

Does Visual Aesthetics of the Workplace Matter? Analyzing the Assessment of Visual Aesthetics as Antecedent of Affective Commitment and Job Crafting

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Abstract. In this work, two objectives were addressed. First, the visual aesthetics assessment of the workplace was explored for the first time as a potential antecedent of the proactive behaviors of job crafting. Second, the potential mediating role of the affective organizational commitment in this relationship was analyzed. To address these purposes, a field study was conducted with a sample of 428 workers. Following a set of hypotheses, the results of the measurement model, $\chi^2(df) = 494.288(215)$; $CFI = .920$; $TLI = .906$; $RMSEA = .066$, showed that the visual aesthetics assessment of the workplace was significantly correlated with three of the four dimensions of job crafting ($r = .19$ with ISO-JR, $r = .15$ with IC-JD and; $r = .17$ with IST-JR; $p < .001$) and with affective organizational commitment ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). In addition, through a structural equation model, $\chi^2(df) = 494.895(219)$; $CFI = .921$; $TLI = .909$; $RMSEA = .065$, positive and significant indirect effects were found from the visual aesthetic assessment of the workplace to the same three dimensions of job crafting, all through the affective organizational commitment: $.17$ with ISO-JR, $.25$ with IC-JD and, $.23$ with IST-JR; 95% $CI [.097, .276]$, $[.161, .361]$ and $[.161, .361]$, respectively. The results obtained provide useful evidence for researchers and managers about the value of providing an aesthetically satisfactory workplace, which would enhance the affective commitment of employees and, consequently, positively affect the proactive behaviors of job crafting.

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The work and management of organizations does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a specific physical context with its own characteristics, that affect the individuals and their behavior (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). Researchers within the field of organizational behavior and management (e.g., McElroy & Morrow, 2010; Schein, 1985; Strati, 2010), as well as in psychology and environmental design (Gosling, Gifford, & McCunn, 2013), agree that the aesthetic dimension of the workplace affects its occupants through the affective responses it evokes (e.g., Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004). Likewise, it has been proven that these affective responses impact not only well-being at work (e.g., Schell, Theorell, & Saraste, 2011), but also other related variables such as motivation and job satisfaction (e.g., Vilnai-Yavetz, Rafaeli, & Yaacov, 2005), sustainable behavior (e.g., Waistell, 2016),

performance and effectiveness (e.g., Baron, 1994), and productivity (e.g., Gagliardi, 1996; Strati, 2010; Warren, 2008). At this point it is important to note that, although aesthetics can be appreciated through the five senses (Baron, 1994; Gagliardi, 1996; Strati, 2010), and there is research that analyzes the effect of olfactory (e.g., Baron & Thomley, 1994), tactile (e.g., Hornik, 1992) or auditory (e.g., Banbury & Berry, 2005) stimuli, literature tends to focus on the visual aspects due to their importance in the perception of space (Berleant, 2018; Parsons & Daniel, 2002).

On the other hand, the individual is not only affected by the environment, but is also an active agent that can influence his/her own environment and his/her role within the organization (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In this sense, the new work design requires

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organizations to increasingly count on empowered workers with autonomy, capable of anticipating and engaging in proactive and innovative behaviors (Oldham & Hackman, 2010), which in turn allow them to experience higher levels of well-being, commitment and performance (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler, & Saks, 2014; Kooij, Tims, & Akkermans, 2017). There is hardly any research on how work design can trigger aesthetic experiences and its potential effects, although at least one study has found that the aesthetic experiences of employees contribute greatly to their level of affective commitment, represented by pride, pleasure at work and flow experiences (De Groot, Weggeman, & van Aken, 2015). Consequently, it is necessary to further deepen the study of the relationship between the variables of the physical context of work, the person and the organization (Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004), in order to promote positive feedback flows between them (Dazkir & Read, 2012). In this sense, research results have shown that when workers experience a greater affective commitment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Stanley, 2016), they tend to be more proactive, to design and shape their work, to challenge themselves and to mobilize their resources to achieve their objectives; a set of attitudes and behaviors known in the literature as job crafting (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Based on previous research, the present study aims to analyze the assessment of the visual aesthetic dimension of the workplace as antecedent of affective commitment to the organization and of job crafting. Therefore, in this work three models are complemented that share their interest in providing explanations for organizational dynamics focused on three fundamental elements: The context, the person and behavior. These three conceptual frameworks are: the impact of the physical workplace model (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007, Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2005); Allen and Meyer's (1990) organizational commitment model (Meyer & Stanley, 2016), and the Job Demand-Resources model (hereinafter, JD-R), in which the behaviors of job crafting are framed (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014).

