

The Influence of Organizational Aesthetics on Work life Quality in Employees

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role of organizational aesthetics on work life quality in employees. The research approach of this study was a qualitative approach and the grounded theory method has been used. In the grounded theory, the first step is coding of the concepts that underlie the foundation of the theory. The second is the axial coding step. At this stage, the descriptive codes are combined according to the common characteristics of the concepts below. The third is the selective coding step. At this stage, one category is known as the core category and the other categories are linked to that, and eventually, the data-

based theory is created. The qualitative research software, NVivo10 was used to sort, arrange and classify data. The statistical population of this research is the employees of an insurance organization of Kerman city, Iran. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The sampling method is theoretical sampling method. The results showed that the organization aesthetics strategy can improve the work life quality in employees.

Keywords: *Aesthetics, Organizational Aesthetics, work life quality*

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Introduction

The concept of beauty has long been a topic of discussion in various fields of research, including philosophy, aesthetics, history, and sociology. These fields have significantly contributed to the reform and logic of aesthetics, and historically, the concept of beauty has evolved and changed over time (Ivanaj and et al, 2018). Aesthetic thinking in everyday life can take on a completely different meaning in the organization. Theorists have studied the aesthetic approach in many organizational phenomena (Hamman, 2008). In organizational studies, aesthetics is used as a sensory tool in truth and decision making. The field is now emerging as a new field of study and requires further research to extract paradigms in organizational science (Bjerke & Ind, 2015). Organizational aesthetics is a new proposition in organizational philosophy, and it gives meaning to the identity of the organization (Witz et al, 2003). The aesthetic debate in the organizational studies was widely discussed when researchers at the organization were looking for alternative ways to build the knowledge structure and they might have faced considerable difficulty in presenting this topic in the organization (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Aesthetics is always considered as one of the important elements of the organization's physical environment (War Hurst et al, 2000). The setting of the physical environment deals with aesthetics on employee behaviors, their behavioral interactions, interest in jobs, interpersonal cooperation, as well as in the creation of talent and creativity (Dangmei, 2017). Even inactive organizations in the art field can benefit from applying the organizational aesthetic approach (Bathurst, 2007). Organizational aesthetics consists of two parts: hardware and software aspects. The hardware part of aesthetics of the organization includes production design and physical environment of the workplace and office (Witz et al, 2003). The hardware part of the organization's aesthetics is completed by the software part. This part includes a set of behaviors that are observed when employees enter and leave the organization. Each of its members is to express feelings or thoughts (facial expressions and eye contact). In

other words, in the general literature of business, non-verbal communication plays an important role in negotiations and interactions between members of the organization (Witz et al, 2003). Organizational aesthetics is among the topics that affect the economy of countries. Economics is a better way to live. Everyone wants to have a better life using more goods and services than in the past. People are always looking for a way to increase the production of their facilities, services and resources (Chowdhury, 2019). The main idea of economics is that economic resources are limited, but human demands are unlimited, so to get the most out of their desires, people always need to use the best economic way to use these limited resources (Chowdhury, 2019). It is important that we identify and develop issues related to aesthetics in modern management and economics based on a paradigm and cognitive thinking (Taylor, 2000). The development of aesthetics in economics in everyday life has greatly contributed to the development of the concept of aesthetics at work (Witz et al, 2003). On the other hand, in the literature of economic development, human capital is considered as an important factor in economic growth (Ogundari & Awokuse, 2018). Economic growth is the ultimate goal of any country's economic policy to increase people's welfare (Guptha & Rao, 2018). Schultz and Becker believe that human capital is a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that people learn over time through education, work experience, medical care and immigration. Therefore, the realm of human capital includes health, education and experience (Ogundari & Awokuse, 2018). Attention to the role of man in economic development is historically from the beginning of economics in the framework of classical Adam Smith (Mohammadi et al, 2018). Gary Becker believes that the human factor in production is the most important phenomenon affecting economic growth (Mohammadi et al, 2018). Therefore, paying attention to the situation of human factor is an important issue. The strong development of human resources is an important factor for a country to achieve superiority over another. It is also an important factor for economic performance.

