Abstract

Purpose

This study aims to investigate the concepts of culture, well-being, and their importance to employees in the workplace. There is minimal research related to culture and well-being in the profession of interior design and even less related to the physical workplace environment. Therefore this study was designed to explore these variables.

Review of Literature

Culture is a part of our values and identity. Identity is an area of well-being that is directly tied to the quality of life, impacting our perspectives from which we make all life decisions (Diener, 2009). Scholars posit that cultures have different well-being concepts, which influence an individual's desirable feelings (Diener, 2009). Diener (2009) states this concept "speaks to the fundamental nature of well-being, and therefore understanding in this field cannot proceed without acknowledging the influence of culture" (p.1). Findings from Sagiv and Schwartz's (2000) study reveal that values have weak direct effects on well-being when the environment is not considered. Therefore this study is essential to address in the interior design profession and uses Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions model as a theoretical framework to ground the concepts of culture defined as nationality and ethnicity. The Council For Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) (2018) requires that all "Interior designers have a global view and consider social, cultural, economic, and ecological contexts in all aspects of their work." (p.16). Though research has been conducted around culture and interior design, very few discuss an explicit connection to well-being. Guerin (2014) states that a factor shaping well-being is designing for people's cultural identity, cultural aesthetics, and/or cultural norms.

Research Questions

1. Does culture influence employee well-being in the overall physical work environment?
2. Does culture mediated by satisfaction with the physical workplace environment influence well-being?

Methodology

The survey used in this study was an existing validated and reliable post-occupancy evaluation tool. Questions related to culture were developed and added from existing literature. The questions were piloted and demonstrated an acceptable value of reliability (p =.726). All questions were created using a 7- point Likert Scale and demographic questions. This study used a purposive convenience sample of full and part-time faculty and staff who were culturally diverse and taught courses related to culture in a midwestern University building located in a major metropolitan area. The survey was administered to 215 faculty and staff who officed in the building with 75 participating in the study resulting in a 30% acceptable response rate. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis.

Findings

The majority of employees believed that culture is important in the workplace environment (95.4%) and that culture does influence well-being in the workplace environment (81.5%). These findings support the literature reviewed in this study.

Implications

Designing with culture in mind can address diversity and well-being in workplace environments by influencing employee well-being and workplace retention. In doing so, employees may feel valued. As employees are exposed to cultures outside of their own, there is a greater awareness and appreciation of their similarities and differences. Organizations addressing employee well-being should understand that employees who feel valued by their companies create a deeper connection with the organization. The connection is reflected in employees' satisfaction and loyalty to the company, resulting in less turnover and a higher return on investment.