

Optimizing Physical Conditions to Enhance Professional Life Quality

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Abstract:

Physical conditions in the workplace, such as lighting, ventilation, temperature, noise, and space design, play a critical role in enhancing employees' professional quality of life. While these factors may seem simple at first glance, their profound impact is evident in their ability to either enhance or diminish employee comfort, thereby directly affecting job performance and satisfaction. It is well known that a comfortable and well-designed work environment provides employees with mental and physical well-being, reducing stress and fatigue while boosting productivity. However, the question arises: To what extent can physical conditions effectively contribute to enhancing professional quality of life? Can these improvements be the primary factor in improving employees' mental and physical comfort, thus increasing their efficiency and productivity at work? This issue opens the door for studying the impact of improving physical conditions on employee well-being and professional quality of life, contributing to answering questions regarding the role of these factors in improving the work environment and enhancing overall performance.

Keywords: Physical environment, workplace quality of life, environmental design, physical conditions, professional quality of life

1. Introduction

In the modern era, it has become evident that the work environment is not merely a place where tasks are performed, but a critical factor in determining the professional quality of life for employees. Professional quality of life is not solely dependent on financial or professional incentives, but also on factors that affect the physical and psychological comfort of employees within the workplace. Among these factors, the optimization of physical conditions stands out as a key component in improving this quality, as it includes lighting, ventilation, temperature, space design, and furniture, all of which have a significant impact on employee productivity, mental and physical health, and job satisfaction.

Numerous studies indicate that favorable physical conditions can notably contribute to enhancing employees' physical and psychological comfort. For instance, a study by Veitch & Newsham (2000) showed that natural lighting could reduce discomfort, while a study by Ulrich et al. (1991) confirmed that green spaces and proper ventilation reduce psychological stress and increase mental well-being. Although there is broad consensus on the importance of adequate physical conditions in improving professional quality of life, there remains a notable research gap in understanding the detailed relationship between physical conditions and professional quality of life, and how these conditions affect various psychological and physical dimensions of employees.

Furthermore, most studies have addressed physical factors separately, without integrating them into a unified framework that could assist organizations in comprehensive planning and organization. Additionally, many studies highlight that organizations face practical challenges such as financial and structural constraints that may hinder the implementation of necessary improvements in the work environment. Many organizations may not be able to provide ideal work environments due to the high costs that would require a comprehensive overhaul of office and workplace infrastructure. The questions that arise are: Can professional quality of life truly be improved by merely adjusting physical conditions? How can favorable physical conditions in the workplace contribute to enhancing the professional quality of life for employees? And

what challenges may organizations face in optimizing these conditions?

This paper aims to address the knowledge gap regarding how to optimize physical conditions as a means to improve professional quality of life by examining the relationship between physical factors and the dimensions of professional quality of life within the context of modern organizations. It also seeks to propose practical strategies that organizations can adopt to improve the work environment without incurring high costs.

2-Professional Quality of Life:

The concept of quality of life has been defined as "the degree to which an individual's life experience meets their desires and needs (physical and psychological)" (Vischer & Wifi, 2017). Professional quality of life is a subset of overall quality of life that is influenced by work. It is more than just job satisfaction or happiness at work; it is the broader context in which an employee evaluates their work environment.

Professional quality of life is a branch of quality of life research that has been studied independently since the late 1970s. For researchers in the field of quality of life, efforts to improve employees' professional quality of life may also impact their sense of quality of life. Like quality of life, professional quality of life is influenced by work-related goals, desires, expectations, and needs, as well as the extent to which these goals and desires are met (Vischer & Wifi, 2017). The term "professional quality of life" first appeared in 1972 during the International Labor Relations Conference in New York, where the International Council for Professional Quality of Life was established to support research in this field.