Emerging countries depend on the ability of their human capital to achieve the largest share in global markets) Appiah et al, 2019). The quality of work life is one of the topics in the field of organization that overshadows human capital. Most of the recent studies conducted by different researchers indicate that the quality of work life is the most important priority of an organization and should be given the importance it merits)Hassan & Lapok, 2014). Recently, the concept of quality of work life has been proposed as an important area in human resource management. Ahmad (2013) said that today, the quality of work life in the world has attracted a lot of attention. In modern societies, people spend a third of their lives in the workplace. Therefore, the quality of work life is an important and prominent issue (Ramawickrama et al, 2017). Nowadays, in dynamic business environments, managing and organizing has become a very complex job. Therefore, organizations have to attract and retain a competitive workforce so that they can compete with increasing competition. Therefore, it should be noted that paying attention to the quality of work life of employees is an important tool to increase employee morale and their ability to improve productivity)Shrestha et al, 2019). In addition to increasing productivity, the quality of work life leads to better responsiveness, communication, improved employee morale, better work-life balance and lower job stress in employees)Shrestha et al., 2019). Stress is an important and inevitable part of life (Sing, 2019). Erkutlu and Chafr (2016) believed that the work environment is a potential source of stress because so much time is spent in it) Sing, 2019). The work life quality is a predictable outcome of the human resource management theory and long-term development. The work life quality is related to issues including family discussions, special economic indices, employment, living conditions, interpersonal relationships, children's education, physical and mental emotions. Some research has been conducted in this field since 1990 (Tian, 2020). The work life quality is a subjective perception of the optimal physical conditions of the employees in the workplace (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012). The main focus of the

organization's aesthetic science and quality of work life is the importance and attention to human capital and human resources. Many emerging and developing countries have experienced a tremendous impact on economic growth by applying the science of aesthetics and paying attention to the quality of work life. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the organization's aesthetic influence on the quality of work life of employees based on Ground

Theory.Literature review

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of Western philosophy that expresses our understanding, perception and experience of objects. We describe objects with words such as beautiful, ugly, delicate, hateful, etc. Growing evidence in Cognitive Psychology and Neurology reveals that aesthetics relates to our forms and visualization of objects. Aesthetics is a model of cognition and has a special place in cooperation and responsibility (Ramírez, 2005). In particular, aesthetics covers all aspects such as visual design, colors, furniture, and the type of materials used in the workplace. Aesthetics is often a form of human knowledge based on sensory perceptions, which are obtained through the five main senses - auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory, and taste (Dangmei, 2017).

Organizational Aesthetics

Aesthetic thinking in everyday life can find meaning in a completely different way in an organization. Theorists have studied aesthetic attitudes in many organizational situations. Bart (2007) stated that aesthetic experiences are conscious, immediate, vivid, amazing and timely experiences to expand the horizon of thought. Emphasizing the quality of relationships based on experience can enhance the characteristics of complex social problems. Strati, based on his studies in the organization, stated: Although the organization is in fact a social and social structure, it encompasses exclusively the cognition that comes from all human senses (Hamman, 2008). Organizational Aesthetics was developed by Strati (1999), de Montoux, (2002) and Thyssen (2003). But it is still in the early stages of

emergence and the formation of new ideas and perspectives. Although aesthetics of the organization is a new field of study, it seems that its main roots go back to the philosophical discussions of phenomenological phenomena (Bjerke & Ind, 2015). Organizational aesthetics can be used to analyze issues such as images related to organizational identity, the physical space of the organization and the beauty of social organizations, and how the organization's management can use art form and content (Bjerke & Ind, 2015).

