

# The Influence of WFH, WFO, and Hybrid Work Conditions On Design Creativity

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## **ABSTRACT**

A person's creativity can be influenced by external aspects which derive from the surrounding environments both physically and socially. In this case, the creativity in question is the creativity of internship students in carrying out the design process during their practical work course. The students in question are UPH students majoring in interior design class 2018 who have done internships either by WFH, WFO, or hybrid. This study aims to determine whether the work environment influences creativity development. The method used is ethnography with an interpretive lens, while the qualitative data collected were measured and translated using quantitative tools. The research results showed that the physical and social environment of the office could affect creativity in the design process.

Keywords: environmental conditions, creativity, physical environment, social environment, internship

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human resources' creativity is a critical component in the success of a company or organization, also as the foundation of a creative company. Creativity is an individual competency that is needed by any organization (Sudarmanto, 2009:107). This writing focuses on creativity, which is an essential aspect of work, especially in terms of the design process. Creativity can be influenced by various things, such as the environment both physical and social, and the activities are undertaken to increase it.

With this background, the authors are interested in conducting an assessment of the working environment conditions of the Work From Home (WFH) system,

Work From Office (WFO) system, or hybrid systems, and how it affects creativity during the design process. In this case, the creativity in question is the creativity of internship students in carrying out the design process during their practical work course. The students in question are UPH students majoring in interior design class 2018 who have done internships either by WFH, WFO, or hybrid, categorized by their period of work: interns and short-term interns. Interns have a working period of about 10 (ten) months, while short-term interns have a shorter working period of about 4 (four) months.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Sudarmanto in Widhiastana, Wardana, and Sudibya (2017:223-250), creativity is an individual competency needed by any organization. Creativity defined as the ability to create new and valuable ideas for the survival of the company or organization (Robbins and Judge, 2002:190; Poornima, 2011:316).

According to Munandar (2009), there are two main factors affecting creativity, internal factors and external factors. External factor indicators divided into two, the physical environment and the social environment factors.

### **Physical environmental factors**

(1) The first factor is office facilities that support work activities. According to Yazid (2019), facilities had an effect of 29.6% on someone's creativity, (2) The second factor is visual comfort. According to Aufizaha (2015), to achieve visual comfort, we need to notice the strength of the lighting in buildings based on natural daylight in buildings, (3) The third factor is thermal comfort. According to Rilatupa (2008), humans can't live in the modern era to rely solely on natural thermals, so they must use air conditioning as a supporting medium to achieve a minimum temperature of thermal comfort of 22.5°C - 29°C. (4) The last factor is acoustic comfort. According to Imran and Nini (2015), it is known that loud and continuous noise can cause interference in someone's ability to reach optimum results in their task.

### **Social environmental factors**

(1) The first factor is casual relations between coworkers and superiors, (2) The second one is the convenience of exchanging ideas with colleagues and superiors, (3) The third factor is good working conditions and fair work distribution in teams, (4) The fourth one is supports or training assistance provided from colleagues or superiors, and lastly (5) Challenging task or project conditions. Oktaviani et al. (2020) argued that there is a significant relationship between how superiors' and subordinates' bonds would affect work performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

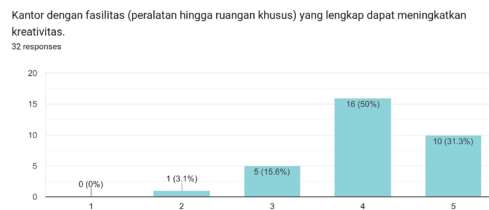
The method used is ethnography with an interpretive lens (Crouch and Pearce, 2012), while the qualitative data collected were measured and translated using quantitative tools (Neuman, 2014). These combined strategies required the author to conduct interviews with informants and collect data from the respondents via Google Forms using Likert Scale and essays. The Likert Scale used consists of 5 points, with 5 points meaning all parameters are working well, 4 means some are

working well, 3 means all are working, 2 means some aren't working, and 1 means all aren't working. The respondents are students from Pelita Harapan University's 2018 Interior Design Bachelor's program who participated in short-term and long-term internships during the pandemic using the Work From Home (WFH), Work From Office (WFO), and/or hybrid working system. These systems impact both the interns' and short-term interns' creativity levels during their internship course which were discussed during the interview.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Physical environmental factors

#### (1) Influence of Office Facilities on Creativity



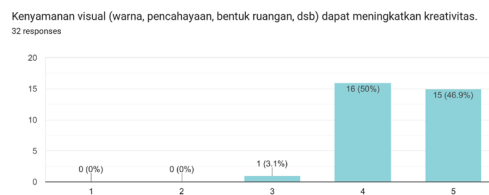
**Image 1. Influence of Office Facilities on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

