current role and to assist them develop further into a future role.

8. **Opportunity to apply**

Individual workloads and organizational systems and processes do not hinder employees from applying established skills or from practicing newly learned skills.

9. **Job aids**

Their work is to be made easier and help minimize error rates and customer dissatisfaction by supplying job aids. These can include templates, guides, models and checklists.

10. **Environmental factors**

Environmental factors such as temperature, lighting and ventilation have a direct impact on health - for example very high temperatures can lead to heat stress and heat exhaustion.

11. **Physical factors**

Physical factors in the workplace such as poor layout or overcrowding can lead to common types of accident such as tripping or striking against objects.

MOTIVATION AT WORKPLACE

“No person will make a great business who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit.” – Andrew Carnegie.

Motivation is present in every life function, most especially at the work force; we can see motivation play a key role in leadership success. A person unable to grasp motivation and apply it will not become or stay a leader. While the most obvious incentive for increasing employee productivity is often thought to be based on salary and promotions, this is not always the case. In fact, recent thought on the true nature of optimal human resource management has concluded that in a large number of cases, salary has to do with motivation than do other important factors. In addition, a motivating work environment must be the one in which employees are treated fairly. No matter what level of input a particular worker has in relation to the business processes as a whole, it is essential for a manager to give each employee a sense of playing a dynamic, integral role in something much larger. Indeed, engendering loyalty is a key element of motivating workers and thereby increasing the overall productivity of operations.

One important tool for motivating employees is praise. Effective project managers must learn how to cultivate this powerful method of worker motivation. While oftentimes largely ignored by managers in the workplace, this can be an actual work being done. Praise has, in countless examples, shown productivity

WORKPLACE CULTURE & INTERVENTIONS

Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making one adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns, hierarchy, dress code if any, workspace and most importantly working and behavioral patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers, can be a lesson of life. Individual mismatch to workplace cultures may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases, office politics and gossips can be major stress inducers. Primary and secondary interventions may prevent adverse outcomes by reducing or eliminating external loads, changing organizational factors, altering the social environment, improving individual stress-coping skills, or matching the physical demands of the job with the employee's physical capacities. The literature suggests that some of these approaches are more successful than others. Some interventions have not yet been adequately assessed. Medical research has shown that external loads in the work environment act on the body to create internal loads on tissues and other anatomical structures. Interventions that focus on the reduction or elimination of exposure to external loads must first identify and quantify the

motions and forces acting on the individual, including vibration and thermal exposures. Often a static study of the work is required to evaluate these physical exposures and their characteristic properties. When specific physical stress factors are identified, the sources of these loads are ascertained. Workplace redesign may include alterations in tools, equipment, Workstations, materials handled, tasks, work methods, work processes, and work environment, based on their contributions to the identified stresses.

MANAGING CONFLICT IN WORKPLACE

Whenever a group of people is put into a work situation, there's a potential for conflict. People bring to the job differing work habits, ethics, and modes of expression, and differences of opinion are bound to arise. It's not possible to eliminate conflict from a workplace, but establishing clear guidelines for work responsibilities, promotion practices, and scheduling issues goes a long way towards creating a harmonious environment. Periodic reviewing of employee responsibilities is necessary to make sure that one or a few employees don't end up doing a disproportionate share of the work. If it turns out that some employees do less than their share on a consistent basis, you can bet the other employees recognize this and have some intense feelings about the situation. Intervention is necessary; if the problem is due lack of skills, then the employee needs to be trained. If it's an issue of poor time management or lack of organization, there are plenty of classes available in those skills; offer to pay for them and strongly urge the employee to attend. When personal conflicts do arise, have a policy for resolving them. Provide mediation and counseling opportunities for employees, and make sure they feel comfortable using them. If a conflict becomes serious enough to threaten the harmony and efficiency of the workplace, you may need to require mediation for the parties involved. Finally, keep an eye on the dynamics of different departments. Some may run very smoothly most of the time, while others seem to be in constant conflict. If that happens, you may need to take a good look at the management of the poorly functioning department; sometimes your department head may have a management style that invites conflict rather than serving to resolve it.