Work life quality

Work life quality is a philosophy consisting of a set of principles. In this philosophy, human resources are the most important factor in the organization. They are trustworthy, responsible and they should be treated with dignity and respect (Rose et al, 2006). The elements related to the quality of individual lives in the organization include employee tasks in the organization, the physical work environment, the social environment within the organization, the officialism, and the relationships between life inside the organization and outside the organization (Rose et al, 2006). Work life quality is a general sense of well-being that is strongly linked to the perception of one's health and ability to perform the duties. On a large scale, work life quality can be seen in all aspects of life affecting the quality of physical life and mental health of individuals directly (Bumin et al, 2008). The field of quality of life is not limited to job satisfaction in employees, but also to living outside the work environment, including family, activities and social needs (Pio & Tampi, 2018). Quality of work life means that the organization satisfies the employee by

meeting personal and work needs and involving the employee in organizational goals. As a result, job satisfaction reduces the desire to leave the service and reduces job stress (Huang et al, 2020). The quality of work life reflects a level of freedom for employees to ensure that job satisfaction matches their needs and interests. In other words, the quality of work life is a program to increase employee satisfaction with their work environment. This leads them to becoming productive (Kara et al, 2018). Hackman and Oldhams (1980) stated that the conceptual element in the quality of work life is communication between the work environment and personal needs of employees (Hassan & lapok, 2014). Erdem 2014 believes that the quality of work life is physical and mental well-being in the workplace (Badawy et al, 2018).

Research Questions

In this study, researchers investigated the impact of the role of aesthetics on the work life quality of employees in an insurance organization. Researchers sought to find out whether aesthetics affects work life quality of employees. Which organizational aesthetics affect the work life quality of employees?

Methodology

The research methodology of this study is grounded theory. The feature of the grounded theory method is the formation of a theory based on the data collected during the study. The main advantage of this research method is that it reflects the participants' real perception of the phenomenon under study (Sebasto & Walker, 2005).

Steps of grounded theory

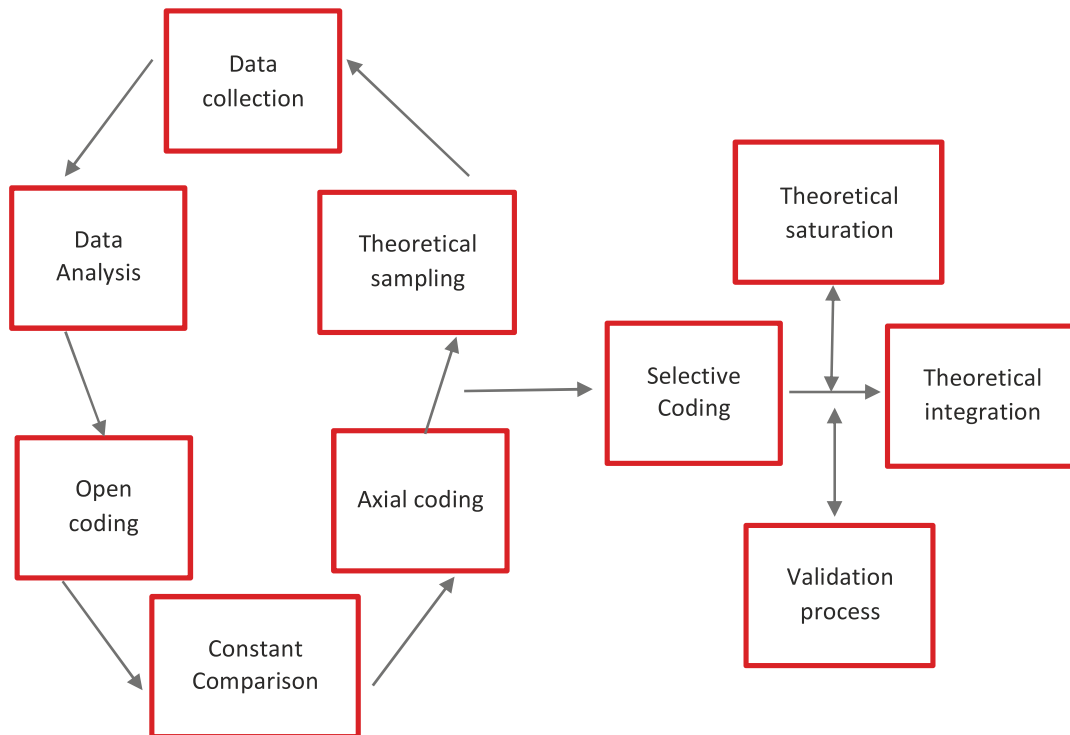


Figure 1: Steps of grounded theory based on Strauss (Roman et al, 2017)

Reasons for the importance of grounded theory in qualitative research

1. This theory identifies and describes social-centered processes.
2. Concepts and categories are derived from data that are identified by the researcher.
3. This theory is extracted from the data
4. This theory focuses on process and change (Gehrels, 2013).