The importance of this concept grew after major companies like General Motors implemented programs to improve the work environment. The concept of professional quality of life focuses on the organized efforts adopted by human resources management to improve the work environment and meet employee needs, including involving them in decision-making and ensuring job and psychological security. Professional quality of life can be defined as a set of programs and policies aimed at developing the work environment and improving the lives of workers, thereby enhancing their satisfaction, loyalty, and the organization's goals (Hamdi, 2024, p. 14831). This definition reflects the importance of improving the

work environment and factors contributing to employees' well-being, which in turn affects their productivity and loyalty to the organization. Improving professional quality of life requires organizations to adopt comprehensive policies that address employees' psychological and physical needs.

Furthermore, investing in employee well-being not only increases personal satisfaction but also enhances overall organizational performance by reducing stress and strain, while increasing motivation and engagement. Additionally, the presence of programs aimed at improving the work environment contributes to reducing job turnover rates and providing a more stable work environment, which positively impacts achieving organizational goals more effectively.

On the other hand, professional quality of life refers to how employees experience work within the organization and the relationship they have with it. The more positive an employee's experience within the organization, the better their performance and job satisfaction. This includes various aspects such as mental well-being, job security, work environment, and opportunities for personal and professional development (Benhassine & Boukhemkhem, 2015, p. 91). The core message here is that management should care about the health and well-being of its employees because a balanced and healthy workforce contributes to improved overall organizational performance. If an employee feels comfortable and satisfied in their workplace, they will be more productive, more loyal to the organization, ultimately benefiting it. Professional quality of life refers to the level of well-being and satisfaction individuals feel in their work environment. This quality covers various aspects of professional life that directly impact employee performance and happiness. Improving professional quality of life helps boost productivity, reduce stress, and improve relationships between employees, which positively impacts workflow.

2-1-Key Indicators of Professional Quality of Life:

- Includes the extent to which an employee is satisfied with their work, whether in terms of assigned tasks, salary, or professional development opportunities.
- Relates to how work is organized, the distribution of tasks, available resources, and the effectiveness of communication between employees and management.

- Refers to the employee's ability to reconcile work demands with personal life needs, including flexible working hours and vacation policies.
- The availability of opportunities for employees to improve their skills and develop themselves, whether through training courses, seminars, or promotion opportunities.
- Reflects the strength of relationships within the work environment, and how employees interact with each other and with the management.

"Environment" in person-environment fit research can take many forms, with organizational environments being among the most important. Person-environment fit occurs when individuals align with the characteristics of their work environment. It is widely accepted that individuals with specific needs, values, goals, capabilities, and personalities interact differently with organizational environments that have distinct demands, resources, values, and cultures. Since being introduced in the mid-1970s as a standalone theory, the idea of person-environment fit has become a solid research framework appearing in various disciplines, from applied psychology to human resources management.

From the employee's perspective, fit is a rewarding experience, especially when multiple types of fit (e.g., person-job and person-organization fit) occur simultaneously. However, from an organizational or societal perspective, the benefits of high fit must be weighed against potential costs, such as favoritism, conservatism, and homogeneity, which may lead to organizational stagnation and perpetuate inequality (De Cooman & Vleugels, 2022). This theory emphasizes how alignment between the individual and their environment leads to greater satisfaction and higher productivity. For example, if the work environment meets the employee's needs—such as comfortable workspace, suitable lighting, and proper temperature—it leads to a sense of comfort and increases work efficiency, enhancing the quality of work life.

• **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** : Self-Determination Theory is a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation and personality. It focuses on how individuals interact with and depend on their social environment. SDT

identifies intrinsic motivation and various types of extrinsic motivation and explains how these affect situational responses, as well as social, cognitive, and personality development. The theory centers around three basic psychological needs—**autonomy, competence, and relatedness**—which are essential for self-motivation, well-being, and personal growth. It also highlights the critical influence of social and cultural contexts in either facilitating or thwarting these psychological needs, self-directed behavior, performance, and overall well-being (Legault, 2017). According to SDT, physical conditions such as adjustable desks or good lighting can enhance autonomy and control over the environment, which increases employee motivation, a sense of achievement, and ultimately improves the quality of work life.