The explanation proposed in the impact of the physical workplace model distinguishes three dimensions: Instrumental, symbolic and aesthetic. In the present study, the focus is placed on this last dimension, because although aesthetics, or what can be seen of an organization, is a vital aspect of its existence, it tends to be omitted from analysis in both, research (Strati, 2010) and in literature reviews (e.g., Oldham & Fried, 2016). However, there is consistent evidence to show that aesthetics affects people, especially from the affective responses it evokes in them, impacting their attitudes

and behaviors (e.g., Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004). In this sense, Allen and Meyer (1990, Meyer & Stanley, 2016) proposed in their model that organizational commitment has three components: continuance, normative and affective. Each of these types of commitment has certain antecedent and consequential factors. Affective commitment can have two main antecedents: Personal characteristics and work experience; and diverse consequential factors, such as turnover (or intention to leave the organization), employee's health and wellbeing, and workplace behaviors (e.g., absenteeism, organizational citizenship behavior or performance, among others). The present study proposes analyzing a component of work experience as an antecedent of affective commitment: The aesthetic dimension of the workplace, in relation to a particular type of workplace behavior, such as the proactive behaviors of job crafting (Tims et al., 2012), which are framed in the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014).

Similarly to how the aesthetic experience has been related to other work feelings, such as intrinsic motivation, peak experiences or flow experiences, which in turn influence the results of work (effectiveness, productivity, creativity) (Sandelands & Buckner, 1989), the present study aims to increase the evidence on the relationship between aesthetic experience and affective commitment (De Groot et al., 2015) and to test the mediating role of the latter in the relationship between aesthetic experience and the performance of proactive behaviors at work.

Specifically, this research is structured around two objectives that, to our knowledge, have not been studied so far. The first objective focuses on exploring, for the first time, the role of the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace as a potential antecedent of the proactive behaviors of job crafting. The second objective is to explore the potential mediating role of affective organizational commitment in the relationship between the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace and job crafting.

Regarding its applied value, the present study aims to provide useful evidence in the challenge of promoting the generation of more satisfactory work environments. This goal implies not underestimating the role that the aesthetic dimension of the workplace can play in the affective and behavioral sphere, even more so taking into consideration that it is a variable susceptible to manipulation for the benefit of the person and the organization.

Next, the main theoretical antecedents that support the novelty and relevance of this research are presented, the study is explained and carried out and, finally, the results are analyzed, and their limitations and challenges are discussed.

The importance of the physical workplace

The physical workplace refers to the physical environment of the organization, the material elements of the area that surrounds the employee and the characteristics of that context (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). Researchers of organizational behavior and management have provided evidence of the effect of the physical environment of the organization on employees and their work (e.g., Alcover, Martínez-Íñigo, & Chambel, 2012; Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Schein, 1985). In fact, important reviews agree on the positive effect that a pleasant workplace has on employees (e.g., Sundstrom, 1987), by reducing discomfort, reducing occupational risks and absenteeism, improving effectiveness, job satisfaction and, therefore, productivity (e.g., Gagliardi, 1996; Warren, 2008).

According to Vilnai-Yavetz et al. (2005, see also Elsbach & Pratt, 2007, Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004), the analysis of the physical environment of organizations distinguishes three dimensions: instrumental, symbolic and aesthetic. The study of the characteristics of the physical workplace has been mainly concerned with instrumentality, especially from the disciplines of Human Factors and Ergonomics, in order to adapt the working conditions to the person and the tasks. From this perspective, plenty of evidence has emerged regarding the impact that the physical context of work has on the health and well-being of its occupants (e.g., Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004), on decision-making and on productivity at work (e.g., Waistell, 2016). Regarding the symbolic dimension of the organization, it refers to the associations elicited by the environment, the significance of the built environment and the interpretation that people make of it (Gagliardi, 1992). Thus, the symbolic aspect is associated with studies on the identity, culture and reputation of the organization, and its relationship with variables such as the promotion of affiliation or exclusion (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007). A more recently associated concept that has gained relevance is the idea of embodied cognition (Harquail & Wilcox King, 2010). From this perspective, the focus is on understanding the process of constructing the identity of the organization. This model proposes that what is known and experienced in the workplace is a function of what has been lived or experienced bodily, beyond the cognition understood in a traditional or merely mental way. In this line, therefore, the sensory experience plays a relevant role in the creation and interpretation of the different meanings and symbols to represent what people perceive in the organization and in relation to it. This ability to process information when interacting with the organizational environment is part of the experiences processed through embodied cognition.

