WORK ENVIRONMENT: A FACTOR THAT INFLUENCES EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

BY

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Abstract. The work environment consists of all the factors that surround employees and the space in which they perform their tasks. Today's workers seek more than just a well-paying job; they desire a meaningful workplace with a positive culture that promotes a balance between their professional and personal lives. They also value opportunities for personal and professional growth, along with a sense of appreciation and respect. A healthy work environment is essential in any organization, as it brings advantages that directly and indirectly benefit both the company and its employees. This paper aims to provide a thorough examination of the various work environments present in different organizations. By utilizing an exploratory research approach, the study seeks to identify the work environments that employees prefer and those that companies adopt, which have resulted in enhanced human resource performance and positively impacted organizational.

Keywords: Work environment, working conditions, productive work, job satisfaction, professional life.

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1. Introduction

When organizing the work of employees, employers must consider both legitimate interests of the organizations and those of employees. They should ensure that wages are paid for the provision of quality services, and that these wages are comparable to those offered under normal working conditions. Additionally, any intrusion into employees' personal lives should be minimized. Employers must create jobs to meet their organizational objectives, while also fostering work environments that support the physical, psychological, and social well-being of employees in the workplace.

The term "work environment" refers to the set of conditions (physical, psychosocial, technological and organizational) in which employees carry out their work, directly influencing their performance, job satisfaction and well-being. Work environments are more than just a place where people work; they shape the company culture, promote employee well-being and lead to better organizational outcomes, creating a positive work environment. A well-designed/optimized work environment is essential for maximizing efficiency, fostering collaboration, and enhancing employee motivation. The work environment can be examined from both physical and non-physical perspectives. Physically, this includes aspects such as the appearance of the workspace, furniture, lighting, temperature, air quality, noise levels, the technologies employed, and areas designated for relaxation. On the other hand, non-physical aspects encompass company values, organizational culture, leadership styles, interpersonal dynamics, as well as themes of diversity and inclusion.

All these aspects encourage respect, collaboration, creativity, teamwork and open communication between employees within organization. Hence, employees with increased motivation and job satisfaction add value to the entire organization.

2. Factors that influence the work environment

The work environment encompasses everything that surrounds employees, that influences how they perform their work tasks. It includes both external and internal factors that can impact employee morale, and, consequently, he or she overall the productivity. A productive workplace requires an environment that supports achieving desired outcomes. Conversely, an inadequate and unfavorable work environment can result in work-related stress and may lead to employees' skills being underutilized. Hence the strong interaction between employee productivity and the physical environment at work (Pimpong, 2023). In the evolving work landscape, employees' preferences for their work environment are changing. Today's workers are not just looking for a job where they are highly paid, they are looking for a meaningful workplace with a positive work culture that offers a work-life balance, opportunities for personal

and professional growth, and a sense of appreciation and respect. A good climate is essential in any organization, and this can only have advantages that have direct and/or indirect repercussions on both the company and the employees.

The work environment encompasses all aspects that influence employees' experiences, from interpersonal interactions to overall job satisfaction. In essence, it refers to the setting in which tasks are carried out. Its quality can vary significantly depending on the organization, directly impacting both employee well-being and organizational performance.

A supportive organizational climate plays a vital role in shaping positive work outcomes; when the environment is supportive, employees are more likely to perform at their best atmosphere is supportive, employees are more likely to perform at higher levels. Therefore, fostering a healthy work environment is essential for achieving organizational goals. An exploration of what makes for a positive or negative, environment in the workplace begins with defining the key components of the environment itself, which is made up of various factors (Fig. 1).
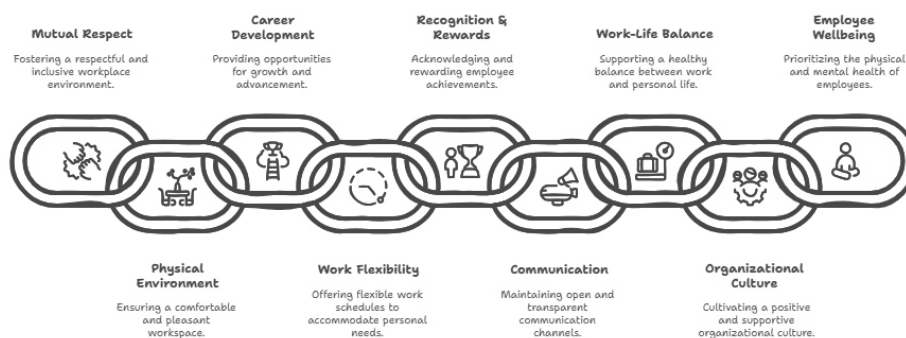

Fig. 1 – Key factors for employee satisfaction, own adaptation after (Beaumont-Oates, 2023; Pimpong, 2023; Phuong and Vinh, 2021; Rusu *et al*., 2016; Turnea *et al*., 2020).

