

Sharing economy value congruence and employees' workplace satisfaction in co-working spaces

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Abstract. *The sharing economy paradigm inspires changes in various work-related domains by imposing the values of social cohesion, collaborative lifestyle and sustainability. The embodiment of this value system is seen in the evolving trend of co-working space. In order to investigate the relation between the perception of the presence of these specific values in office spatial features and the capacity of the workspace to satisfy the psychosocial needs of occupants, we conducted research on 81 employees working in different office types. It was found that employees recognize availability, collaboration, ability to create networks and openness, as more represented values and satisfaction with personalisation and territoriality more linked with them. Results also show that there is a correlation between perceived values and workspace satisfaction with the focus on the needs for status congruency that becomes more emphasized in traditional shared offices along with the identification needs, which becomes the challenge for modern co-working offices.*

Keywords. *Co-working spaces, sharing economy values, employees' workplace satisfaction*

1 Introduction

Co-working office is derived as the product of the sharing economy paradigm values in business and work environment planning, and it represents the sharing economy values. The world of work was facing the shift towards knowledge economy, turning to flexible working arrangements and pervasive changes in labour demographics (Clifton et al, 2022). These spaces are characterized by a collaborative work approach that provides emotional, professional, and financial support with flexible access to required resources for their occupants (Fuzi, 2015). It started as a reaction to the personal isolation of employees working remotely, from home and as the result of their need for community, support and sharing, along with the professional and financial benefits of using communal space and diverse professional networks (Spinuzzi, 2012). Sharing economy concepts of *social cohesion* and *sustainability* create a social context of specific cultural patterns based on values of openness, community, collaboration, sustainability, and accessibility (Schuerman, 2014), along with the post-materialist values of autonomy, spontaneity, mobility, availability, versatility, and ability to form networks (Müller, 2021). Employees may be satisfied with "ideologically" coloured features in the context of their psychosocial needs. This workspace satisfaction is affected by personal space, territoriality issues, personalization, identification, status congruency and privacy/interaction regulation (Kovačević, Čizmić, 2012).

The main problem of the study is how the co-working space concept as a sharing economy value satisfies the specific psychosocial needs of the occupants. Thus, the research goal is to investigate workplace satisfaction and the perception of the level of spatially represented sharing economy values within their workplace among employees occupying shared offices (with a focus on co-working space).

The objective of the study is to analyze 1) Do spatial features of the workspace conform to the sharing economy values – at what level? 2) How are employees satisfied with their workspace psychosocial

characteristics, and 3) Is there a correlation between their workspace satisfaction and perceived level of visual (spatial) representation of sharing economy values within co-working spaces they occupy?

Based on previous research that implies a strong connection between the co-working office concept and sharing economy paradigm (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018; Durante & Turvani, 2018; Bouncken et al., 2020; Clifton et al., 2022;), as well as those concerning aspects of workspace satisfaction (Merrell et al., 2021; Bouncken et al., 2020; Lee, 2018) and especially according to work of Weijs-Perrée and colleagues (2019), we postulated the hypothesis:

H0: There is a correlation between workspace satisfaction and the level of the perceived congruence between sharing economy values and workspace layout.

2 Sharing economy values and new work arrangements

The emergence of sharing offices has transformed traditional workspaces into core business models for new business ventures (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018). Associated with the sharing economy, co-working spaces embody values beyond mere office arrangements, representing a startup lifestyle and fostering a sense of community (Durante & Turvani, 2018; Belk, 2014). Participation, autonomy, community, and knowledge creation are core to satisfying workspaces in the digital and sharing economy (Bouncken et al., 2020). These spaces, characterized by openness, collaboration, and sustainability, facilitate knowledge sharing among professionals with diverse skills (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018). Operating on principles of communal resources and shared values, they create an ideal environment, often termed a "co-working bubble" (Durante & Turvani, 2018). Such spaces prioritize flexibility, accessibility, and conviviality, aiming to enhance productivity and creativity (Fuzi, 2015).

Co-working embodies the concept of "working alone together," emphasizing independent work within a collaborative setting to boost productivity and creativity (Clifton et al., 2022). Recognized for fostering boundary-less work environments and collaborative learning, co-working spaces have become hubs for creativity (Fuzi, 2015). Many companies utilize co-working spaces to save resources and allow for remote work (Clifton et al., 2022). Definitions vary, but generally, co-working spaces are localized areas where independent professionals share resources and knowledge (Capdevila, 2013). They typically offer open workspace desks and facilities managed by co-working businesses (Durante & Turvani, 2018).

Workspace satisfaction, a component of overall job satisfaction, depends on how well the workspace aligns with individual preferences and needs (Knight & Haslam, 2010). Co-working spaces can fulfill employees' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Merrell et al., 2021; Lee, 2018). However, challenges such as noise, privacy issues, and lack of professionalism may arise (Bodin Danielsson & Bodin, 2008). While unassigned workstations can lead to dissatisfaction, desk-sharing doesn't necessarily affect organizational commitment negatively (Worek et al., 2019). Flexi-desk arrangements may decrease workplace productivity, influenced by factors like office layout and comfort (Kim et al., 2016). Occupants prefer inspiring, affordable spaces with semi-open layouts and homelike interiors (Weijs-Perrée et al., 2019).