Population and Sampling

The statistical population of this study is employees of an insurance organization of Kerman city, Iran. In most of the research methods, sampling is one of the first steps of the research. In this method, the determination of the sample is done simultaneously with other aspects of the research. This feature is related to the general logic of this research. Such a process provides a specific type of sampling that is known as theoretical sampling (Roman et al, 2017). In

this study, knowledgeable individuals were selected to participate in the research. Theoretical sampling continues until the categories reach theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation means that no more new data related to the subject of research is created. Interviews were conducted with 26 employees of the insurance organization of Kerman city, Iran; this provided 26 theoretical saturations after which the researcher stopped conducting further interviews.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool is a semi-structured interview. Charmaz (2006) emphasized that an interview is a good tool to gather information in the grounded theory. The interviewee shares his / her feelings, beliefs, motivations and interests with the interviewer (Gehrels, 2013).

Results

The grounded theory has a fixed way of analyzing data. The data analysis process has three coding steps. The coding steps in the grounded theory include open, axial, and selective coding. In open coding, the notes made by the researcher obtained from the interviews are transformed into smaller pieces called concepts (Newman, 2012). Concepts are meaningful units with specific patterns, including individual thoughts, feelings and actions (Alvinus et al, 2016). The qualitative research software, NVivo10 was used to sort, arrange and classify data. In the axial coding stage, the concepts are categorized. In this step, we categorize the concepts created from the data (Howard-Payne, 2016). These categories include: 1. Causal conditions (causes of the main phenomenon); 2. Action-reaction strategy; 3. Intervening conditions (specific contextual conditions affecting strategy); 4. Contextual conditions (general conditions affecting strategies) and consequence (by the use of strategy) (Najafi et al, 2016). In the third stage, one category is known as the nuclear category and the other categories are linked to that, and eventually, the data-based theory is created (Newman, 2012).

Central category

The main category in the aesthetic model of the organization is the desire for beauty among employees.

Causal conditions

Beauty emotion, beauty need, beauty perception, beauty experience as the individual components, group norm as a group component and organizational justice, organizational spirituality, organizational culture as the organizational components were obtained.

Strategy

Organizational Aesthetics is the key strategy to control, manage, interfere and respond to the aesthetics desire of employees.

Intervening conditions

The body image and the appearance characteristics were identified as specific conditions affecting organizational aesthetics.

Contextual conditions

Physical environment of the organization was identified as the general conditions affecting organizational aesthetics.

Consequence

Improving employees' work life quality.