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE

Workplace design needs to take into account a wide range of issues. Creating better and higher performing workplace requires an awareness of how workplace impacts behavior and how behavior itself drives workplace performance. Joroff et al. (2003) argues that in the relationship between work, the workplace and the tools of work, workplace becomes an

integral part of work itself. Increasing workplace understanding is built on the recognition that space has different characteristics: It performs different functions and there are different ways people work. People work individually and interact with others and this requires different workplace solutions. Research on behalf by the architects, Gensler (2005) of 200 UK business managers supports the contention that an improved workplace would increase employee productivity by 19 per cent and their own productivity by 17 per cent. These improvements have huge implications for the economy as a whole if proven. The research was followed up by Gensler (2006) in a survey of 2,000 office workers in the USA which found that 90 per cent of the survey respondents believed that better workplace design and layout result in better overall employee performance. In a study (ASID, 1999), employees and their managers were asked about the importance of the physical workplace environment. Employees identified the effective utilization of space and having a workplace allows them to work efficiently as the most important aspects of the work environment. Managers focused on issues of privacy and flexible workspaces but included personal comfort and visual appeal as important in the design of their workspaces. The research focused on the relationship between productivity and the indoor environment in offices and took into account the fact that productivity depends on other factors by using an Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI) The attempts made to link the physical environment with the productivity of its occupant's falls into two main categories:

1. Office layout:

Office layout revolves around two main debates: those of open-plan verses cellular offices, and the matching of the office environment to the work processes

2. Office comfort:

The following four steps are an excellent start in implementing a workplace environment that has the best chance of satisfying technical and professional employees.

- a. Do an audit of your company's control system.
- b. Decide what characteristics to adopt.
- c. Train technical workers and managers for the new culture.
- d. Monitor success and provide feedback.

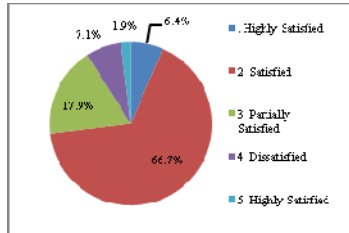
Barnard, Janet (1997), in his study says that if organizations want to avoid the intellectual drain caused by the attrition of technically – skilled people, a solution may well be in the design of the work environment.

APPRAISING WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FACTORS:

1. Space and Facilities Required for doing the Job

The actual physical layout of an office is extremely important when it comes to maximizing productivity. Chart 1 shows satisfaction of employees towards the space and facilities provided to do the job. 66.7% respondents are satisfied with the space and facilities provided by the company. Majority of the employees are given the required space and facilities to do their job

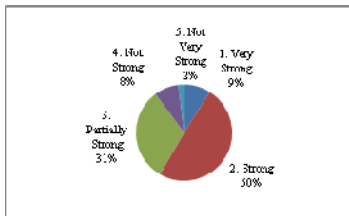
Chart 1: Satisfaction of Employees towards the Space and Facilities Provided



2. Relationship with Superiors at the Workplace

Superiors act as advocates for employees, gathering and distributing the resources needed by the employees in order to do a good job and providing positive encouragement for a job well done. It can be inferred from Chart 2 that around 60% 49.4% respondents maintain a strong relationship with their superior at the workplace.

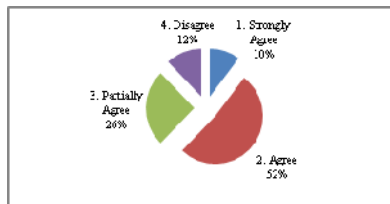
Chart 2: Cordial Relationship with Superiors at the Workplace



3. Equality of Treatment at the Work Place

Treating employees equally at their workplace motivates employees to do their work with full interest in their work environment. Chart 3 shows that 62% respondents agree that they are motivated since they are treated equally at their workplace, that everyone is treated equally.

