

Original Article

OPEN OFFICE LAYOUT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL AND MENTAL WELL BEING

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ABSTRACT

Background. Open office layouts are widely adopted to improve communication, collaboration, and work efficiency. However, they can also cause noise, concentration disturbances, and reduced privacy that affect the psychological and social experience of employees. This phenomenon is also found in the administrative room of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo, which integrates several work functions in one open work area.

Research Purpose. This study aims to analyze the application of open office layout in the perspective of employees mental well being and social well being, and its relationship with work implementation.

Research Method. This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were obtained through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving five informants in an open work environment. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification with the help of NVivo, and validity was tested through source and technique triangulation.

Findings. The implementation of open office layout supports communication, coordination, and social interaction, but also presents challenges in the form of noise, distractions, and privacy limitations. These conditions are related to mental well being, especially psychological comfort, concentration, and mental fatigue, as well as social well being through interaction and relationships between employees.

Conclusion. The condition of the workspace is related to the smooth implementation of work and the effectiveness of employee work.

Keywords: Open Office Layout, Mental Well being, Social Well being.

BACKGROUND

PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo is a company engaged in the automotive sector with administrative activities involving various work functions in one workspace. To support the effectiveness of coordination, communication, and smooth administrative processes, the company applies the concept of open office layout to the administration space by integrating several work functions, namely Human Resource Development (HRD), Administration Head (ADH), cashier, sales administration, delivery order administration, and invoice administration in one open work area. The application of this concept is expected to be able to accelerate the flow of information, improve coordination between parts, and create a more efficient work process. However, based on the results of initial observations, the activities of several work functions that take place simultaneously also present several challenges, such as increased noise due to work activities that take place at the same time, the emergence of distractions when employees do work that requires high concentration, and reduced

privacy in handling administrative documents. This condition has the potential to interfere with concentration on administrative work that requires high precision and focus. This is in line with empirical studies that show that noise in open-plan offices, especially those originating from conversations between employees, irrelevant noises, and phone rings, can cause distractions, reduce privacy, and have an impact on the comfort and smooth work of employees [1][2].

[3]Explains that changes in modern work patterns encourage organizations to adapt through open office layout, a spatial concept that minimizes permanent partitions so that interactions, information exchange, and communication between employees take place more openly, while providing flexibility in workplace arrangements according to the needs of the organization.

From the perspective of office administration, office space layout is one of the aspects that determine the smooth running of organizational activities. According to [4], office layout is the systematic arrangement of workspaces and all office equipment and facilities so that the implementation of work takes place effectively, efficiently, comfortably, and is able to smooth the work flow. Furthermore, [4] explained that a good office space arrangement needs to pay attention to the principle of the shortest distance, the principle of work series, the principle of using all spaces, and the principle of changing the flexible workplace arrangement. This is strengthened by findings from [5] that show that the dimensions of comfort and office space in office space have a significant relationship with employee productivity, so that workspace arrangement cannot be separated from efforts to improve organizational performance. The application of these principles aims to create a workplace arrangement that supports the smooth work process, shortens the movement of employees and documents, and optimizes the use of available space. Based on this principle, office layout is not only related to the physical arrangement of the workplace, but is also one of the elements that supports the effectiveness and efficiency of work implementation.

Comprehensively, an integrative study[6] of the physical work environment explains that the three main dimensions of physical space, atmosphere, spatial configuration, and aesthetics have a central role in influencing the work process, mental and physical health, and the smooth completion of employee tasks. This view is strengthened by a holistic review [7] that confirms the close relationship between office spatial design characteristics and mental health indicators, especially stress levels, concentration, social well being and mental well being of employees. In line with that, [3]shows that open-plan offices can improve communication, teamwork, and social interaction related to social well being, but at the same time raise privacy and concentration issues related to mental well being. These findings confirm that the suitability of space design with work characteristics still needs to be considered so that its benefits are not defeated by its negative impacts [7].

