

## Cafés as Conducive Workspaces: The Intersection of Sappāya VII and a Happy Workplace\*



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### Abstract

As an alternative to traditional office facilities, cafés have been increasing in popularity. The article mixes theory and documentary analysis to show how useful café-style workstations may be for many different things. It combines ideas from the fields of organizational psychology, workstation design, and Buddhist studies. According on Buddhist *Sappāya* principles, which aim to promote well-being, this study investigates how café workspaces are designed and utilized.

The article shows that the basic qualities of cafés, such as their friendly atmospheres, sense of community, and subtle encouragement of conscious connection, are in line with the main ideas of *Sappāya*. The papers carefully investigated data from scholarly publications, case studies, and related theoretical constructs to come up with a new conceptual framework that intelligently mixes with *Sappāya* insights from environmental psychology. This unified model gives a complete plan for making the most of modern work places by giving useful tips for improving mental health, encouraging mindfulness, and making work environments in coffee shops more productive.

**Keywords:** Sappāya VII; Workplace Happiness; Cafe as the Workplaces; Environmental Design

### Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of remote work, cafés have become vital alternative workspaces that merge productivity with relaxation. As third places, cafés create environments separate from home and office that enhance creativity, collaboration, and well-being (Oldenburg, 1997). Nevertheless, cafés frequently struggle to address the ergonomic, sensory, and psychological requirements of professionals. Factors like noise control, seating design, and mindfulness incorporation can affect overall workplace satisfaction (Evans and McCoy, 1998). The imperative to establish structured frameworks that enhance cafés as effective workspaces necessitates an examination of Buddhist environmental principles and theories of workplace happiness to improve these settings.

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A diverse array of scholarly frameworks and Buddhist philosophies elucidate strategies for enhancing occupational environments within café contexts. According to the PERMA Model of Well-being (Seligman, 2011) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan, and Deci, 2000), engagement, independence, and healthy interpersonal connections are crucial for sustaining workplace satisfaction. Moreover, Sappāya VII, a Buddhist paradigm for holistic mental and physical health (Buddhadasa, 2004), delineates seven fundamental conditions—such as Avasa-sappāya (suitable dwelling place) and Dhamma-sappāya (suitable teaching)—that have the potential to augment café atmospheres. The utilization of Dhamma music, recognized for its soothing properties, has also been documented as a mechanism to alleviate stress and enhance concentration (Ricard, 2014). Through the synthesis of these theoretical frameworks and practices, this investigation explores the applicability of Sappāya VII in the development of a systematic Happiness Workplace Model tailored for café employment settings.

This investigation is driven by the escalating necessity for meticulously crafted, adaptable work environments that enhance professional efficiency and promote individual well-being. Although numerous cafés offer visually appealing atmospheres, they frequently lack systematic methodologies aimed at ensuring prolonged workplace satisfaction. This inquiry intends to make a significant contribution to the disciplines of Buddhist workplace ethics, environmental psychology, and innovative workspace design, providing pragmatic insights for café proprietors, urban designers, and professionals striving to cultivate mindful, efficient, and harmonious work settings. By integrating theoretical frameworks with practical implementations, this research aspires to develop a model that fosters both cognitive clarity and professional involvement within café-centric workspaces.

### **The Role of Cafés as Effective Workspaces in Modern Professional Culture**

The construct of happiness within a professional setting is intricate, integrating both extrinsic and intrinsic elements that play a pivotal role in an employee's comprehensive well-being and contentment. Workplace happiness is frequently synonymous with well-being, defined by elevated life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and a reduction in negative affect (Fitriana, Hutagalung, Awang, and Zaid, 2022). This construct necessitates a constructive and health-promoting organizational climate that cultivates communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation, thereby augmenting employee satisfaction and commitment (Firmansyah, and Wahdiniwaty, 2023). The principles of positive psychology, when adeptly incorporated into the professional milieu, can substantially enhance employees' psychological health and organizational affiliation, although the specific influence on workplace happiness may exhibit variability (Khair, 2023). The external occupational environment and internal cognitive frameworks constitute essential components, with the latter frequently receiving insufficient attention relative to external determinants (Mari et al. 2023). For the younger demographic, who place a premium on work-life equilibrium, happiness

in the workplace is paramount for the recruitment and retention of exceptional talent, thereby necessitating strategic talent relationship management to ensure alignment with their values and anticipations (Januari, 2022).