As presented in Fig. 1, among the factors identified as the most common are:

Mutual respect serves as the cornerstone of a healthy organizational culture. Each employee deserves to be treated with dignity, and leaders should lead by example. When mutual respect is present, it enhances collaboration and builds trust among team members.

Comfortable and pleasant physical environment can improve employee mood and productivity. Well-designed physical workspace can elevate mood, reduce stress, and enhance productivity. Factors such as natural lighting, ergonomic furniture, relaxation areas, proper ventilation, and regulated temperature all contribute to a favorable work atmosphere. An aesthetically pleasing and flexible environment supports employees' concentration and fosters a stronger connection to their work, ultimately benefiting both mental and physical well-being. Some factors contribute to creating an atmosphere

conducive to concentration and creativity, such as natural light, ergonomic furniture, relaxation spaces, proper ventilation of the space where you work, temperature, cleanliness, noise level.

Career development opportunities. Access to professional development programs tailored to individual needs helps employees grow and enhances their long-term commitment to the organization.

Work schedule flexibility enable employees to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments. Options such as remote work or adjustable hours often lead to increased satisfaction and productivity.

Recognizing and rewarding performance motivates them to push themselves and contribute more to the success of the organization. Acknowledging individual and team performance motivates employees to contribute actively. A fair and transparent reward system, including competitive compensation packages, bonuses, and benefits, reinforces employee engagement. Conversely, unclear or inadequate compensation structures can diminish motivation and increase turnover.

Transparent communication/ open communication channels allow employees to voice ideas and concerns, while leaders provide constructive feedback and share relevant business information. Transparency fosters a culture of trust and involvement, whereas poor communication practices can undermine morale and lead to disengagement.

By supporting a *work-life balance*, organizations should implement policies and programs that promote balance between work and personal life. Flexible scheduling, leave policies, and wellness initiatives can contribute significantly to overall employee satisfaction

Positive organizational culture - a strong culture based on shared values, collaboration, and innovation enhances loyalty and performance. Clearly defined goals and practices, when consistently applied, guide employee behavior and decision-making. A culture that values diversity, encourages continuous learning, and rewards effort fosters a productive and inclusive environment. Conversely, a disconnect between stated values and actual practices can create a toxic atmosphere

Support for *employee wellbeing* means providing resources for physical, emotional, and mental health is essential. Programs such as wellness initiatives, counseling, and comprehensive health benefits help reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. Additionally, positive social interactions at work contribute to a cooperative and enjoyable environment, reducing tension and strengthening team dynamics.

It is essential to remember that there is no perfect work environment that will please all employees and that suits everyone (Pimpong, 2023). Thus, if one refers to a simple employee, the work environment that suits them today, that ideal environment, for performing a task, may be unsuitable for performing another task on another day or even on the same day. Therefore, many factors

influence the work environment, particularly the ability to measure it, as this depends greatly on the expectations, interests, and perceptions employees have of the organization.

3. Types of work environments

When discussing the work environment, one refers to the setting in which work occurs. This includes everything related to the performance of an employee's activity, from how he or she interacts, to what the place where the activity is carried out looks like, to their degree of satisfaction.

