

**Key Research: Wells (2000)** - Office clutter or meaningful personal displays: The role of office personalization in employee and organisational well-being.

**Method / Design**

Survey based study with five out of 20 companies also participating as case studies where employees were interviewed about importance of personal items and effects on well-being.  
Observation checklist used to check number of personal items.

**Procedure**

**Employee Survey:**

Section One examined workspace personalisation and consisted of number of personal items displayed, types of items displayed, degree they would like to display items but are not allowed, extent of workspace arrangement, reasons for personalising workspace or not and the extent of personalisation of team spaces.

Second section assessed satisfaction with physical work environment (using 5point rating scales).

Third section assessed job satisfaction (five point rating scale).

Fourth section assessed wellbeing using general well-being questions such as "how do you feel about your life as a whole?" on physical and psychological well-being.

The fifth section of the survey assessed employee perceptions of organisational well-being including social climate, moral and productivity.

The sixth section assessed personality traits and need for affiliation, privacy and creativity.

**Participants & Sampling**

Survey of office workers at 20 companies in Orange county, California. Recruited from 2000 companies participating in a small business project.

20 companies included two manufacturing companies, two real estate agencies, a law firm, a car dealership and so on.

The 338 respondents consisted of 187 males, 138 females and 13 gender un-specified. Aged between 25-44 years.

**Results**

Men and women personalise for different reasons with women using it to express identities and emotions and men to show their status. Women also displayed more items than men (11.2 vs 7.68 avg items). The interview data supported the view that personalisation was more important to women for general well-being.

Most people display symbols of personal relationships (68%) with the lowest being music (3%).

Personalisation is significantly associated with satisfaction of work environment but this was not found with personalisation of team spaces. Satisfaction with physical work environment was also positively associated with job satisfaction.

Companies that allow more personalisation have a more positive organisational climate.

**Conclusions**

The difference in importance of personalisation to men and women may be due to the needs related to it, for example women who have traditionally been homemakers feel more of a need to make their environments at work comfortable. Women may also feel more of a need to express their identities as the workplace has a male aura.

Business managers may benefit from this study by realising that people want to personalise their workspaces and restricting this may be linked to reduced satisfaction of the work environment and job.

**Key Issues relevant to study**

Generalisability

Validity

Ethnocentrism

Time-locked

Conceptual links to content analysis, interviewing and use of triangulation of data types.

Cause and effect