Next, the importance of the study of the aesthetic dimension as an antecedent of affective commitment and job crafting is developed.

The importance of the aesthetic dimension of the workplace

According to Schein (1985), the elements of the physical workplace are visible and tangible manifestations of an organization and, therefore, could be subject to aesthetic assessment. However, even though the appearance and what is seen of an organization is a vital aspect of its existence, in organizational studies, it tends to be omitted from the analyses (Strati, 2010; Oldham & Fried, 2016). Generally, for organizational behavior researchers, the focus is on the study of individual, social or organizational dynamics, downplaying the role played by the aesthetics of the workplace in the adequate functioning of organizations (Schell et al., 2011). With some exceptions, until recently, the publications in the Human Factors area of study were practically devoid of references to aesthetics (Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004). However, those responsible for management should not underestimate the power of workplace aesthetics on behavior, given that it is a controllable factor that influences people's perceptions and can be adjusted to their needs. For this reason, some authors have suggested it should be addressed independently from and complementary to ergonomic assessments (Schell et al., 2011). As a result, there is an incipient field of research that addresses the study of aesthetics in organizations, defining it as the sensory experience of pleasure that a person has regarding his/her physical workplace (Baron, 1994; Gagliardi, 1996; Strati, 2010; Taylor & Hansen, 2005; Warren, 2008). This experience involves personal assessments of whether the workplace is attractive or desirable, or whether it has a pleasant appearance (Lindgaard & Whitfield, 2004). From this perspective, the concept of aesthetics does not refer to the objective *beauty* of a place, which could be judged by an expert (e.g., an architect or a designer), as the aesthetic assessment of an expert and a non-expert may differ (e.g., Gosling et al., 2013). What is of interest here is the subjective assessment, as an antecedent of affective reactions and personal behaviors.

In line with different reviews (Gagliardi, 1996; Strati, 2010; Taylor & Hansen 2005; Warren, 2008), the focus of the present study considers that, far from being frivolous, visual aesthetics plays an important role in improving both the use and the enjoyment of work environments, as well as in the attitudes that people develop with respect to the organization in which they work. To this end, the study further delves into the identification of antecedents of organizational behavior, analyzing the relationship between visual aesthetics, people's affective response and their behavior at work.

The visual aesthetics of the workplace and the affective commitment with the organization

As the visual aesthetics of the workplace can evoke different responses in its occupants, it can influence the way people experience, react, affiliate, approach or avoid contact with organizational environments (Dazkir & Read, 2012). Therefore, as a result of its assessment, the aesthetics of the workplace could provide a personal feeling towards the organization, which could contribute to the explanation of the degree of commitment to it (Veitch, Stokkermans, & Newsham, 2013).

Due to its relevance, one of the most studied areas of management and organizational behavior is the affective bond that the employee has with the organization. Thus, the present study will focus on a particular type of commitment that is considered potentially related to the aesthetic dimension: the affective organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employee commitment has strong implications on the person (e.g., satisfaction), on his/her work (e.g., performance) and on the functioning of the organization. Moreover, commitment is related to turnover, absenteeism, and productivity (Alcover et al., 2012).

Research has shown that physical contexts perceived as convenient, safe and pleasant (colorful, adequate light, etc.) are positively related to organizational commitment (Veitch et al., 2013). Similarly, the redesign of working environments through changes in physical disposition (greater openness and avoidance of obstacles, etc.) influences the affective organizational commitment (McElroy & Morrow, 2010). Likewise, it has been suggested that the presence of a “feel good aesthetic” is related to variables such as the goodness and decency of the organization, which in turn strengthens the loyalty and commitment of employees (Hancock, 2005).

Organizational commitment and job crafting

When employees feel committed to the organization, they are more proactive, they design and shape their work, they raise their own challenges and mobilize their resources to meet their objectives. Consequently, it can be said that organizational commitment is closely related to another emerging process: Job crafting (Meyer & Stanley, 2016; Petrou, Bakker, & den Heuvel, 2016).