The findings derived from Köhler's (2019) investigation underscore the notion that meticulously designed activity-based workspaces (ABW) possess the potential to significantly enhance employee satisfaction by addressing crucial environmental factors—most notably, acoustic privacy. Among the diverse strategies examined, the implementation of acoustic desk barriers emerged as an exceptionally effective intervention. By granting employees the agency to regulate their auditory surroundings, such barriers mitigate disturbances and cultivate a more personalized and comfortable workspace. This enhanced sense of autonomy and focus can consequently elevate overall well-being and productivity, as employees perceive themselves to be more adequately supported in their professional pursuits.

The arrangement of office settings greatly affects employee contentment by nurturing a space that encourages health, job satisfaction, and active participation. Contemporary principles of workplace design underscore the significance of holistic well-being, harmonizing personal and professional spheres—a necessity for the emerging workforce that prioritizes inclusivity and interpersonal connections (Gaurang, 2022). An optimally designed work environment can substantially enhance the quality of life for employees by addressing their environmental and functional requirements, ultimately leading to elevated levels of job satisfaction and performance outcomes (Abouelela, 2022). Different types of office setups, like closed offices versus open areas, have shown through research to affect how happy employees feel and their job satisfaction, with closed offices usually providing better outcomes. Furthermore, workplace cultures that emphasize health, respect, and trust are instrumental in fostering employee happiness and retention, as well as enhancing team performance and talent development (Magnier-Watanabe, Benton, Uchida, and Orsini, 2019). The role of leadership is pivotal in the cultivation of these cultures, which consequently affects employee satisfaction and productivity.

Khaerunnisa, and Putri (2024) have identified that ergonomic interior design significantly impacts employee satisfaction by fostering a supportive work environment that promotes both physical and psychological wellness. Components such as optimal illumination, adequate ventilation, and thoughtfully arranged workspaces are crucial in mitigating work-related stress and improving comfort levels. This research highlights the premise that a carefully designed ergonomic workspace not only enhances employee health but also contributes to overall job satisfaction. The investigation conducted by Lee (2023) elucidates the considerable influence of physical office design on employee satisfaction and the overall workplace experience. A deficiency in personal space significantly undermines employee satisfaction, whereas factors such as spatial configuration, quality of furnishings, circulation pathways, ventilation systems, and hygienic amenities shape perceptions of the environment. These components

synergistically affect comfort, productivity, and overall well-being within the workplace. Also, the investigation unveils that employee evaluations of design details might possess greater relevance than their own stated satisfaction levels. This revelation underscores the necessity of incorporating health-centric, human-centered design methodologies in the planning and management of office spaces. By addressing these environmental determinants, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction while simultaneously improving workplace efficiency and sustainability. Consequently, they can cultivate environments that are advantageous for employees and operate effectively from both economic and ecological perspectives. The astute amalgamation of biophilic design components (Atwa, and Sale, 2023), which meticulously integrate natural elements within the constructed environment, alongside the tenets of ergonomic science, which prioritize human well-being and operational efficacy, can serve as a significant impetus for the establishment of a holistic and comprehensive framework that is specifically designed to substantially enhance the overall quality of diverse office settings.

The development of a workspace that promotes employee innovation and operational efficiency necessitates a multifaceted strategy that integrates physical, cognitive, and organizational elements. Corporations such as Google, Apple, and Facebook exemplify the successful implementation of innovative work environments that diverge from conventional designs, highlighting the critical importance of a meticulously orchestrated physical environment in fostering creativity (Meinel, Maier, Wagner, and Voigt, 2017). However, academic literature indicates that the formulation of such environments is complex and requires an in-depth understanding of how various workspace characteristics can either facilitate or obstruct innovation. Therefore, a holistic approach that combines flexible, collaborative, and psychologically supportive elements is essential for the creation of a workspace that maximizes employee innovation and efficiency.

### **The Applicability of the Buddhist Sappāya VII Principles in Promoting Workplace Satisfaction**

The pedagogical insights of the Buddha concerning the seven "conducive conditions" (Sappāya 7) as articulated in the Anguttara Nikāya 10.11, present a holistic framework that not only fosters spiritual advancement but also facilitates the creation of contexts that enhance physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being. When these principles are implemented within the domain of workplace design and organizational ethos, each condition represents an essential element of a salubrious, efficient, and purposeful working milieu. The Sappāya 7 within the Tipitika outlines Suitable Shelter (Avāsa-sappāya), Suitable Cuisine (Bhojana-sappāya), Suitable Weather Conditions (Utu-sappāya), Suitable Body Position (Iriyāpatha-sappāya), Suitable Persons (Puggala-sappāya), Suitable Teaching Methods (Bhassa-sappāya), and Suitable Aptitudes (Gocara sappāya).