• **Energy and Effort Theory** : Strong individuals are often more successful in pursuing their goals, as many studies have shown. But does this mean they exert more effort? Current power theories do not offer a clear answer. Based on recent findings in power literature and integrating motivation psychology and neuroscience, this theory—"Effort Investment Theory of Power"—suggests that power determines effort investment based on the **principle of resource conservation**. That is, power influences how people assess a goal's importance and feasibility, and this evaluation affects how much effort they invest. The theory also incorporates the **time dimension**, highlighting how experiences during goal pursuit (like success or failure signals) and prior experiences (like past tasks or goals) shape judgments of importance and feasibility. It discusses the consequences of power on effort investment in terms of performance and efficiency, offering insights for both theory and practice, and directions for future research (Schmid, 2022).

The theory states that an employee's performance depends on the energy invested, which is influenced by the surrounding physical environment. Good lighting, moderate temperature, and a quiet atmosphere enhance focus and efficiency. In contrast, uncomfortable conditions lead to energy waste, reducing productivity and negatively impacting quality of work life.

• **Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model)** : This model was introduced about fifteen years ago to explain **job burnout**, a chronic state of work-related psychological stress marked by exhaustion, mental distancing (e.g., cynicism), and reduced

professional efficacy. The model later expanded to include **work engagement**, a positive and fulfilling psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. According to the model, every job includes **demands** and **resources**. Job demands are aspects that require sustained mental or physical effort and are thus associated with physiological and psychological costs—such as workload, conflict, and job insecurity. In contrast, **job resources** are the “good things” in the job, such as support from others (to achieve work goals), autonomy (to reduce demands), and performance feedback (to stimulate learning) (Schaufeli, 2017).

This theory highlights the balance between job demands (like stress and challenges) and available resources (such as social support and a proper physical environment). If the work environment lacks necessary resources—like ergonomic furniture or good ventilation—employees may feel more stressed. Conversely, when comfortable conditions are provided, employees feel supported, reducing stress and enhancing task performance.

Psychological and managerial theories confirm that **physical conditions** such as air quality, temperature, lighting, furniture, and noise levels have a **direct impact** on employees' physical and mental well-being. Improving these conditions helps boost motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction, thereby enhancing the overall quality of professional life.

5- Previous Studies on the Relationship Between Physical Conditions and Quality of Work Life

Here are some studies that have focused on examining the impact of physical conditions on the quality of work life, which support the theories discussed earlier:

- **The Impact of Office Design on Business Performance** :This study emphasized the significant effect of office design and physical conditions on productivity and job performance. It found that a work environment with good lighting, proper ventilation, and comfortable furniture enhances employee concentration and reduces stress, leading to increased productivity. A comfortable and motivating work environment through improved office design, lighting, and a pleasant space

contributes to employee performance and improves the quality of work life (Hameed & Amjad, 2009).

• **Effects of Environmental Factors on Job Performance** :This study explored the effects of environmental factors (such as lighting, temperature, and ventilation) on job performance. The study showed that improvements in physical conditions like natural ventilation, better lighting (natural or artificial), and maintaining suitable temperatures lead to better job performance and reduced stress. A healthy work environment with good physical conditions helps improve concentration, creativity, and teamwork, thus enhancing job effectiveness and performance quality (Kahya et al., 2019, p. 2).

• **The Impact of Indoor Environmental Quality on Worker Performance** :This study examined the impact of indoor environmental quality (such as ventilation, lighting, and temperature) on employee performance. Data from various offices were collected to evaluate how improvements in these factors affected health and productivity. The study indicated that enhancing indoor environmental quality helped improve employees' physical and psychological comfort, which positively impacted their performance. Additionally, employees working in better environments had lower rates of fatigue and illness (Kang et al., 2017).