Research on office space in Indonesia is still dominated by the issue of employee effectiveness and performance. [8,9] shows that proper spatial planning supports employee efficiency and performance, while [10] found the relationship with employee comfort. Most of this study uses a quantitative approach that emphasizes testing relationships between variables, so that employees' experiences and perceptions related to mental well being and social well being in open workspaces have not been explored in depth.

On the other hand, international studies such as [11,12] show that the evidence on the relationship between workspace design and mental health and psychological well being is still relatively limited and uneven. Thus, there is a research gap in studies that simultaneously explore the application of open office layout, mental well being, and social well being based on employee experience, especially in the context of automotive company administration, which is the basis for the use of a qualitative approach in this study. Without

a deep understanding of employee experience of the workspace condition, efforts to improve the spatial layout risk focusing only on physical efficiency without considering its impact on the psychological and social well being of employees, which can ultimately affect work comfort and smooth implementation of administrative tasks.

This study contributes in three ways. First, it provides qualitative, experience-based evidence on how employees perceive mental well being and social well being in an open office, a perspective that is still limited in Indonesian office layout research, which is dominated by quantitative studies of employee effectiveness and performance [8–10]. Second, it examines both dimensions together with the implementation of work in a single setting, the administrative room of an automotive company, which has not been explored qualitatively before. Third, it relates employee experience to the principles of office layout [4], so that the findings can inform layout evaluation that considers psychological and social impacts and not only physical efficiency

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the application of open office layout in the administrative space of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo in the perspective of employee social well being and mental well being, especially through aspects of mental well being and social well being, and see the relationship with the implementation of work.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of open office layout in the perspective of employee social well being and mental well being in the administrative space of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo. This approach emphasizes understanding of the experience, perspective, and meaning of a phenomenon based on the natural conditions of the research subjects [13,14] so that it is appropriate to explore employee perceptions without examining the relationship between variables statistically, in line with the approach of Ramantswana et al. (2024) which explores employees' perceptions of mental and social well being in an open-plan office environment.

Data collection was carried out based on an official research permit issued by the Faculty of Economics and Business, State University of Surabaya, starting with Letter No. B/124174/UN38.7/TU.00/2026 dated August 19, 2026 regarding the Research Permit Application addressed to the Head of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo. The permit provides official authority to conduct interviews, observations, and documentation collection at the selected research location.

The selection of the location is based on the characteristics of the administrative space that integrates several work functions in one open area, which allows direct coordination but also presents noise, distractions, and privacy limitations. The object of the research is the application of open office layout and the effectiveness of the execution of work, with a focus on spatial planning, workflow, communication and coordination, noise, distraction, privacy, and concentration.[2]

The research informants were determined using the purposive sampling technique, which is a technique to determine informants based on certain considerations in accordance with the purpose of the research. This technique was chosen because the informants involved are individuals who have experience, knowledge, and direct involvement in the implementation of open office layout in the company's administrative space. This study involved five informants.[15]

The main informants in this study are employees who directly use the workspace with the concept of open office layout in the administrative room of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo. The main informants consist of Human Resource Development (HRD) staff, cashiers, sales administration staff who are also delivery order administration, and invoice

administration staff. The selection of the main informant was carried out purposively based on direct involvement in the use of the open workspace and experience in carrying out daily work activities in the space. The four informants are the main source of information about employee experiences with workspace conditions, including aspects of noise, distraction, privacy, comfort, concentration, social interaction, and psychological and social conditions related to social well being and mental well being.

In addition to the main informant, this study involves the Administration Head (ADH) as the key informant. ADH was chosen because he has knowledge and involvement in the management of the work environment and has authority related to the arrangement of administrative spaces. Interviews with ADH were conducted to obtain information on the basis of the implementation of open office layout, considerations in spatial planning, and policies related to work environment conditions. Thus, information from ADH is used to complement and confirm information obtained from the main informant through source triangulation.