3 Research design

Variables in this research include office type, workspace satisfaction and sharing economy values. Office type is a categorical variable covering six potential types of shared office: 1) co-working space with shared workplace, 2) co-working with fixed workplace, 3) deskbooking, 4) shared office of traditional type, 5) working from home, and 6) working individually in office.

The instrument used in the survey is a questionnaire consisting of demographic questions, general questions about employment and objective workspace features, 36 items of the Scale of satisfaction with workspace psychosocial features and the *Sharing economy values scale* consisting of 12 offered values to be recognized and assessed within spatial features at the respondents' workplace: 1) openness, 2) community, 3) collaboration, 4) sustainability, 5) accessibility, 6) autonomy, 7) spontaneity, 8) mobility, 9) availability, 10) creativity, 11) versatility, and 12) ability to form networks. The *Scale of satisfaction with workspace psychosocial features* (Kovačević, Čizmić, 2012) measures

the level at which workplace characteristics satisfy the social and psychological requirements of their occupants. It consists of 36 items covering 6 indicators of workspace satisfaction (personal space, territoriality, personalization, identification, status congruency, privacy/interaction), with internal reliability gained in a preliminary study ($\alpha=.91$). Our sample consisted of 81 employees from different industries, prevalently IT (51.9%), education (12.3%) and marketing (9.9%), employed in different organizational positions. More than 50% of respondents are from domestic companies, 13.6% are international with headquarters in Serbia and 35.8% are multinational with mainly large companies (42%) and small and medium-sized (25.9% and 19.8%) and only 12.3% of micro companies with less than 10 employees. Our sample is slightly biased towards female employees who cover 57% of the whole sample born in the period between 1980 and 2000 (a sample of a relatively young employable population), with almost 70% of them having less than 15 years of tenure.

4 Research results

In the context of the organization of daily work activities, respondents in our sample prevalently work in a shared offices (56%), followed by those working in a coworking space with fixed (19%) and shared workspace (15%), as it could be seen from the Figure 1.

Our primary interest was to see does employees working in different contemporary offices register the presence of current sharing economy values that are expected to be incorporated even in the physical spatial office features as the result of pervasive cultural, economic and social changes in the world of work. Also, these values and subjectively experienced objective office characteristics might provoke different levels of satisfaction that could be connected to these values. For these purposes, we use two scales that proved to have solid internal reliability.

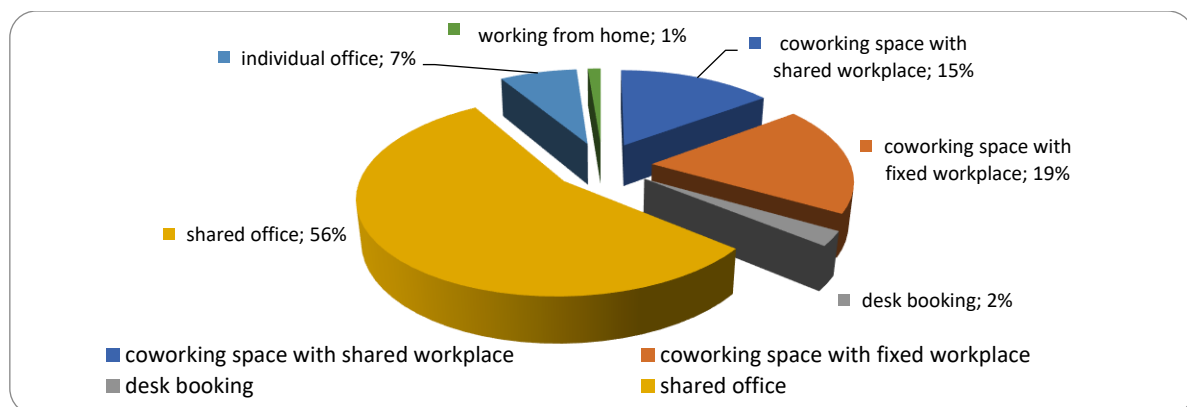


Figure 1. The percentages of respondents working in different office types (Source: Authors' work)

As the *Scale of satisfaction with workspace psychosocial features* consists of six indicators we tested their reliability individually, and in order to gain higher internal reliability we divided the component of privacy/interaction into two dimensions. Internal reliability of the scale of Sharing economy values is Cronbach's $\alpha(12)=.892$ and of the Workspace satisfaction scale Cronbach's $\alpha(36)=.82$ (subscale reliability varies from $\alpha=.739$ to $\alpha=.868$). The main sharing economy values recognized are those of accessibility ($M=4.28$, $SD=.762$, $N=81$), collaboration ($M=4.19$, $SD=.91$, $N=81$), networking ($M=4.11$, $SD=.962$, $N=81$) and openness ($M=4.06$, $SD=1.017$, $N=81$) and the least one area of autonomy ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.047$, $N=81$) and creativity ($M=3.64$, $SD=1.197$, $N=81$). Nevertheless, the variance is large between the answers. When it comes to satisfaction it is slightly higher than average ($M=3.6$, $SD=.466$, $N=81$) with the highest for personal space ($M=4.09$, $SD=.846$, $N=81$) and status congruency ($M=4.07$, $SD=.721$, $N=81$) and the lowest for identification ($M=2.97$, $SD=.884$, $N=81$) need satisfaction.