These characteristics are essential for any individual who seeks to teach, clarify, or authentically embody the Dhamma. In the realm of professional pursuits and occupational duties, this specific concept relates to the meticulous endeavor of structuring and enhancing the surrounding environment while concurrently selecting an appropriately favorable location that not only enhances productivity but also considerably facilitates the successful realization of predefined objectives in a manner that is both efficacious and efficient.

1) *Avasa Sappāya* (Suitable abode): A tranquil and serene environment that fosters cognitive growth and concentration. In occupational contexts, this is reflected in the architectural design of workspaces aimed at reducing potential distractions while simultaneously enhancing tranquility and productivity (Disastra, and Choandi, 2024).

2) *Bhojana Sappāya* (Suitable Food): Nutritionally advantageous food that fosters a state of mindfulness while avoiding any form of physical or psychological disturbance. Within the professional environment, this necessitates the provision of healthful and accessible dietary alternatives that facilitate sustained levels of productivity (Melián-Fleitas et al., 2021).

3) *Iriyapatha Sappāya* (Suitable Posture): Optimal postural arrangements that foster both comfort and attentiveness, tailored to various tasks. The design of the workplace ought to incorporate ergonomic furnishings and enable mobility to improve overall well-being (Yin, and Zhang, 2024).

4) *Puggala Sappāya* (Suitable People): Engagement with supportive individuals who share collaborative ideologies is essential. In professional contexts, this leads to team formation centered around common goals and values. Such collaboration enhances productivity and fosters a positive organizational culture, promoting innovation through diverse perspectives. (Chowdhury, 2019). An environment that prioritizes open communication and respect among team members further bolsters collaboration, facilitating dynamic idea exchange and creativity.

5) *Bhassa Sappāya* (Suitable conversation): This highlights environments conducive to personal development and engagement. Meaningful work and mental stimulation enhance creativity and job satisfaction (Rein, 1964).

6) *Utu Sappāya* (Suitable Climate): A well-organized physical environment characterized by optimal air quality, comfortable temperature, and aesthetic appeal. This condition fosters comfort and enhances concentration, thereby increasing productivity and job satisfaction. (Hamed et al. 2024)

7) *Gocara Sappāya* (Suitable area): Fostering physical and psychological wellness through coordinated sensory inputs. In professional settings, it is essential to avoid monotonous or overly strenuous tasks while ensuring that resources and organizational frameworks support sustained productivity (Reynolds, and Bennett, 2023). Establishing a harmonious environment that emphasizes employee welfare can stimulate creativity and teamwork, thereby enhancing organizational success.

The integration of Buddhist aesthetic principles along with semantic considerations in workplace architecture has the potential to significantly augment feelings of satisfaction and joy, as these elements are often associated with positive emotional experiences and personal development (Prohl, 2022). Chen, Porter, and Tang (2022) contend that the environment is instrumental in fostering mindfulness practices, with participants recognizing 'ambiance,' 'comfort,' and 'tranquility' as the three essential spatial characteristics that enhance their experiences. This underscores the imperative to develop meticulously designed contemplative spaces that facilitate mindfulness.

In conclusion, the Buddhist Sappāya VII principles provide a significant framework for enhancing workplace satisfaction. Each condition addresses vital aspects of human well-being in professional environments, including physical space and interpersonal relationships. When applied effectively, these principles foster mindfulness, collaboration, and emotional equilibrium. Contemporary examples, such as mindfulness cafés, illustrate the practical relevance of these teachings. As organizations pursue holistic employee well-being, the Sappāya VII principles serve as a crucial resource for developing meaningful and ethically sound workspaces.

### **Cafés as Workspaces: The Psychological and Social Dimensions**

The concept of employing a café as a workspace is closely linked to the theory of third places, as delineated by sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1997). Third places refer to settings distinct from the home (first place) and the workplace (second place), which promote social interaction, creativity, and a sense of community. The emergence of such spaces—public venues beyond domestic and professional realms—has positioned cafés as micro co-working environments. As urban professional culture evolves, many individuals seek non-traditional workspaces that offer both autonomy and social connectivity. Cafés present a viable alternative to conventional offices, balancing focused work with informal collaboration.