• **Workplace Design and its Impact on Employee Well-being**:This study focused on the relationship between workplace design and employee health and well-being. It examined factors such as open spaces, types of furniture, and lighting distribution, and how these affected employee comfort and productivity. The study found that providing a flexible work environment with comfortable furniture and natural lighting leads to employee motivation and improves overall well-being, boosting morale and job satisfaction (Veitch, 2011).

• **Work Environmental Factors and its Impact on Employee Productivity: The Mediating Role of Employee Commitment** :This study confirmed the vital relationship between the work environment and employee productivity, especially in academic institutions. Research showed that a well-designed and supportive workplace significantly improves employee commitment and performance, leading to better outcomes for organizations. The results revealed the importance of creating an environment that encourages engagement and reduces stress,

thus enhancing productivity and overall job satisfaction (Pimpong, 1991).

• **Physical Office Environment and Employee Productivity** :This paper highlighted the substantial impact of the physical work environment on employee productivity and well-being. It indicated that a well-designed and comfortable work environment is not only necessary to enhance employee satisfaction but also improves efficiency, reduces absenteeism, and promotes overall health. The study, based on an analytical review of existing literature, reinforced the importance of the physical environment in influencing work outcomes, particularly in terms of focus, motivation, and job satisfaction. The findings showed that employers play a key role in shaping the physical environment, which in turn affects employee engagement with their work. A suitable and comfortable work environment positively contributes to employee comfort, reduces stress, and fosters a productive atmosphere, benefiting the organization by improving performance and overall organizational success (Sapiah Abdul Hamed et al., 2023).

• **The Effect of Workplace Design on Quality of Life at Work** : Quality of life research has developed various methods to measure how well human needs and desires are met. This study explores how meeting environmental needs in workplaces contributes to better office space design and improves workers' quality of life. One way to evaluate the environmental quality is by measuring functional comfort, or how much workplace features help employees achieve their work or make tasks easier. A non-functional workplace environment causes stress and reduces quality of life at work (Vischer & Wifi, 2017).

• **Impact of Noise on Employee Performance and Health** :This study examined the effect of noise in the workplace on employees' health and job performance. The study confirmed that high noise levels negatively affect performance and concentration, increasing stress and mental strain. A lower noise level and a comfortable level of silence enhance employees' ability to concentrate and achieve better work results (Nassiri et al., 2013).

Previous studies strongly confirm that physical conditions in the workplace, such as lighting, ventilation, temperature, furniture, and noise levels, directly impact employees' physical and mental well-being. Improving these conditions contributes to increased

productivity, better mental health, and job satisfaction, which in turn positively affects the quality of work life.

On the other hand, Some literature highlights several key areas in which workplace design can impact the quality of work life (Veitch, 2011):

- **Natural Light Exposure and Appropriate Artificial Lighting :** Exposure to natural light and suitable artificial lighting helps regulate the biological clock, which affects mood, sleep quality, and overall health. Bright environments can make employees feel more energetic and focused, while inadequate lighting may lead to fatigue and mood disorders.
- **Workplace Design and Employee Interaction:**The design of the workplace affects how employees interact with each other. Open spaces, collaborative areas, and private spaces can influence social behavior and how employees feel about their work environment. Healthy social interaction is linked to better psychological outcomes, whereas lack of interaction can lead to isolation and stress.
- **Aesthetics in the Workplace:**Aesthetic elements in the workplace, such as colors, artwork, and the overall atmosphere, influence mood and physical well-being. Positive aesthetic experiences can improve job satisfaction, while a dull or unattractive environment may have the opposite effect.
- **Incorporating Nature in the Workplace:**Including elements of nature, such as plants, green spaces, or natural views, can help employees recover from stressful situations and improve their clarity of thought. Studies have shown that nature helps reduce stress and promotes relaxation, even in small amounts.
- **Control Over the Work Environment:**Allowing employees to control aspects of their environment, such as lighting, temperature, or noise levels, can reduce feelings of discomfort and stress. Privacy is also essential; employees need spaces where they can focus or take breaks without feeling overwhelmed or distracted.