According to the survey, completeness of facilities has an impact on promoting creativity with half of the respondents ( $n=16/32$ , 50%) agreeing. The parameters are completeness of working equipment and facilities, and various functional rooms available. The quantitative results supported by the qualitative responses below:

*"Practicing WFH short-term internship, still requires comfort. To improve a productive atmosphere, work in a separate area from other potentially distracting activities, work with comfortable tables and chairs, and put on the diffuser"* (ML, Short-term intern, WFH)

*"Comfortable and ergonomic furniture can also aid concentration."* (CL, Intern, WFO)

#### (2) Influence of Visual Comfort on Creativity



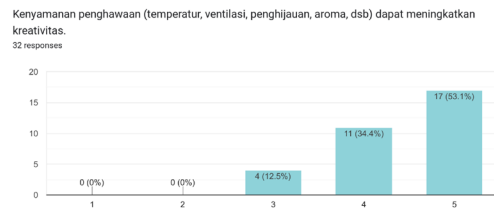
**Image 2. Influence of Visual Comfort on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

The parameters used on visual comfort, includes color, lighting, and space form, which can considerably improve creativity, according to a large number of the respondents ( $n=16/32$ , 50%). The quantitative results supported by the qualitative responses below:

*"We tend to get fatigued more easily if the room conditions are not favorable (in terms of illumination, chair amenities, internet, lighting, and so on), which will affect work efficiency."* (RR, Intern, hybrid)

“...the use of bright colors helps in the growth of peaceful thinking” (ST, Short-term intern, WFO)

### **(3) Influence of Thermal Comfort on Creativity**



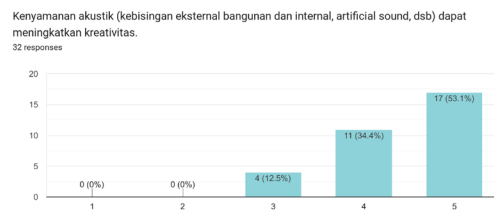
**Image 3. Influence of Thermal Comfort on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

According to survey data on air comfort, the majority of the respondents (n=17/32, 53.1 %) strongly agree that it can boost creativity. Parameters used are temperature, ventilation, and aroma. The qualitative results followed:

“Employees have been upset due to the scent of cigarettes in the workspace.” (AG, Intern, WFO)

“I used to experience WFO at first, and if the room was a bit heated, it made me dizzy right away.” (EF, Short-term intern, hybrid)

### **(4) Influence of Acoustic Comfort on Creativity**



**Image 4. Influence of Acoustic Comfort on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Most respondents (n=17/32, 53.1 percent) strongly agree that acoustic comfort can increase creativity in the design process. The parameters are indoor acoustic and external acoustic. The qualitative results confirm:

“The best room to work is on the second level, so there’s no noise disturbance. It makes us more focused.” (ST, Short-term intern, WFO)

“Employees have been bothered by the barking of the office dog...” (AG, Intern, WFO)

The results above showed that the workplace’s physical environment could influence creativity and the design process. There was no difference in the influence of workspace facilities in WFH, WFO, or hybrid system. However, there were significant similarities in the efforts made by workers to ensure that their work environment supports the creative process.

## **Social Environmental Factors**

### **(1) Influence of The Relationship Between Colleagues and Superiors on Creativity**



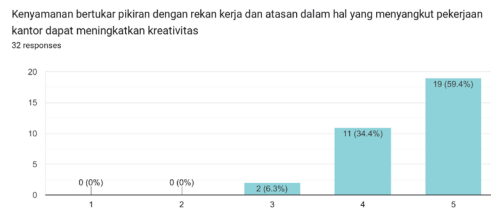
**Image 5. Influence of The Relationship Between Colleagues and Superiors on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Most respondents (n=15/32, 46.9%) strongly agree that relationships with colleagues and superiors might affect their creativity. The parameters are having good relations with coworkers and having good relations with superiors. The qualitative results validate:

*“Because the interaction with coworkers could be said to be extremely casual. I feel comfortable asking colleagues if there are problems or asking for input. Relationships can give thoughts from another point of view and can increase creativity in completing tasks.”* (BR, Short-term intern, WFO)

*“The interaction between designers has a big impact, especially if the office works in a team.”* (ST, Short-term intern, WFO)