The sociocultural milieu of cafés facilitates informal interactions and the exchange of ideas, thereby potentially enhancing team cohesion and fostering innovative thinking. The inclusion of coffee and food services within professional environments has become a significant factor in motivating employees to return to on-site work settings (Kaschafi, 2023). Specialty coffee, commonly available in cafés, offers a multisensory experience that can improve employee satisfaction and engagement, thereby contributing to a more productive work environment. Kurniawan (2022) examined how specialty coffee redefines traditional coffee breaks in the workplace, particularly in the evolving context of Saudi Arabia. Findings suggest that specialty coffee enhances cognitive performance, team collaboration, and employee morale. These enhanced breaks foster productivity and reflect a shift toward more enjoyable and meaningful workplace experiences. Additionally, the emphasis on sustainability

and social responsibility in the specialty coffee industry contributes to a greater sense of purpose among employees, further enriching the workplace culture.

The transformation of cafés into informal work environments signifies the increasing necessity for versatile settings that accommodate contemporary remote employees, particularly those identified as digital nomads. This transition corresponds with extensive trends in the hospitality industry towards hybrid work-leisure environments, wherein cafés function simultaneously as social centers and productivity spaces. The deliberate implementation of interior aesthetics—comprising elements such as lighting, design features, and spatial configuration—enhances both creativity and comfort (Fariyanti, 2020), while the influence of background music is crucial in augmenting concentration and emotional state, contingent upon musical genre and personal inclinations (Park, Kwak, and Han, 2020). The emergence of the “workation” phenomenon, which amalgamates professional responsibilities with vacationing, has established Thailand as a prominent locale for digital nomads, attributed to its hospitable café environment, dependable internet connectivity, and economical living conditions (Choi, and Qu, 2024). In response, Thailand’s hospitality industry has innovatively evolved by providing hybrid facilities that integrate accommodations with coworking spaces, meticulously designed to meet the specific requirements of this transient labor force (Orel, 2020).

In conclusion, cafés have evolved into dynamic third places that support the psychological and social needs of the modern workforce. By offering a blend of sensory-rich environments, social interaction, and flexible workspace design, cafés foster creativity, emotional well-being, and a sense of community. Their role in enhancing cognitive performance, promoting informal collaboration, and accommodating lifestyle shifts such as remote work and “workation” culture underscores their growing relevance in professional life. As hybrid work models expand globally, cafés continue to emerge as vital spaces that balance productivity with human connection, satisfying both the mental and social dimensions of contemporary work.

### **The Conceptual Framework that Merges Insights from Environmental Psychology and Sappāya VII Principles for Café-Oriented Workspaces**

Avasa Sappāya underscores the necessity of a serene environment to optimize mental health and productivity. This principle necessitates the integration of design elements in cafés that harmonize social engagement with concentrated work (Pathirana, and Wijesundara, 2024). Café configurations should feature specific quiet areas for intensive tasks alongside communal spaces for networking. The spatial design must also address noise reduction through acoustic measures to prevent disturbances for those seeking focus. Furthermore, the inclusion of private booths, comfortable seating, and flexible lighting significantly improves the workspace ambiance, rendering cafés more effective for work.

Cafés exemplify the Bhojana Sappāya principle by providing nourishment that supports physical and psychological health. An optimal café workspace should focus on a health-promoting menu that avoids the lethargy associated with heavy consumption. Offering balanced food choices, including protein-rich snacks and brain-enhancing drinks, fosters productivity. In addition, café designs that encourage mindful eating through considerate seating arrangements and tranquil settings contribute to overall wellness and enhance work performance. A balanced diet consists of fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy products. The provision of healthy snacks promotes better dietary choices and stable energy levels. Health promotion initiatives like food labeling and portion control aid in informed dietary decisions. Offering nutritious meals demonstrates organizational concern, positively affecting employee satisfaction and retention (Smith et al. 2020). Furthermore, innovative naming of dishes can affect food choices and encourage engagement with healthier selections (Gavrieli et al. 2020).

Iriyapatha Sappāya emphasizes the necessity of appropriate postures and movement for sustained physical health. Numerous cafés offer varied seating options, addressing distinct postural requirements. Nevertheless, extended sitting without ergonomic support can lead to discomfort and decreased productivity. To effectively apply this principle, cafés should implement adaptable seating configurations, standing desk alternatives, and movement-oriented environments. Biophilic design enhances ergonomics by incorporating natural elements, including flora, wood textures, and natural light into workspaces (Atwa, and Saleh, 2023). Research indicates that nature exposure improves cognitive performance and alleviates stress. By integrating biophilic components, such as indoor plants and aquatic features, cafés can cultivate an atmosphere that promotes physical and mental wellness. A workspace that harmonizes ergonomic support with natural elements creates a comprehensive environment that encourages concentration and tranquility.

