

## **The Impact of Physical Work Environment on Job Satisfaction: The Perceptions of the Clerical Staff at the University of Kelaniya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The workforce within the service sector is rapidly increasing. Service sector employees spend much of their time in indoor office environments, which affect employee performance and employee wellbeing. Nonetheless, little empirical evidence is available from Sri Lanka to demonstrate the link between the physical work environments and job satisfaction. The present study is conducted to identify the different elements of the workspace and their association with job satisfaction. The environment comfort model postulates that environmental comfort can be conceptualised to include the three aspects, physical, functional and psychological comfort. Physical comfort is the minimal level of comfort required, followed by functional and psychological comfort in affecting employee satisfaction. Thus, the model is hierarchical in nature. Demographic characteristics of employees are expected to affect perceptions of comfort. The investigation was carried out through two studies, using qualitative and quantitative approaches. University of Kelaniya was selected as the study site and clerical and allied grade employees were selected as the population for both studies. Focus group discussions were used for data collection and relative levels of comfort for the three aspects were assessed. The highest satisfaction was with physical comfort, followed by functional and psychological comfort, which is consistent with the hierarchical nature of the environmental comfort model. The study used stratified random sampling. Demographic characteristics affected experiences of comfort; specifically, results showed male respondents reported higher environmental satisfaction than female employees. The results indicated a significant relationship between physical work environment and job satisfaction, but not with functional and psychological comfort. The findings were generally supportive of the environmental comfort model. The results support the hierarchical nature of environmental comfort and the significance of physical comfort in the job satisfaction of employees. The study highlights through qualitative data that all three levels of comfort are nevertheless important. The implications of the findings to managerial applications are also discussed.

**Key words:** *Job Satisfaction, Physical Work Environment, Comfort Factors, Sustainable Buildings, Environment Comfort*

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