Job crafting refers to a set of proactive behaviors that seek to modify and influence one’s work, including physical and cognitive changes that people perform in their tasks, within the limits of their relationships at work, in their own job challenges and demands and in the resources to achieve or optimize their personal goals (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In line with this seminal definition and based on the JD-R model

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), job crafting is defined as the changes that employees can make in their job demands and resources with their personal skills and needs (Tims & Bakker, 2010). According to the JD-R model, all work characteristics can be classified into two large groups: Job demands or job resources. Job demands refer to all aspects of work that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills. Therefore, job demands are associated with certain physiological or psychological costs, such as workload and emotionally demanding interactions with others. Job resources refer to the process of reaching goals, reducing job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and stimulating personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), for example, autonomy and performance. In this case, job crafting tries to shape a job according to the preferences and abilities of the individual (Berg & Dutton, 2008), that is, with the aim to initiate real change behaviors in job demands or job resources. Thus, through the redesign of their work, people can change and choose tasks, negotiate content and assign meaning to their functions. Therefore, job crafting has a motivational potential, as it constitutes a set of physical, psychological and social acts that affects the identity of work and its meaning (Tims et al., 2012).

From this perspective, job crafting comprises a set of employee behaviors oriented towards modifying the social and structural resources of work: Increasing learning opportunities or autonomy at work; increasing challenges and demands at work, such as asking for new tasks and responsibilities (Petrou et al., 2016), but also reducing work demands, such as behaviors aimed at minimizing the more demanding emotional, mental or physical aspects of work; or reducing one’s workload and the pressure of time (Petrou et al., 2016). The results of a recent meta-analysis (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019) show that reciprocal and positive relations exist between job-crafting promotion-focused (increasing job resources and challenging job demands, expansion-oriented tasks, and increasing relational and cognitive activities) and work commitment, and between job crafting prevention-focused (reduction of difficult job demands, contraction-oriented tasks and relational activities) and burnout. Although this last aspect of job crafting can have a dysfunctional effect, it is considered that, well used, it can play a self-regulating role.

Regarding its operationalization, it has been widely developed across the literature, both qualitatively (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013), and in the development of quantitative measurement instruments. In fact, there are different scales available, such as the Job

Crafting Scale (Tims et al., 2012), the Job Crafting Measure (Nielsen & Abilgaard, 2012), or the Job Crafting Questionnaire (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013). Among these instruments, the first two are the most widely used, however, the second was developed with the focus on “blue collar” employees. Consequently, in the present study, the Job Crafting Scale was used, which was designed in a generic way for different employees and professions, and has a Spanish version (Ficapal-Cusí, Torrent-Sellens, Boada-Grau, & Hontangas-Beltrán, 2014).

The present study

As previously mentioned, this research has two objectives. On the one hand, exploring for the first time the role of the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace as a potential antecedent of the proactive behaviors of job crafting and, on the other, exploring the potential mediating role of affective organizational commitment in this relationship. The direction of the proposed relationships is supported by the results of several previous studies, which proved, both, the relationship of the physical work context and organizational commitment (e.g., Hancock, 2005), and the relationship between organizational commitment and job crafting (e.g., Meyer & Stanley, 2016). Specifically, the hypotheses of the model proposed in this study are the following (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1: The assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace is positively related to job crafting.

Hypothesis 2: The assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace is positively related to affective organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 3: The affective organizational commitment is positively related to job crafting.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace and job crafting is mediated by affective organizational commitment.

Method

The hypotheses proposed involve contrasting, firstly, the existence of a relationship between the variables,

and secondly, that this relationship occurs at the within-subjects level in the context of the workplace. No questions are posed in relation to the moment when the relationship between variables begins, or for how long it will be maintained. Consequently, to test the hypotheses, a correlational and transversal field study was carried out on a non-probabilistic convenience sample. This study was previously approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee of the University of La Frontera (Chile). All participants received information regarding the ethical aspects of the research, they were guaranteed the confidentiality of their data and signed an Informed Consent form, of which they were given a copy.