A café workspace is enriched by quality social interactions. Puggala Sappāya emphasizes the importance of supportive peers. Cafés can facilitate meaningful connections and professional networking. Implementing communal worktables, networking events, and discussion-friendly spaces can enhance social engagement. However, cafés must also provide quiet zones for individuals needing solitude, balancing social and personal requirements.

Bhassa Sappāya denotes engagement with instructive teachings that cultivate insight, ethical behavior, and professional advancement. Numerous cafés inherently embody this concept by facilitating book clubs, lectures, or knowledge-sharing gatherings. Cafés that integrate selected reading materials, showcase inspirational quotes, or offer spaces for collaborative discourse enhance intellectual engagement. Fostering respectful and enriching conversations while ensuring a distraction-free environment allows patrons to gain both motivation and concentration. In Thailand, cafés such as Paccattam Café, Nàtha Café, and Ayatana Café exemplify this concept through mindfulness-oriented settings. Especially,

Ayatana Café's donation initiative promotes compassion and collective purpose with each purchase (Chompoo, and Tohsati, 2024). These examples demonstrate the integration of Buddhist principles into daily environments, fostering mindfulness in customers and satisfaction among employees within a spiritually guided work culture.

Utu Sappāya underscores the importance of a well-regulated physical environment that fosters both comfort and cognitive clarity. A variety of components, including air quality, thermal regulation, and acoustic management, play a crucial role in fostering an environment that is favorable for productivity in a workplace. A café must ensure adequate ventilation, implement effective temperature control mechanisms, and limit overcrowding to avert discomfort. Furthermore, aspects of interior design such as gentle illumination, soothing color schemes, and soundproofing strategies enhance the overall harmony and functionality of the workspace. Café atmospheres must strike a balance between sensory allure and the creation of a space that nurtures focus.

Gocara Sappāya, which emphasizes the suitability of surroundings and activities, aligns closely with principles from environmental psychology in shaping café-oriented workspaces that support cognitive focus and well-being. From this integrated perspective, managing sensory stimuli is essential for sustaining attention and minimizing distractions. Background music, for instance, should be thoughtfully curated to enhance mood and concentration without disrupting the workflow—a concept supported by research in workplace acoustics and sensory ergonomics. Seating layouts must reduce foot traffic near work zones, creating psychologically supportive spaces that balance openness with quiet. Additionally, improvements in technological infrastructure—such as well-placed charging ports and optimized lighting conditions—align with both physical comfort and perceptual clarity, enhancing task engagement. This convergence of Sappāya VII and environmental psychology offers a conceptual framework for designing mindful café work environments that harmonize sensory experience, spatial function, and personal productivity.

The synthesis of Sappāya VII principles with environmental psychology yields a robust framework for creating café workspaces that enhance well-being and productivity. Each principle—encompassing space, nutrition, posture, climate, and social interaction—corresponds with essential environmental psychology concepts, highlighting the importance of design, sensory management, and engagement in human experience. When applied judiciously, this integrated framework fosters not only physical and cognitive capabilities but also emotional and ethical aspects of workplace satisfaction. Cafés embracing this model can function as adaptable and inclusive spaces catering to the diverse requirements of remote workers, digital nomads, and contemporary professionals. The amalgamation of Buddhist spatial philosophies with empirical psychological research establishes a significant approach for developing environments that promote concentration, social cohesion, and tranquility—elevating cafés to become intentional third spaces beyond their conventional functions.

## Conclusion

This study explored the intersection between environmental psychology and the Buddhist framework of Sappāya VII, with the aim of understanding how café spaces can function as happiness-oriented work environments. The findings highlight that cafés are not only social hubs but also evolving third places that offer meaningful psychological and sensory benefits for modern workers. The integration of Sappāya VII principles—such as suitable dwelling, suitable food, supportive people, and suitable conversation—demonstrates how physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being can be cultivated in informal workplace settings.

By aligning elements such as spatial arrangement, lighting, music, ergonomics, and nutrition with Buddhist-informed principles, café spaces can become holistic environments that foster mindfulness, productivity, and satisfaction. Moreover, the emerging work-life trends among digital nomads and remote professionals further validate the relevance of hybrid, flexible workspaces. As cafés continue to merge functionality with intentional design and ethical values, the Sappāya VII framework offers a valuable guide for shaping inclusive, peaceful, and psychologically enriching work environments in the post-pandemic era.

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