The research data consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were carried out by directly observing the condition of the administrative room without being involved in employee work activities. The aspects observed included the arrangement of the work desk, the layout of facilities, circulation paths, communication patterns between employees, noise levels, activities that have the potential to cause distractions, and conditions related to privacy during the implementation of work.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in depth to all informants using interview guidelines that have been prepared based on the focus of the research. This technique gives the informant the flexibility to explain his experience and views on the implementation of open office layout, as well as allowing the researcher to dig deeper information according to the development of the interview process. All interview results are recorded with the consent of the informant and then transcribed as analysis material.

Documentation is used as supporting data which includes office spatial plans, visual documentation of workspaces that have obtained company permits, and other supporting documents related to the implementation of open office layout. The use of these three data collection techniques aims to obtain complementary information so that it can increase the depth of research analysis.

Data analysis in this study is carried out continuously from the data collection process to the drawing of conclusions. The data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation is first organized and prepared for analysis. Furthermore, the data is analyzed using thematic analysis with the help of NVivo software. The analysis process is carried out through reading the data thoroughly, coding relevant data, grouping codes based on the similarity of meanings into categories, and developing themes that are in accordance with the focus of the research. The themes formed are then reviewed and interpreted to gain an understanding of the implementation of open office layout, the effectiveness of work implementation, and the mental and social well being of employees. NVivo is used as a tool to organize, codify, and group data systematically, while the process of interpretation and drawing conclusions is still carried out by the researcher.

The validity of the data was carried out through source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from five informants, namely Administration Head (ADH), Human Resource Development (HRD) staff, cashier, sales administration staff who are also delivery order administration, and invoice administration staff. Although they have different job functions, all informants provide information about the same research phenomenon based on their respective

knowledge and experience. Information between informants is compared to identify suitability, differences, and data reinforcement regarding the conditions of open office layout and its implications for mental and social well being. Furthermore, technical triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews with the results of observation and documentation. Data that has gone through the triangulation process is then used to strengthen the interpretation of the theme and become the basis for drawing research conclusions.

FINDINGS

The analysis was carried out by reading the entire transcript of the interview of the five informants repeatedly, grouping the answers into categories according to the focus of the research (spatial planning, mental well being, social well being, evaluation and expectations), and then comparing the answer patterns between informants as part of the triangulation of sources. The relationships between the categories were then visualized in the theme scheme, and the words that appeared most frequently throughout the transcript were examined to see if they fit the themes that had been formed.

After all the data from the five informants were grouped, a cross-examination was carried out to compare the response patterns between informants in each category. This comparison aimed to see the extent to which the findings of one informant were strengthened, complemented, or different from the findings of other informants, as part of the source triangulation process. Next, the relationships between the categories were visualized in the form of a schema for each major theme, to show how the sub-themes are related to each other within the same theme. This schema is used as a tool to facilitate a thorough interpretation of the patterns that emerge from the data.

Spatial Observation Results. Non-participant observation showed that the administrative room of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo places six work functions (HRD, ADH, cashier, sales administration, delivery order administration, and invoice administration) in one open area without permanent partitions. This arrangement has two observable consequences. First, the close proximity of the work desks allows coordination between functions to take place quickly. Second, work activities that take place at the same time can be heard and seen by other work functions, and administrative documents are handled openly without visual barriers. As a result, documents and conversations related to work can be noticed by employees outside the function concerned, which limits privacy.

Based on the results of the grouping of all the five informant's answers, an overview of the distribution of themes in each category was obtained. Most of the sub-themes appeared in all or almost all informants, indicating that the experience related to the implementation of open office space was consistent and not only experienced by a small number of informants. The sub-themes with the highest number of occurrences were concentration and noise, which indicated that noise concentration disturbance was the most frequently conveyed issue compared to other sub-themes, in line with the characteristics of administrative work that required high precision. The results of the comparison of the number of statements on each major theme showed that the five informants had a similar pattern across all themes, although they had different job functions. The theme of mental well being obtained the highest number of statements from all informants compared to other themes, indicating that aspects of psychological comfort and concentration were the most talked about.