Participants

A total of 428 employees from public (municipalities, health centers, fire brigade, municipal education department, gendarmerie) and private (banks, schools, hotels, industrial security company) organizations from the ninth region of Chile took part in the study. Of the total of participants, 17 left more than 10% of the items in the questionnaires unanswered. Consequently, the analyzes were performed on a sample of 411 participants: 221 female employees (53.8%), 166 male employees (40.4%) and 24 who did not specify gender (5.8%); with different levels of responsibility and hierarchy (19.9% had operational positions, 69.9% had administrative and professional positions, 10.2% had managerial and head office positions, and 19.2% did not provide this information). The average seniority in the organization was 7.15 years (given that only 19 cases, 4.6%, had less than half a year of seniority, and that their elimination did not modify the adjustments and results obtained, they were maintained in the analysis). The age of the participants was determined within ranges: Younger than 26 years of age (17.4%); between 26 and 35 years of age (40%); between 36 and 45 years of age (26.5%); between 46 and 55 years of age (12.5%) and more than 55 years of age (3.7%). This sample is considered sufficiently heterogeneous and representative of the population under study and, consequently, suitable for hypothesis testing.



Figure 1. Proposed model of relationships between assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace, affective organizational commitment and job crafting.

Procedure

Data were collected between January and March 2016. In a first stage, the research team visited the organizations to inform about the scope of this study and to obtain the authorization of those responsible. In a second stage, the employees who performed their work in offices (individual or shared) were invited individually and in their own place of work, to participate. Before answering the questionnaires, the participants were informed of the objective of the study, that the participation would be completely anonymous and voluntary, and that it did not imply any physical or psychological risks. The participants did not receive any compensation in exchange for their participation. All participants read and signed an Informed Consent form and then answered the questionnaire that contained the measurements of all the variables under study, which was completed in approximately twenty minutes. Finally, the researcher collected the questionnaires, resolved any possible doubts and thanked their participation in the study.

Instruments

Assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace. To collect the personal assessments related to the visual aesthetics of the workplace, an ad hoc reflective measure was used, elaborated from the criteria considered in the aforementioned literature. Previously, the validity of this measure was analyzed by psychologists and management researchers, followed by a pilot study ($N = 78$) and an exploratory study ($N = 201$). This measure, of a one-dimensional nature, consisted of seven statements that reflect the aesthetic assessments of the workplace (e.g., "I like the decoration of this place", see Appendix 1) and whose answers were scored using a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *not at all in agreement*; up to 7 = *in total agreement*. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .95, which indicates a good internal consistency.

Affective organizational commitment. To measure this variable, a short version of the instrument created by Allen and Meyer (1990, e.g., "I feel committed to my organization"), consisting of 4 statements, was used, which had been previously adapted to Spanish and applied in the same country in which the present study was conducted (Chiang, Núñez, Martín, & Salazar, 2010). The answers were collected using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all in agreement*, 7 = *in total agreement*). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .88, which indicates a good level of internal consistency.

Job crafting. To measure this variable, a short version of the Job Crafting Scale (Tims, et al., 2012) adapted to Spanish (Ficapal-Cusí et al., 2014) was used. The measure evaluates the four dimensions of job crafting,

using three items in each of them, such as: increasing structural job resources (IST-JR; e.g., "I try to learn new things at work"; $\alpha = .85$); increasing social job resources (ARS; e.g., "I ask others for feedback on my job performance"; $\alpha = .55$); increasing challenging job demands (IC-JD, e.g., "When an interesting project comes along, I offer myself proactively as project co-worker"; $\alpha = .71$); and decreasing hindering job demands (DH-JD, e.g., "I make sure that my work is mentally less intense"; $\alpha = .66$). The answers were collected using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all in agreement*, 7 = *in total agreement*). Considering the reduced size of the sub-scales, the internal consistency levels are considered acceptable (for the full scale the α was .77). The items of all sub-scales are presented in Appendix 1.

At this point, it is important to point out that as it is a cross-sectional study using Likert scales to collect the answers, a priori measures and considerations were taken to control potential sources of bias associated with the common-method variance (hereinafter CMV; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). On the one hand, both the oral and written instructions included statements aimed at controlling two of the main sources of CMV: Social desirability, and the lack of motivation to deliver precise answers, in line with the considerations raised in the specialized literature (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Specifically, it was clearly established that in the study "there are no correct or incorrect answers" (i.e., control of social desirability), and that "the most important thing is to answer with absolute sincerity and with the greatest possible precision". It was also stated that: "Before starting, please take a few moments to place yourself in your workplace, observe it and focus on it. Then, read the following questions carefully and answer accordingly"; all this in order to reinforce the control of social desirability, as well as the potential lack of motivation to deliver precise answers (Podsakoff et al., 2012). On the other hand, it was taken into consideration that the items of the visual aesthetic assessment measure were written in a precise manner and that they would require a specific judgment on behalf of the participant (e.g., "I like the decoration of this place", see Appendix 1) and the same can be said of the affective commitment items, already widely used, (e.g., "I really care about the fate of this organization", see Appendix 1) and job crafting items (e.g., "I like to take on very difficult tasks to improve the understanding of my work", see Appendix 1). In short, the items point to well-differentiated elements of the organizational context and require a relatively demanding assessment from the participant, which also helps to avoid the possible effect of the bias associated with the CMV derived from the aforementioned causes (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Data analyses