Organizational Aesthetics Model

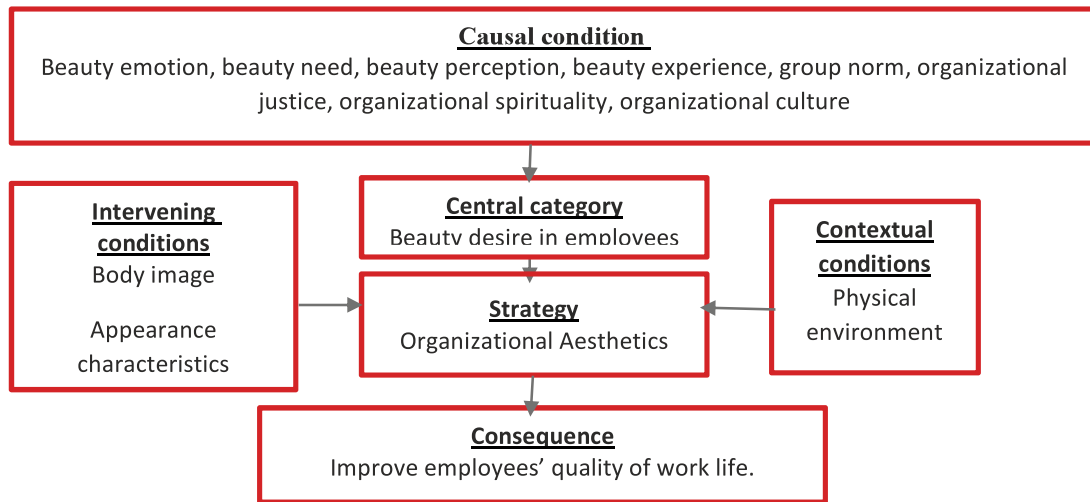


Figure 2: Organizational Aesthetics Model (Sabbagh Molahossini et al, 2019)

Discussion

Based on the obtained research results, it was found that the central category in the model is the beauty desire. Beauty is one of the tendencies among human beings. Among them, the tendency for beauty existed in the abstract concept, either in the meaning of creating beauty which is considered as art or in the meaning of loving beauty. Humans usually attempt to dress well to look attractive; this is a universal phenomenon. Human beings love the beauty of nature, and wherever they see clear water, sea, pool, etc. they enjoy watching. Religious teachings have emphasized that the human soul belongs to the divine Nature and is dependent upon it. So, God's beauty features as the best divine sign for humans (God is beautiful). Hence, not only is the world a manifestation of God's beauty, it also reflects material and spiritual beauty. This helps the human soul feel relaxed and comfortable in the material world (Shukri, 2010). Beauty tendency is an inherent sense among employees. Beauty emotion, beauty need, beauty perception, beauty experience, group norms, organizational justice, organizational spirituality, and organizational culture are conditions in the

organization that influence this desire. Beauty is a key element in the design of goods and services; for example, AEG products, London transport buses and Coca cola soft drinks are based on beauty principles. The Bank of Midland in London is a good example. The bank's culture has changed based on the importance of employees' feelings (Witz et al, 2003). Organizational Aesthetics is the most unique strategy to control and satisfy this desire in the employees. Recent studies have provided an aesthetic approach to understand the work and experiences of organizational life (Mack, 2013). Organizational aesthetics is a form of knowledge based on the multi-sense experiences and judgments of aesthetics, or both, obtained by the researchers and the organizational members in organizational studies (Mack, 2013). Two types of conditions affect organizational aesthetics strategy. First, intervening conditions contain the Body Image: A mental image of our body affects our cognitive function, mental health, and physical health. Much research has been done on the body image in the field of clinical psychology (Rudd, 2001). Body image is related to how people (whether male or female) understand and feel their body, and how their body image changes over the

course of their lives (Şanlıer et al, 2016). Biswas (2009) pointed out that in the service delivery process, employees can change their face shape, adjust their voice and smile, and make the customer satisfied. Witz et al (2017) also suggested that employees can attract customers towards the organization by changing their voice and clothes (Tsaor & Tang, 2013). Appearance and Staff Characteristics are the second specific conditions influencing the organizational aesthetics strategy. When employees are satisfied with their appearance, they provide good service to customers. The employee's neat and clean appearance has a significant impact on maintaining their spirit (Tux et al, 2011). Weissing (2006) stated that employees should spend more time on their appearance in the workplace (beyond the regular working hours). They should improve their personal skills related to job beauty and present a good picture of the organization while serving customers. They should strive to look attractive in the workplace (Tsaor & Tang, 2013). According to Waring (2005), the cabin crew should be able to control the details of their appearance, body and tone of voice. Employees should plan and think about wearing appropriate clothes in the workplace (Tsaor & Tang, 2013). The physical environment of the organization is one of the intervening conditions or general conditions affecting the organizational aesthetics strategy. The physical environment in an organization includes all material objects, organization building, furniture, equipment, and environmental conditions such as light and air quality inside the organization. The physical environment of the organization plays an important role in facilitating or limiting the operations of the organization. Everything, even the efficient production of a computerized piece, is affected by the design and arrangement of the machines. Generally, the appropriate selection and arrangement of suitable things is one of the challenging tasks that managers face (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). In 1965, a study focused on the role of designing the physical environment of the workplace. When your desk, shelves, and office walls are covered in scrolls, images, and other decorative effects, this space is not beautiful. The office space should be neat

(Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). Finally, according to the research participants, improving the work life quality was identified as a consequence of organizational aesthetics strategy. Work life quality among employees is important because it requires active participation of the employees in many programs. Having high quality work life will lead to better welfare for employees and the community. This factor is one of the most important issues in any organization. When an organization presents the work life quality to employees, it is a good indicator to enhance its image to attract and retain its employees. Also, organizations must be able to provide a workplace that is comfortable for employees. Ultimately, the work life quality makes employees more committed to the organization (Noor & Abdullah, 2012).

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the role of organizational aesthetics on work life quality in employees. The results showed that organizational aesthetics as a unique strategy improves the quality of work life among employees. Since organizational aesthetics occurs based on the human innate tendency to beauty, according to Wisnom and Gallagher (2018), managers need to find ways to make organizational life enjoyable for employees (Wisnom & Gallagher, 2018). According to the research results, the organizational aesthetics strategy is one of the effective ways to make work life enjoyable for employees. Also, based on other research results, body image, physical characteristics of employees and physical environment of the organization influence the quality of work life of employees. Galbraith (1959) believes that work life quality refers to the comfort of people in the workplace and the spiritual joy or satisfaction of work and life (Tian, 2020). The researchers working in the field of environmental psychology suggested that giving employees the opportunity to control and manage their work conditions including the environmental conditions (light, temperature, sound, air quality of the work place) as well as the ability to set the equipment, tools, office furniture based on their needs (for example, high and adjustable chairs) leads

to job satisfaction and performance enhancement (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). When employees have control over their workspace and can make adjustments based on their specific needs, their needs will be met. Paciuk (1990) believes that when employees can control the heating elements of their workplace, it increases their satisfaction. The perceived quality of the workplace beauty, generally including offices, office buildings, leisure, chairs, desks, computers, and tools, have a significant impact on the wellbeing and work life quality resulting in lower work stress and absence (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). According to interviewees, the aesthetic phenomenon of the organization creates a safe and healthy environment, develops human capabilities and provides opportunities for continued growth and security. Review of literature on work life quality revealed that Walton (1973) had conducted the most research studies on this factor. He identified eight components for work life quality: (1) adequate and fair pay, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capabilities, (4) opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social integration in the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and total life space and (8) social relevance of work life. Walton (1973) points out that the work life quality emphasizes the human values and social responsibility (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012). Greenhas (1987) suggested that work life quality is related to employees' job satisfaction and the behaviors associated with the work. When employees experience pleasure in the organization, they feel satisfied. It also influences their commitment to the day-to-day work of the organization. Also, the work life quality has a significant and considerable impact on the community.

A happy worker experiences positive feelings, which are transferred to the family and society. Quality of life is important for today's stressful times. The development of work life quality goes back to the basic management theories. In the early management theories such as Taylor's theory of scientific management and Elton Mayo's theory of human relations, the human being plays a determining role in the performance of the organization. Some of these studies focused on the relationship between work life quality and customer satisfaction; others focused on the relationship between work life quality and productivity (Noor & Abdullah, 2012).

Limitations

This research study has the following limitations:

- 1- In this study, the interview method was used to collect data, which is one of the time-consuming methods.
- 2- Some employees refused to be interviewed because they were not familiar with the interview method.

Future research directions

Future research directions could be based on:

- 1- Research similar to that of other organizations in different countries to compare the results and to increase the validity of the research findings.
- 2- The results of the study showed that organizational aesthetics improves work life quality. Future researchers could examine the relationship between organizational aesthetics with other organizational variables such as productivity and organizational commitment.

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