The following findings were compiled to answer the three focuses of the research analysis, namely: (1) the application of open office layout in the administrative room of PT

Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo, (2) the analysis of open office layout in the perspective of the mental well being of employees, and (3) the analysis of the open office layout in the perspective of the social well being of employees.

Implementation of Open Office Layout

ADH explained that the implementation of open space is motivated by the need for coordination between sections, so that information can be delivered faster without changing places, as well as the efficiency of space use. Reviewed from the principle of the shortest distance and the principle of the work series, the placement of six work functions in one area is in line with the goal of accelerating the workflow between interconnected sections. However, ADH itself admits that "the needs of each part are still considered because the character of the work is different, some require precision and concentration", indicating that the principle of using the entire space has not been balanced by the division of zones based on the characteristics of the work, as later confirmed by the main informant's complaint. Regarding the principle of changing the composition of the workplace, ADH said that it is still possible to adjust the position of the desk or the division of areas without completely closing the space[4].

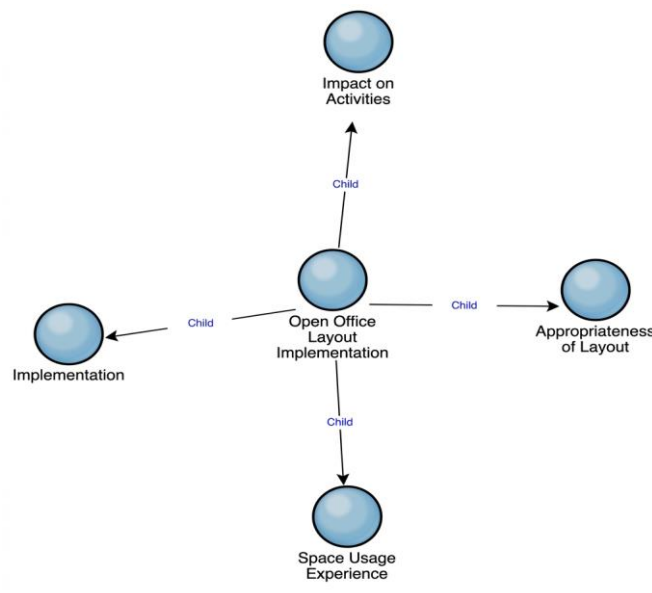


Figure 1. Open Office Layout Theme Diagram (Processed By The Researcher, 2026)

Mental Well Being

Six sub-themes were found related to the psychological condition of informants while working in open spaces, namely psychological comfort, concentration and noise, distraction or pressure, privacy, mental state when needing focus, and sources of comfort or discomfort. This theme obtained the highest number of statements compared to other themes. All key informants said that the crowded atmosphere made them mentally tired faster and some needed to repeat work checks after being distracted. Some informants emphasized that the distraction was purely a matter of focus, not a matter of relationships with colleagues. The limitation of privacy related to documents and sensitive conversations was also a concern, and was confirmed by key informants as complaints that the company had received.

The Invoice Administration informant stated, "during a crowded atmosphere I feel tired faster and need time to refocus." The Cashier informant added that the crowded atmosphere makes him "mentally tired faster and more alert so that mistakes don't happen." Regarding privacy, the Sales Administration/DO informant called his documents and screen "in an open area," so he is "more comfortable if it's not too visible".