Chart 3: Treating Everyone Equally at the Work Place



4. Communication System at the Workplace

A formal communication system at the workplace promotes trust and loyalty among the employees and encourages better team work and relationship shows that communication system at the workplace. 75% respondents (Table 1) feel that there is a formal communication system at the workplace.

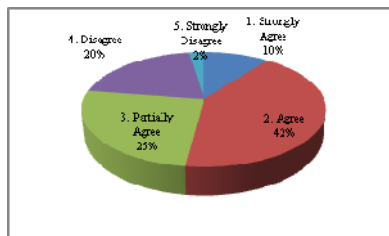
Table 1: Communication System at the Workplace

1	Yes	75
2	No	25

5. Environmental Factors are Conducive to Work

Companies have to provide a friendly and comfortable workplace to work. Most of the employees agree that environmental factors such as temperature, lighting and ventilation will not impact on health. Through Chart 4, it is seen that 52.2% respondents agree that the environmental factors are highly conducive to work in the study organization.

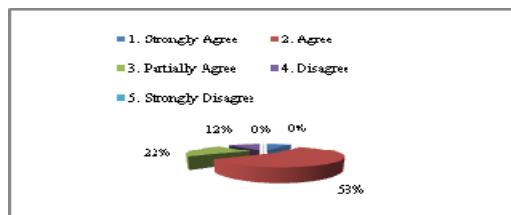
Chart 4: Environmental Factors are Conducive to Work



6) Procedures to Identify and Control Hazards

There are several procedures followed to identify and control hazards. Majority of employees agree that the procedures are followed strictly to identify and control hazards at the workplace which helps to improve working area. 66% respondents (Chart 5) agree that organization follows procedures to identify and control hazards.

Chart 5: Procedures to Identify and Control Hazards



INFLUENCE OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE

a. Factors affecting Employee's Attitude at Workplace

Employee's attitude at the workplace is affected by factors like interpersonal relationships, control over environment, shift, emotional factors, job assignment, overtime duty, extended work, etc. as shown in Table 2, Emotional factor is one of the leading factors which affect employee's attitudes with mean value of 4.92. It is an array of non-cognitive abilities that influence one's ability not to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures. Thus this leads to reduction in productivity at the workplace.

Interpersonal relationship is regarded second, with mean value 4.79. Since Interpersonal relations at Work place does not serve a critical role in the development and maintenance of trust and positive feelings among employees in the organization. Hence this may affect employee's attitude.

Control over work environment has been given the third rank with mean value 3.99 by the employees. Since most of the employees feel that they are not given right to control their work environment, thus it may affect their attitude.

Shift system with mean value 3.91 has been placed at fourth. Company is having three shifts where employees are not comfortable with their shift system. So this may affect the employee's attitude.

Job assignment ranks fifth with mean value 3.59. Job description which defines duties, basic goals of the organization is not defined very clearly to the employees, so it may affect the employee's attitude towards their work.

Extended work with mean value 3.57 is regarded sixth, because the company is extending the work during the emergency period and it does not affect employee's attitude seriously.

Employee's attitude is not affected due to overtime duty. Overtime duty with mean value 3.23 is least prioritized, since overtime duty is given only if the works are not completed before the required time. Hence employee's attitude at the workplace is affected highly by emotional factors and lowest by Overtime duty.

Table-2: Factors Affecting the Employee's Attitude at Workplace

Interpersonal Relationships	4.79	2
Control over environment	3.99	3
Shift	3.91	4
Emotional Factors	4.92	1

Job Assignment	3.59	5
Overtime duty	3.23	7
Extended work	3.57	6

b. Physical Aspects influencing Employee's Performance at the Workplace

Office space is one of the leading physical aspects that influence the employee's performance at the workplace with mean value 3.06 (Table 3). Majority of the employees ensures that a poor arrangement of office space, wastes time and energy by failing to provide the means for effective work habits. Since sufficient space is not provided by the company for the assigned job.