Latent variable models of confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equations were specified through the MPlus 7 package, using the robust unweighted least squares (ULSMV) estimator. This estimator has been proposed as adequate to analyze data collected using ordinal scales (Muthén, 1993; Satorra & Bentler, 1994) and has shown a better performance in comparison to other estimators in data simulation studies (e.g., Li, 2014).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis and analysis of bivariate relationships. Firstly, a measurement model was specified through a confirmatory factorial analysis for which adjustment indices and factor loadings were found to be in the acceptable range, $\chi^2(df) = 494.288$ (215); $CFI = .920$; $TLI = .906$; $RMSEA = .066$ (low values of $RMSEA$.08, and values of CFI and TLI of .90 suggest an acceptable fit; Bollen & Long, 1993). Further details about the specification and the factor loadings can be found in Appendix (see endnote for a posteriori¹ control and analysis of the possible presence of CMV). This model was used to examine the bivariate correlations between the variables of interest (Table 1), thus addressing the first three hypotheses.

¹A posteriori control of the presence of CMV. In order to control the possible presence of CMV, three methods of a *posteriori* diagnosis were applied. Firstly, the Harman single factor test (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010) was applied. This is the most widely used method to examine the pernicious presence of CMV (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Tehseen, Ramayah, & Sajilan, 2017). The result revealed that when all the variables were included in a Principal Component analysis, five factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 accounted for 68.68% of the total variance; and that the first non-rotated factor captured only 30.24% of the variance in the data. Hence, the two assumptions underlying the presence of a problem derived from CMV were not found. That is, no single factor emerged, and the first non-rotated factor did not capture most of the variance (i.e., greater than 50%). These results suggest that CMV is not a problem in this study. Secondly, we tried modelling the possible effect of the CMV in the structural equations model. Although we managed to properly specify this type of model based on the generally accepted recommendations (e.g., Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010), the complexity of such a model in conjunction with the characteristics of the available data (i.e., sample size and measurement levels of the observed variables) prevented finding a solution for that model using MPlus or lavaan. Our understanding of the situation is that the estimation and modelling of matrices of polychoric covariances under models with this level of complexity requires a larger sample size, which is understood as a limitation of the study. Therefore, in third place, we proceeded to analyse the level of the correlations between the latent factors. As established by Bagozzi, Yi and Phillips (1991), the CMV bias “will be evident when there is a substantial correlation between the main constructs ($r > .9$)” (Tehseen et al., 2017, page 156). In this case, the correlations between latent variables were considerably lower (see Table 1), which avoided the suspicion that the measured constructs were superimposed on each other in a way that could be harmful for the adequate analysis of the hypothesis, supporting the notion of discriminant validity.

Broadly, significant positive correlations were found among all the variables of study, confirming Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, with the exception of the job crafting variable Decreasing hindering job demands, which showed no significant correlations with any of the other variables of the study.

Structural equation model and analysis of direct and indirect effects. Using the previous analysis as a basis, a structural equation model was specified that would reflect the theoretical model proposed, as shown in Figure 2. The dimensions of job crafting were freely correlated in the model. Adjustment indices and factorial loadings were found to be in the range of the acceptable, $\chi^2(df) = 494.895$ (219); $CFI = .921$; $TLI = .909$; $RMSEA = .065$, thus proceeding to analyze the hypothesized relationships (see Figure 2).

The assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace was found to be positively and significantly related to the affective organizational commitment, which in turn presented a positive and significant relationship with the dimensions of job crafting, except for the dimension of Decreasing hindering job demands. In line with the previous analysis, these results support Hypotheses 1 and 2 and, partially, Hypothesis 3.