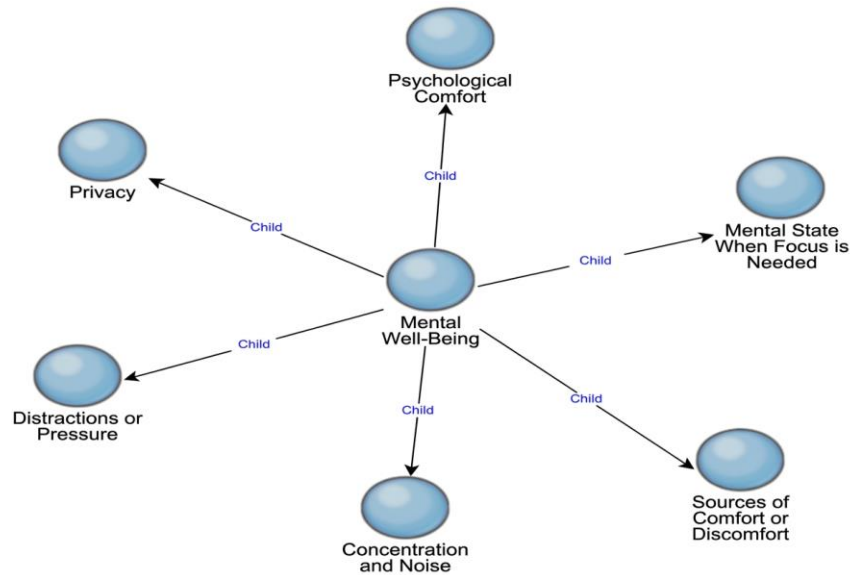


Figure 2. Theme Diagram Mental Well being (Processed By The Researcher, 2026)

Social Well Being

Five sub-themes related to the social side of the informant in the workspace were found, namely communication, social interaction, cooperation, interaction disruption, and social relations. All informants assessed that open spaces speed up communication, facilitate interaction, and make social relations between employees good. However, communication that takes place at the same time can still interfere with concentration, even when the conversation is not related to someone's work. This pattern is consistent across all informants. The HRD informant explained that conversations near his desk "are not always about me but can still attract attention." The Invoice Administration informant added something similar: nearby voices "can make me pause" even though it's none of their business.

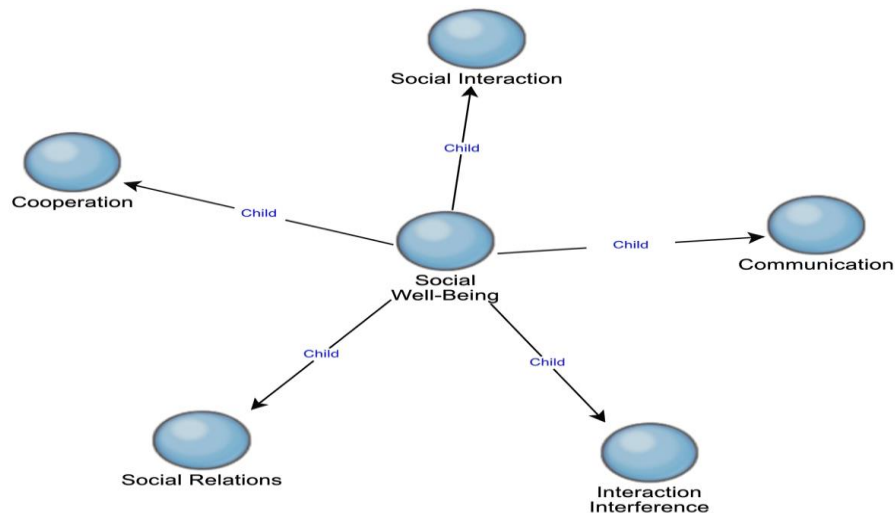


Figure 3. Theme Diagram Social Well being (Processed By The Researcher, 2026)

DISCUSSIONS

The findings regarding mental well being are in line with three key factors, namely perceived privacy, pleasant ambience, and autonomy, as determinants of whether the openness of space has a positive or psychologically depressing impact. In the administrative room of PT Sun Star Motor, perceived privacy and pleasant ambience have not been achieved, as reflected in complaints about document privacy and noise of simultaneous activities. This condition is different from the finding that the three factors that are met actually accelerate the recovery of post-work physiological stress. In other words, the mental fatigue of the informant is most likely not caused by the openness of the space itself, but by the unfulfilled conditions of privacy and supportive ambience [16].