Furniture and furnishing is ranked second leading physical aspect with mean value 2.71 by the employees. At the company furniture is not maintained in a good condition and proper furnishing is not done so employees feel unsophisticated while they work. Thus it influences employee's performance at the workplace.

Storage of materials has been given third rank with mean value 2.20. Adequate storage facilities for materials are provided by the company in order to arrange the materials properly. Thus it does not influence much on work performance.

Interior space has been given the lowest significance with mean value 2.04 because employees are comfortable and satisfied by the interior space of the company, since it act as a practical, aesthetic, and conducive to intended purposes, such as raising productivity, selling merchandise, or improving life style. Table 3 indicates that office space highly influences employee's performance at the workplace than other physical aspects.

Table 3: Physical Aspects influencing Employee's Performance at the Workplace

Office Space	3.06	1
Furniture & Furnishing	2.71	2
Storage of Materials	2.20	3
Interior Surface	2.04	4

c. Job Factors motivating Employees Performance to Attain the Target

Interesting work, opportunity to develop special abilities, adequate information, enough authority, sufficient help and equipment, friendly and helpful co-workers, opportunity to see

results of work, competent supervision, clearly defined responsibilities and good pay (Table 9) are considered to be the job factors that motivates employees performance to attain the target Interesting work has got the highest significance with mean value 8.24. Majority of employees agree that the work they are indulged to do is very interesting and also motivates their performance to attain the target. Good pay is ranked second with mean value 6.89, since company pays good pay according to their position and work. Thus most of the employees are motivated by the good pay to perform their work.

Opportunity to develop special abilities got the third rank with mean value 6.41. The company is providing training facilities for their employees to develop their special abilities for the particular job which help them to gain knowledge and develop abilities.

Clearly defined Responsibilities have got the fourth rank with mean value 6.17. In the organization every employee has been allocated with particular work which they need to attain before the given time. Thus responsibilities are clearly defined which motivates the employees performance. Enough authority has got the fifth rank with mean value 5.30. Each employee is given enough authority to perform their work. Thus it partially motivates employees to attain the target. Adequate information is placed at sixth with mean value 5.28. In the organization each employees is getting the enough information about the work to be performed. The target to be attained has been set by the organization, where they pass enough information to their employees about the work. Thus it motivates employees to attain the target. Sufficient help and equipment is ranked seventh with mean value 4.69. Thus the company provides required equipment for the work and superiors provide enough information to their co-workers to work in a corrective manner. Thus, these two factors motivate employees to perform well to attain the target. Friendly and helpful co-workers rank eighth with a mean value of 4.35. In the company the relationship between the employees are moderate but this relation does:

Find ways to make life more pleasant in general for employees. Offer flexible schedules, work-from home schedules, gym memberships, etc.

Provide personal counseling for the employees affected by domestic problems. Have fun! You can promote a feeling of happiness and satisfaction in the workplace by going out and talking to co-employees.

CONCLUSION:

Workplace environment plays a vital role in motivating employees perform their assigned work. Since money is not a sufficient motivator in encouraging the workplace performance

required in today's competitive business environment. Managers and supervisors will need to be comfortable with working with the whole gamut of workplace factors that influence employee motivation. Skills required include the ability to engage employees in mutual goal setting, clarifying role expectations, and providing regular Performance feedback. Time and energy also needs to be given to provide relevant performance incentives, managing processes, providing adequate resources and workplace coaching. Last but not least, to drive organizations to peak performance managers and supervisors must put out the human face of their organization. Paramount here is the human-to-human interaction through providing individualized support and encouragement to each and every employee. From this study it is known that the organization is providing a good workplace environment to its employees.

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