By integrating these elements into workplace design, employers can create environments that promote mental health, support the prevention of psychological problems, and assist employees in returning to work after mental health-related absences. Design choices made by employers and facility managers should be

thoughtful and considerate of the diverse needs of employees, taking into account their physical and mental well-being.

6-Practical Strategies for Enhancing Quality of Life through Physical Environment Optimization

Improving the quality of work life by optimizing physical conditions in the workplace requires implementing strategies that create a comfortable and safe environment, promoting employee well-being and boosting productivity. Below are some strategies that can be applied to enhance physical conditions in the workplace:

• Improving Lighting

- Whenever possible, provide natural light sources inside the workplace, such as large windows or glass surfaces to allow natural light in. Natural light enhances mood and mental comfort.
- When natural light is unavailable, appropriate artificial lighting should be used, such as energy-efficient lamps that ensure even light distribution while reducing glare and disturbing shadows.
- Lighting should be adjustable according to employees' activities in their workspaces (Alnassary et al., 2022).

• Balancing Temperature and Ventilation

- The workplace temperature should be comfortable for employees (usually between 20-24°C). Heating and cooling systems should be used to adjust the temperature according to the weather and season.
- Ensure good airflow in the building through effective ventilation systems, especially in enclosed spaces such as offices. Air purifiers can be used to reduce pollutants and improve air quality.

• Improving Space Distribution and Work Environment Organization

- Distribute offices and spaces to ensure easy movement between areas, providing shared spaces like meeting rooms and recreational areas for employee relaxation.
- Choose the type of office based on the nature of the work. Open offices can foster social communication, while closed offices provide a quieter environment for focus.
- Provide adequate spacing between desks and other areas to avoid overcrowding and ensure a sense of privacy.

• Improving Furniture and Equipment

- Provide comfortable and suitable furniture for employees, such as chairs that support the back and adjustable desks to accommodate different physical needs.
- Provide adjustable desks (height-adjustable desks) that allow employees to switch between sitting and standing positions, reducing back pain and fatigue.
- Ensure that modern and efficient office equipment is available, such as fast computers, printers, and other tools that facilitate task completion.

• Monitoring and Reducing Noise Levels

- Take steps to reduce noise in the workplace, such as using soundproofing materials on walls and installing sound-absorbing flooring. Quiet areas can also be designated for tasks that require high concentration (Alouti, 2016, p. 132).
- Calm music or ambient sounds can be used to enhance the work environment, provided they are suitable for the nature of the work.

• Ensuring Safety and Health Standards

- Ensure that accident prevention measures are in place, such as alarm systems, emergency exits, and first aid equipment.
- Provide safe workspaces equipped with fire extinguishers, and clear evacuation systems.
- Ensure that the work environment complies with health standards in terms of cleanliness and providing necessary tools to maintain employee health.

• Using Appropriate Colors and Decoration

- Use calming colors such as blue, green, and gray in the workplace, as these colors enhance relaxation and comfort. Bright colors like orange or yellow can be used in shared spaces to stimulate activity and energy.
- Introducing natural elements like indoor plants or flowers can improve mental and physical well-being.

• Achieving Flexibility in the Work Environment

- Offer flexible working hours that allow employees to manage their work schedules according to their personal and professional needs.

- Provide the option for remote work or a hybrid work system that allows employees to alternate between working in the office and from home.
- **Enhancing Social Interaction and Engagement**
 - Provide shared spaces such as cafeterias or break rooms where employees can engage socially, helping to improve relationships between colleagues.
 - Organize group recreational activities to enhance social bonds and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Periodic Evaluation of Physical Conditions**
 - Conduct periodic employee surveys to understand their needs and expectations regarding physical conditions.
 - In response to employee feedback, make ongoing adjustments to the work environment to ensure continuous improvement.