The tendency towards the aspect of social well being is in line with the finding that the openness of well-designed spaces strengthens closeness to colleagues; In this study, strengthening social relationships was the most consistent benefit felt by all informants, alongside challenges in terms of concentration [16].

These findings can be read through the perspective of the physical work environment, which holds that spatial configuration, atmosphere, and aesthetics shape work processes, mental and physical health, and the smooth completion of tasks [6]. In the administrative room studied, the spatial configuration, namely six work functions in one open area without permanent partitions, creates an atmosphere in which simultaneous activities can be heard and seen by everyone. Because the work of cashiers, invoice administration, and sales and delivery order administration requires precision, this atmosphere is experienced as a source of distraction and faster mental fatigue rather than as a neutral background condition. This is consistent with evidence linking the characteristics of office spatial design to stress levels, concentration, social and mental well being [7], and with the view that the impact of open-plan offices on mental well being depends on how well the design suits the nature of the work [3,7]. The need of some informants to re-check their work after being distracted further indicates that the mental cost lies in repeated loss of focus rather than in openness itself, which supports the argument that perceived privacy and a pleasant ambience determine the effect of openness [16].

From the perspective of office layout theory, the findings show that the layout principles are only partly fulfilled. Placing six functions in one area follows the principle

of the shortest distance and the principle of work series, which explains why all informants reported faster communication, easier interaction, and good social relations [4]. However, the principle of using all spaces has not been balanced by a division of zones according to the characteristics of the work, so the same openness that benefits social well being also disturbs concentration, even when nearby conversations are not related to a person's own work. This dual effect is in line with the finding that open-plan offices support communication, teamwork, and social interaction while also raising privacy and concentration problems [3], and it appears in this study as closeness among colleagues and concentration difficulties occurring side by side. The principle of changing the workplace arrangement flexibly, which ADH said still allows desks or areas to be adjusted without fully closing the space, offers a way to reconcile the two sides [4]. Accordingly, the layout of an administrative office should be evaluated by the fit between spatial design and work characteristics [7], not by physical efficiency alone.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that open workspace design is closely related to mental health indicators and social interactions, while complementing the study with empirical evidence from the context of automotive companies in Indonesia that has not been explored qualitatively before [3,12]. This research also contributes to the development of office administration science, especially in understanding that the principles of office spatial planning need to be expanded not only to the efficiency of physical workflows, but also to their impact on the psychological and social experience of space users [4]. Practically, these findings can be used as evaluation material for PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo in redesigning the administrative space, for example placing high-concentration functions (cashiers, invoices) in a quieter zone, while intensive coordination functions (HRD, ADH) remain in open areas, according to the informant's expectations of the division of the area without fully closing the space.

This study was limited to five informants in one company administration room, so the results cannot be generalized widely. The next study is suggested to expand the scope of informants, work units, and other company sectors to test the consistency of the influence of open office layout on mental and social well being on diverse work characteristics.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the application of open office layout in the administrative space of PT Sun Star Motor Sidoarjo has two interrelated sides in the perspective of employees' mental and social well being. On the one hand, the openness of the workspace supports smooth coordination, accelerates communication, and strengthens social relationships between employees, as reflected in the theme of social well being. On the other hand, the same space conditions also present noise, distractions, and privacy limitations that have an impact on mental well being, especially in the aspects of concentration, psychological comfort, and mental fatigue that are most expressed by all informants. These findings confirm that the effectiveness of open office layout cannot be seen alone, but it is necessary to consider its suitability with work characteristics, especially administrative work that requires high precision such as cashiers, invoices, and sales and delivery order administration.

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