Afterwards, using this model, the indirect effects were examined -following the recommendations made by Hayes (2009) - from the variable Assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace towards the dimensions of job crafting through the affective organizational commitment, using 5000 resamplings (bootstrap). Consistently with the previous results, and according to the fourth hypothesis, positive and significant indirect standardized effects were found on the dimensions of job crafting: .172 For Increasing social job resources, .249 for Increasing challenging job demands, and .233 for Increasing structural job resources, with an Confidence Interval at 95% CI [.097, .276], [.161, .361] and [.161, .361] respectively; but not for Decreasing hindering job demands, with an indirect effect of .024, and an Confidence Interval at 95% CI [-.045, .33]. These results confirm this hypothesis: The relationship between the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace and job crafting is mediated by the affective organizational commitment.

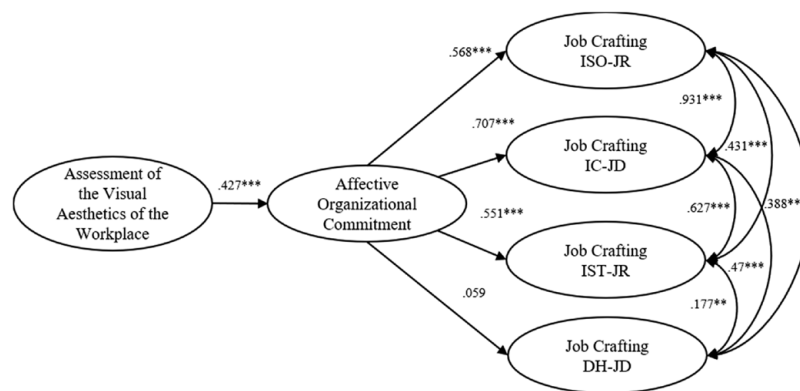
Discussion

The present work makes a worthy contribution to the field of organizational behavior and management, showing that the assessment of the visual aesthetics of the workplace can be understood as an antecedent of affective organizational commitment and job crafting. These preliminary results suggest that, through visual aesthetics, organizations can promote a greater affective commitment with the organization, which would

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations between the Assessment of the Visual Aesthetics of the Workplace, the Affective Organizational Commitment and the Job Crafting Dimension

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Assessment of the Visual Aesthetics of the Workplace	-					
2. Affective Organizational Commitment	.27***	-				
3. Job crafting – Increasing social job resources	.191***	.223***	-			
4. Job crafting – Increasing challenging job demands	.15***	.429***	.391***	-		
5. Job crafting – Increasing structural job resources	.165***	.381***	.302***	.443***	-	
6. Job crafting – Decreasing hindering job demands	.066	-.005	.154***	.19***	.114***	-

Note. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. $N = 411$.

**Figure 2.** Structural Equations Model. Regression coefficients and standardized correlations are shown.

positively impact the positive proactive behaviors associated with job crafting, with the consequent benefits for both employees and the organization (van Wingerden, Bakker, & Derks, 2016).

Our results complement empirical evidence reported so far in the literature in at least three aspects. On the one hand, the results obtained provide information on the relationship between the assessment of the aesthetic dimension and organizational behavior, something that until now was intuited, but had not been confirmed empirically (McElroy & Morrow, 2010). On the other hand, until now, only the factors of the work context (autonomy, etc.) or individual factors (personality, attitudes, etc.) had been analyzed as antecedents of job crafting. Thus, this study is a first approximation to the aesthetic assessment as antecedent of this type of behavior. These results allow adding an antecedent dimension to the job crafting models, while opening a new perspective in their study.

The research field of task design has been focused on the study of top-down processes, that is, oriented towards managers and administrators, who plan and design the work (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). In this case, the study of the processes that could improve the ability to work and encourage work motivation, helps to recognize active workers, with a need to change or customize their own jobs, which is known as proactive

bottom-up job crafting (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angeres, & Weigl, 2010). Moving forward in a perspective oriented from people towards the structure is not only novel, but recommendable, and in fact constitutes a trend that is being developed strongly in current research on organizational behavior (Berg, et al., 2013; Hornung et al., 2010; Tims et al., 2012).

Finally, this study provides a measurement instrument for the visual aesthetics of the workplace, whose extension and good levels of reliability make it a tool with the potential to diagnose the assessment that employees will make of their physical work environment, as well as a basis for further studies that seek to complement the assessment of visual aesthetics with other aspects of the perception of the organization's environment, such as, for example, the olfactory, auditory or tactile sensory dimension.