In the specialized literature 10 types of work environments have been identified classified into three categories as shown in Fig. 2.
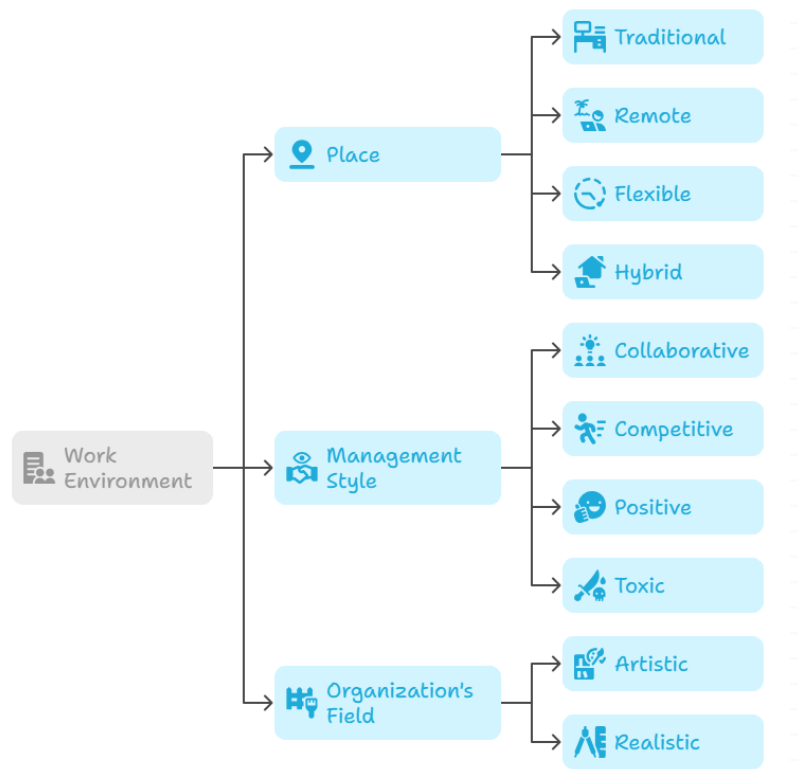

Fig. 2 – Type of work environments, own adaptation after (Badoiu, 2024; Bogathy, 2004; Herrity, 2024; Housman and Minor, 2015; Stoyancev, 2024; https://www.paycom.com/resources/blog/types-of-work-environments).

Traditional or Conventional Work Environment is structured, rule-based, and often hierarchical. It's ideal for people who value routine, stability, and clearly defined roles. While it provides clarity and control, it can also be rigid and

limit collaboration and flexibility. This type is often found in banks, law firms, or government institutions.

In *Remote Work Environment* tasks are performed outside of the office, often using digital tools. It's great for individuals who are independent and value flexibility. Remote work offers better work-life balance, but can lead to isolation and communication challenges if not well managed. It's common in tech, creative, and service-based industries.

Flexible work environment goes beyond just location. It includes flexible schedules, roles, and even contracts. Employees are judged more on outcomes than presence. While it fosters motivation and autonomy, it also demands discipline and strong self-management skills.

Hybrid work environment combines both remote and in-office work, offering the best of both worlds. This setup is ideal for people who enjoy flexibility but also benefit from in-person collaboration. However, it requires strong coordination and communication strategies to succeed.

In the case of the *collaborative work environment*, teamwork is the main driver of success. These workplaces value sharing, co-creation, and open communication. Innovation thrives here, but it also requires strong interpersonal skills and clear facilitation to avoid conflict or misalignment.

Competitive work environments are performance-driven and reward individual success. They're ideal for ambitious, high-energy employees. While they boost productivity, they may also create stress, rivalry, and a lack of cooperation if not balanced with team culture.

Comfortable or positive work environment is where well-being, respect, and open communication are central. These environments foster trust, satisfaction, and long-term productivity. They don't have to be informal; they just need to support human potential.

Toxic or harmful work environment is marked by poor communication, micromanagement, or exclusion. It undermines well-being, trust, and performance; while it might produce short-term results, the long-term consequences are serious.

Artistic or creative environments are all about freedom, originality, and expression. These settings encourage innovation and are often informal, with fewer rules. They're great for people in design, media, or the arts, though they may lack structure or performance metrics.

Realistic or practical work environment are grounded in action and tangible results. They're ideal for those who enjoy technical or manual work, and value efficiency and order. While effective, they can become repetitive or inflexible over time.

4. Comparative analysis of work environments

Work environments vary significantly in terms of structure, culture, and expectations, each shaping employee behavior, performance, and well-being in distinct ways. From the stability and predictability of traditional models to the autonomy and adaptability offered by flexible settings, and from the dynamic energy of collaborative or creative spaces to the dysfunctions of toxic cultures, the environment plays a decisive role in organizational success.