Achieving quality of work life requires creating a suitable physical environment through the application of diverse strategies in lighting, temperature, ventilation, spatial design, furniture, and noise levels. By improving these aspects, employers can enhance the mental and physical comfort of employees, contributing to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

7-Challenges in Enhancing Quality of Life through Physical Environment Optimization

Achieving quality of work life through improving physical conditions in the workplace requires overcoming several challenges that organizations may face when applying strategies for enhancing the work environment. These challenges include economic, technical, cultural, and practical factors.

- Implementing modifications to the work environment, such as purchasing comfortable furniture, improving lighting, and installing advanced ventilation systems, may require a significant financial investment. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may find it difficult to bear these costs.
- Companies may need to balance improving the work environment with other requirements such as salaries, training, and technology. Sometimes, physical condition improvements are neglected in favor of other priorities.
- Some organizations may face difficulty in integrating modern technological systems such as lighting control

systems, smart ventilation, or sustainable environmental technologies into the workplace.

- Equipment and systems that may be suitable for today's workplace needs may become outdated as technology advances, requiring continuous updates and upgrades.
- Employee needs vary based on local culture and social customs. Some physical adjustments may not align with the traditions and practices of certain locations. For instance, some employees may prefer quiet environments, while others may thrive in open spaces with social interaction.
- Some employees may resist changes in the workplace due to attachment to routines or a general reluctance to change. This may hinder the improvement of physical conditions. Employees may also struggle to adapt to open spaces or modifications in office design.
- In some cases, office spaces may be small or inflexible, preventing the implementation of physical adjustments that enhance comfort, such as better ventilation or more efficient space distribution.
- Some workplaces may have outdated or inappropriate designs for modern work practices. Changing the design or adapting spaces may require substantial time and effort.
- In some locations, climatic conditions may be a barrier. For example, in hot areas, maintaining a comfortable office temperature can be challenging due to the high costs of air conditioning systems.
- High levels of external noise (such as from busy streets or nearby factories) can negatively impact the quality of work life. It is sometimes difficult to control this factor, especially if the offices are located in high-traffic areas.
- Organizations may face challenges in ensuring compliance with health and safety standards, such as ensuring the work environment is free from potential hazards (e.g., pollution, toxic materials, or unsafe equipment).
- Neglecting occupational safety, such as inadequate ventilation or unsafe equipment, may lead to health issues among employees. Some companies may find it difficult to invest time and resources in ensuring a safe environment.

- The work environment may need to adapt to new work models such as remote or hybrid work. Managing these models may require updates to office structure and resource distribution.
- Occupational health and safety laws vary from country to country, and companies must comply with them when making changes to the work environment. Adhering to these regulations can require substantial time and effort.
- Some organizations may face regulatory pressure and continuous reviews from health authorities or regulatory bodies regarding the physical conditions of the workplace.
- Organizations may sometimes face economic crises that affect their ability to invest in improving the work environment. Economic downturns may push the priority of improving physical conditions down in favor of other priorities.

Achieving quality of work life through good physical conditions requires overcoming many challenges, from financial and technical obstacles to cultural and operational issues. While improving physical conditions can have a significant positive impact on employee well-being and productivity, implementing these improvements faces numerous hurdles that require flexible and realistic strategic plans to overcome.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that improving the physical conditions in the workplace is one of the key factors that significantly affect the quality of professional life. Good physical conditions, such as proper lighting, suitable temperature, good ventilation, and providing comfortable and safe workspaces, contribute to enhancing productivity and increasing job satisfaction among employees. Improving these conditions not only provides a comfortable environment but also promotes the physical and mental health of employees, which leads to increased efficiency and creativity in performing their tasks.

A good work environment is an indicator of an organization's commitment to the well-being of its employees, which positively impacts its success and growth. Therefore, it is crucial for companies and institutions to continue investing resources in improving these conditions to ensure a balanced and healthy professional life, benefiting not only the employees but also society as a whole.

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