The main goal of the research was to test the hypothesis of the relation between perceiving the sharing economy values at the workplace and the satisfaction with psychosocial features of the working office. Our results show that there is a moderate statistically significant correlation between these concepts: $r(81)=.34$, $p<.001$, where the main correlation is found between these values and status congruency satisfaction ($r(81)=.43$, $p<.001$) and low correlation with interaction and identification ($r(81)=.23$, $p<.05$ and $r(81)=.23$, $p<.005$). When you take into consideration the actual



spatial work arrangement, one interesting question is imposing: do the variances in office space layout make any difference in the satisfaction and value recognition, as well as in the relation between them?

Table 1. Correlations between perceiving sharing economy values and workspace satisfaction indicators for co-working spaces and traditional sharing offices (Source: Authors' work)

	Sharing economy values						
	Office Type	Co-working			Traditional		
Satisfaction		r	Sig.	N	r	Sig.	N
Workspace satisfaction		.369*	.049	29	.52**	.000	45
Personal space		.203	.292	29	.21	.168	45
Territoriality		.255	.181	29	.01	.936	45
Personalization		.051	.792	29	.36*	.016	45
Identification		.018	.927	29	.41**	.005	45
Status congruency		.448*	.015	29	.56**	.000	45
Privacy		.219	.253	29	.01	.967	45
Interaction		.090	.641	29	.35*	.018	45

When we exclude cases of employees working alone in the office and take into consideration only those who are using co-working spaces of different kinds and, on the other side, those using traditional shared offices with only a few colleagues, we found some differences. There were no differences in the values they perceived but there were in the satisfaction with workplace features in general ($t(72)=-3.942$, $p<.001$) and connected with the opportunities to personalize it ($t(72)=-4.005$, $p<.001$) and preserve own territoriality ($t(72)=-3.262$, $p<.001$), that are higher in traditional shared offices. If we focus on partial correlations between sharing economy values and workspace satisfaction for co-working offices and for traditional shared offices separately, some relations are revealed. From Table 1 we can see that, besides the status congruency that is linked with values in both cases, the link between value recognition and identification as the indicator of satisfaction becomes obvious with the relatively strong correlation of $r(45)=.41$, $p<.001$.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The main idea of the research was to connect the values that are ascribed to be of sharing economy culture potential, their visibility in the physical work environment with the workspace satisfaction. We found that there is a positive correlation between recognizing these values and indicators of that satisfaction. Additionally, availability, networking potential, collaboration, and openness are values that are considered present in current offices. There are substantial differences in workspace satisfaction if we compare traditional shared offices and co-working spaces. Partial correlations reveal higher satisfaction in traditional communal offices with status congruency being stronger as the indicator linked with values, as well as identification becoming an important indicator, not correlated with sharing economy values in co-working spaces. These findings are in line with previous studies (Bacevice, & Spreitzer, 2023). Also, concepts of personalization and territoriality are recognized as the indicators that make a difference favoring traditional shared offices with workplaces defined in advance and with fixed working desks. Kim and colleagues' (2016) study implies less satisfaction among employees using flexi-desk arrangements. These results are similar to the studies that found higher satisfaction of psychosocial needs provided by the workspace features (see Kovačević, & Čizmić, 2012) in more confined working spaces than in open offices shared with more users. As if the more is not the merrier in the context of the working environment. Work activities must not be neglected and further research should consider that more systematically. Studies that corroborate the satisfaction of co-working spaces emphasize their superiority in the context of entrepreneurial and start-up micro businesses (Bouncken et al, 2020).

Our sample is limited and the number of categories working in different office types does not represent the actual situation while categories of differently organized space are not comparable. The results are the first explorative study in the domain, that aims to link workspace satisfaction with sharing economy values. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the concept, there should be more studies incorporating the values of the occupants themselves that might or might not be in line with prevalent values of the contemporary organizational culture. Further, some aspects of co-working space were not possible to analyze due to the sample restriction. In order to see the differential effect of fixed or

desk booking practice of office policy, especially on territoriality and personalization issues, we need more cases of the particular practices. Also, identification satisfaction is significantly linked with sharing economy values recognition in traditional sharing offices. The fact that occupants of communal offices in a traditional sense link strongly the sharing economy values with identification with the office space might be the challenge for co-working spaces to convey values more explicitly in order to satisfy identification needs.

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