Table 1

Comparative analysis of work environments, own adaptation after (Badoiu, 2024; Bogathy, 2004; Dale,2024; Herrity, 2024; Housman and Minor, 2015; Stoyancev, 2024; https://www.paycom.com/resources/blog/types-of-work-environments)

Types of work environments	Advantages	Disadvantages
By the place where the work tasks are carried out		
Traditional or conventional	✓ Stability and role clarity ✓ Strong managerial control ✓ Easy coordination in physical teams	➢ Bureaucracy and rigidity; ➢ Limited collaboration and innovation; ➢ High operational costs (office space, commuting); ➢ Risk of employee demotivation.
Remote	✓ Increased autonomy and flexibility ✓ Better work-life balance ✓ Reduced commuting time and costs ✓ Access to a broader talent pool for employers	➢ Risk of social isolation ➢ Blurred boundaries between personal and professional life ➢ Dependence on technology and internet stability; ➢ Potential difficulties in collaboration and supervision;
Flexible	✓ Higher job satisfaction and motivation ✓ Enhanced productivity through autonomy ✓ Attraction and retention of diverse talent ✓ Promotes innovation and adaptability	➢ Challenges in tracking performance objectively ➢ Need for high self-management and discipline ➢ Risk of communication gaps ➢ Potential inequality if not supported by inclusive policies
Hybrid	✓ Balanced work-life dynamics ✓ Opportunities for collaboration and informal interactions ✓ Enhanced employee satisfaction and engagement ✓ Adaptability to different job roles and preferences	➢ Coordination challenges across locations ➢ Potential inconsistency in team dynamics ➢ Need for strong communication strategies ➢ Risk of unequal access to opportunities or visibility

Table 1
Continuation

Types of work environments	Advantages	Disadvantages
By management style		
Collaborative	✓ Increased innovation through diverse perspectives ✓ Stronger team cohesion and morale ✓ Faster problem-solving and idea generation ✓ Encourages a culture of trust and inclusion	➢ Risk of groupthink or conflict avoidance ➢ Dependency on others may delay progress ➢ Individual efforts may be less visible ➢ Requires strong facilitation and conflict management skills
Competitive	✓ Drives productivity and high performance ✓ Encourages innovation and continuous improvement ✓ Identifies and rewards top talent ✓ Fosters a results-oriented culture	➢ Can lead to stress and burnout ➢ Risk of toxic competition or unethical behavior ➢ May reduce collaboration and team spirit ➢ Difficult for individuals who value balance over pressure
Harmful or toxic	✓ Short-term performance might be high under pressure, but unsustainable ✓ Can trigger temporary compliance, but rarely innovation or engagement	➢ High levels of stress, burnout, and absenteeism ➢ Poor collaboration and trust erosion ➢ Low morale and productivity ➢ High turnover and reputational damage
Comfortable or positive	✓ Higher engagement and retention ✓ Enhanced collaboration and creativity ✓ Reduced stress and improved mental health ✓ Strong organizational culture and reputation	➢ Risk of complacency if not balanced with performance focus ➢ Can be difficult to maintain in high-pressure environments ➢ Potential underperformance if expectations are not clear

Table 1

Continuation

Types of work environments	Advantages	Disadvantages
By the organization's field of activity		
Artistic or creative	✓ Stimulates innovation and fresh perspectives ✓ High personal investment and fulfillment ✓ Encourages diversity of thought ✓ Often leads to unique products and services	➢ Lack of structure may lead to disorganization ➢ Difficult to standardize or measure performance ➢ Creative blocks or pressure to be original ➢ May not suit all personality types
Practical or realistic	✓ High clarity of roles and expectations ✓ Tangible and measurable outcomes ✓ Stable routines and clear performance indicators ✓ Effective for results-driven operations	➢ May limit creativity and flexibility ➢ Routine work can become monotonous ➢ Limited interpersonal or emotional engagement ➢ Innovation may be constrained by standardization

All the above categories are not always mutually exclusive. For instance, a flexible environment may also foster collaboration, just as an artistic or creative setting may function effectively in a remote format. Conversely, toxic cultures, regardless of sector or performance level, often lead to disengagement, burnout, and long-term organizational damage. Positive work environments, whether structured, flexible, or creative, are typically characterized by a combination of clarity, mutual trust, and psychological safety. Hybrid or mixed models are increasingly common; for example, a creative startup may blend remote work with a highly collaborative culture.

The compatibility between the work environment and the prevailing management style is crucial; a remote setting, for example, requires clear communication and transparent leadership. Moreover, the perception of a work environment is deeply subjective, influenced by factors such as age, professional experience, lifestyle, and local or national culture. There is an interdependent relationship between three core dimensions: spatial setting, management style, and professional domain, their alignment being essential for fostering sustainable performance and employee well-being.