**(2) Influence of The Comfort Brainstorming Situation Between Colleagues on Creativity**



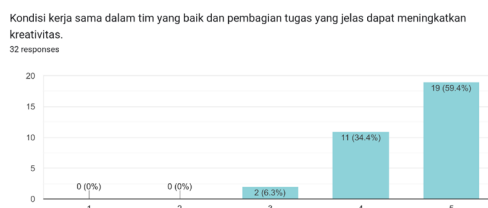
**Image 6. Influence of The Comfort Brainstorming Situation Between Colleagues on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Most respondents strongly agreed (n=19/32, 59.4%) that the ease of exchanging ideas in a comfortable brainstorming situation can significantly enhance creativity. The parameters are the intensity of brainstorming done in a week. The qualitative results affirmed it:

*“The vibes are VERY different outside and online. The hours are not set for WFH, but there is a work environment for WFO, so more questions are asked and the approach is easier.”* (DG, Short-term intern, hybrid)

*“The essential factor in improving creativity is having discussions with other design teams since sharing ideas or giving each other input would expose each other’s flaws.”* (CL, Intern, WFO).

**(3) Influence of The Teamwork and Job Division Clarity on Creativity**



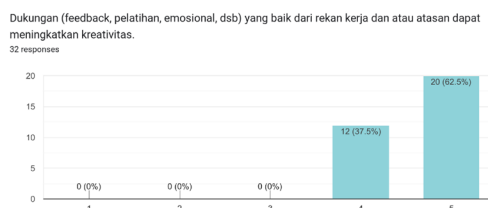
**Image 7. Influence of The Teamwork and Job Division Clarity on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Based on the survey results, most respondents (n=19/32, 59.4%) strongly agree that good working conditions in a team and a clear division of tasks can increase creativity. The parameters are quality of teamwork and division of roles. The quantitative results are supported by the qualitative responses below:

*“You don’t need to be too close or talk constantly, the important thing is mutual respect, maintain good relations, and clear division of tasks.”* (EF, Short-term Intern, WFH)

*“Our principle gives freedom to Short-term Internship Students to explore and provide opinions regarding the issues being discussed. So, the principal’s mindset can be understood when making a design decision, and vice versa.”* (DAC, Short-term Intern, hybrid)

#### **(4) Influence of Support from Colleagues or Superiors on Creativity**



**Image 8. Influence of Support from Colleagues or Superiors on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Most respondents (n=20/32, 62.5%) stated that they had good support from colleagues or superiors, either from feedback, training and teaching, emotional support, etc., which that kind of support could significantly increase their creativity. The parameters are creativity improved significantly affected by supportive partners. It is verified by the qualitative results below:

*“If designers are rarely supported or appreciated for their work by the principal, sometimes they can be less motivated.”* (AG, Intern, WFO)

*“All my coworkers are very friendly and always want to help me with support and provide feedback, the work being done becomes more active.”* (DG, Short-term Intern, hybrid)

### **(5) Influence of Challenging Working Conditions or Projects on Creativity**



**Image 9. Influence of Challenging Working Conditions/Projects on Creativity (Res. Team, 2022)**

Most respondents (n=14/32, 43.8%) strongly agree that challenging working conditions or challenging projects will increase creativity. The parameters are rate of contentment by challenging tasks. Qualitative insights confirmed it:

*“...the differences in the projects given make them think more broadly.”* (ST, Short-term Intern, WFO)

The social environment obviously can affect creativity and the design process. Students who undergo practical work or internships on the WFO system have closer relationships, more convenience in exchanging ideas, ease of getting support, etc. These things can affect the creativity and design process of students so that in a social environment, the WFO system is arguably better in increasing creativity.

### **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research showed that both the physical and social environment of the office can affect creativity in carrying out the design process. These aspects were supported by important factors: the completeness of office facilities, visual comfort, thermal comfort, acoustic comfort, good relationship, convenience to exchange thoughts, good teamwork and clear division of tasks, good support, and challenging projects. The differences in the WFH, WFO, and hybrid systems can be more found in the social environment where interns with direct engagement or in a WFO system situation have the convenience of conversing, exchanging ideas, receiving support and evaluation from colleagues and superiors or principals, thus believed to enhance their creativity building in the design process. Whilst with the physical environment factors, the WFH, WFO, and hybrid system found similarities, whereas the creative thinking process needed support from the work environment situation.

Daikoku et al. (2021) stated that the comfort of the environment, both physical and social, provides space for the mind to focus on alternative solutions and thus, to solving a problem. In the absence of distraction from the outside environment, the mind can easily generate creative ideas in the unconscious or semi-conscious stage of the effort.

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