5. Preferred Work Environments. Employees vs. Employers

In general, employees tend to prefer work environments that offer a balance between autonomy, psychological safety, and opportunities for

development. Flexible and hybrid environments are often valued for their ability to accommodate individual needs related to schedule, lifestyle, and work-life balance. Collaborative and positive environments, characterized by open communication, mutual support, and a healthy organizational culture, also contribute to job satisfaction and employee engagement. Among employees in creative industries or younger generations, there is an increased preference for artistic, innovative, or self-expressive environments. However, the perception of an "ideal" work environment is influenced by factors such as age, professional experience, individual values, and cultural context, making preferences diverse and dynamic (Zhejing *et al*., 2022).

From an employers' perspective, preferred work environments are those that maximize productivity, facilitate team coordination, and support the organization's strategic goals. Traditional environments remain attractive in industries where control, direct supervision, or confidentiality are essential. However, more and more employers are adopting hybrid or flexible models, recognizing their benefits on staff retention and performance. Competitive environments are preferred in organizations focused on quick results, where pressure can stimulate individual excellence. In contrast, companies in innovative or human-capital-centric sectors opt for collaborative or creative environments that encourage new ideas and teamwork (Jianchun, 2024). Employers' choice of a work environment is often strategic and reflects both the specifics of the field of activity and the organizational culture promoted.

Organizations that have implemented flexible, collaborative, and employee-centered environments have seen significant improvements in human resource performance, innovation, and overall organizational effectiveness. Organizations that have achieved significant improvements in human resource performance have adopted modern work environments centered on employee needs and a balanced approach to both efficiency and well-being.

Creating work environments where employees feel safe, valued, and supported, organizations are able to boost engagement, motivation, and overall performance. At the same time, these environments positively impact long-term organizational outcomes, strengthening competitiveness and corporate reputation.

6. Conclusion

Work environments adopted by organizations have significantly evolved to adapt to both employee needs and the competitive demands of the market. The reviewed studies highlight that the work environment directly influences employee performance, job satisfaction, psychological health, and engagement levels.

Traditional, remote, and hybrid environments provide spatial and temporal flexibility, increasing autonomy and reducing stress, but also posing challenges related to communication and cohesion.

Flexible and collaborative environments stimulate innovation and creativity by facilitating social interactions and idea exchange, while competitive environments may boost individual performance but risk negatively affecting the organizational climate if poorly managed.

Furthermore, artistic and creative environments support personal expression and innovative problem-solving, essential for creative industries, whereas realistic/practical environments optimize processes and operational efficiency.

Toxic or harmful environments demonstrate the negative impact that a deficient organizational climate has on employee well-being and productivity, underscoring the need for interventions to improve working conditions. In contrast, comfortable and positive environments promote a healthy balance between professional demands and personal needs, generating a favorable impact on performance and employee retention.

Overall, the literature supports that organizational success depends not only on strategies and technologies but also on the ability to build and maintain work environments that support mental health, motivation, and employee development. Implementing appropriate work environments tailored to the organization's specifics and employees' needs is essential for maximizing human potential and achieving long-term organizational goals.

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MEDIUL DE MUNCĂ: UN FACTOR CARE INFLUENȚEAZĂ PERFORMANȚA ANGAJAȚILOR

(Rezumat)

Mediul de lucru cuprinde toți factorii care îi înconjoară pe angajați și spațiul în care își îndeplinesc sarcinile. Lucrătorii de astăzi își doresc mai mult decât un loc de muncă bine plătit; ei își doresc un loc de muncă semnificativ, cu o cultură pozitivă care promovează un echilibru între viața lor profesională și cea personală. De asemenea, ei apreciază oportunitățile de creștere personală și profesională, împreună cu un sentiment de apreciere și respect. Un mediu de lucru sănătos este esențial în orice organizație, deoarece aduce avantaje care beneficiază direct și indirect atât compania, cât și angajații acesteia. Această lucrare își propune să ofere o examinare amănunțită a diferitelor medii de lucru prezente în diferite organizații. Prin utilizarea unei abordări de cercetare exploratorie, studiul urmărește să identifice mediile de lucru pe care le preferă angajații și pe cele pe care le adoptă companiile, care au dus la îmbunătățirea performanței resurselor umane și au avut un impact pozitiv asupra organizației.