At the applied level, the results obtained in this study can be interesting for researchers of environmental and organizational psychology, as well as for designers who seek to optimize the suitability of work settings. Although research on the interaction between the physical environment and employees has a long tradition, both workplace planners and managers continue to demand evidence that the physical environment influences the functioning of the organization (Veitch et al., 2013). In this sense, it is important to emphasize

that visual aesthetics is an adjustable factor, which influences perceptions, attitudes and behaviors and, therefore, it should -and can- be adjusted to the needs and tastes of people (Gagliardi, 1996) with the purpose of promoting adequate levels of organizational commitment and performance. If it is successfully “managed”, the aesthetic becomes a powerful way of expressing the identity of the organization in the eyes of its customers and competitors, as well as on the identity of the employees themselves and, consequently, on their attitudes and their behaviors (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011). For example, according to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), job crafting can have conflicting effects on organizations, as the behaviors can be positive or negative, depending on the reasons why employees decide to make changes in their work. That is, the emergence of positive or negative feelings towards the organization, such as those experienced from the aesthetic assessment of the workplace (likes or dislikes, pleasure or displeasure), will also be expressed in the attitudes and behaviors directed towards the organization or towards work itself.

In line with Elsbach and Pratt (2007), decisions regarding aesthetics and design require a clear understanding of the effects of physical environments on the organization and its members. Investments in infrastructure are constant and expensive, hence managers should not underestimate the power of aesthetics over behavior, leaving decisions in this matter subject to the budget and preferences of managers, designers and architects. In other words, to build and inhabit more pleasant and sustainable environments, and to take on a perspective that is more beneficial for physical and emotional well-being when designing a space, should become a participatory challenge in organizations, which could imply important benefits for the employee, the organization and the society in which it is embedded.

Additionally, the results of this study also have implications for the embodied cognition perspective and the construction of the organizational identity. As noted by Harquail and Wilcox King (2010), what members get to know and experience of their work and their organization is a function of what they experience physically, as well as what is “in their heads”. In this sense, the visual aesthetic experience of the workplace can be considered a genuine form of embodied cognition, which expands the elements that influence perception, the construction of meaning, identity, attitudes and behavior of people within organizations.

The cross-sectional design and the use of self-report questionnaires can entail certain limitations in the assessment of subjective perceptions, such as the assessment of visual aesthetics. However, when interpreting these results, it should be considered that their

usefulness has been previously demonstrated in research, involving numerous samples, in which aspects of exposure to the physical work environment are valued (see Schell et al., 2011).

On the other hand, with respect to the results obtained from the job crafting scale, and in line with the results obtained from other recent studies (Gordon, Demerouti, Le Blanc, & Bipp, 2015; Petrou et al., 2016), the dimension of Decreasing hindering job demands, understood as the reduction of difficulties (e.g., workload or emotionally intense work) showed different results in comparison with the other three dimensions. Its levels of reliability were adequate, but it was not related in the same way as the other job crafting scales with affective organizational commitment, nor with visual aesthetics. This inconsistency may be due to the fact that the other three dimensions of job crafting, namely, Increasing social job resources, Increasing structural job resources, and Increasing challenging job demands (Tims et al., 2012), represent what Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) described as the “expansive” type of work (p. 185) and, recently, Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2019) as job crafting promotion-focused. However, as explained by van Wingerden et al. (2016), the Decreasing hindering job demands means that employees reduce the scope of their tasks, that is, they “slow down” their growth and limit their development opportunities (Gordon et al., 2015) and therefore, it does not relate, or is negatively related, to work and performance (Petrou et al., 2016). Our results are also consistent with those obtained by Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2019), in the sense that this dimension is related more to burnout and not to commitment, so they provide additional evidence to the link between the dimensions of job crafting promotion-focused and affective commitment.

Another possibility is that this result is due to the fact that social desirability has interfered with the way in which people scored the Decreasing hindering job demands dimension, thus avoiding expressing the form or frequency with which they omit or avoid performing tasks and responsibilities, because this is not generally well accepted. Therefore, future research should include some method of controlling the possible impact of social desirability on the scores, for example, including an instrument that measures the individual’s tendency to answer what is socially desirable (e.g., Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Finally, it should be noted that a better understanding of how the physical work place influences its occupants and organizations requires experimental and interdisciplinary studies, which combine the manipulation of the physical conditions of the work environment, with measures of reactions and personal experiences within these contexts. Therefore, in line

with other works (e.g., Devlin & Andrade, 2017), it is estimated that the next steps to clarify the impact of the assessment of visual aesthetics on behavior should include its manipulation, together with measures of its assessment, and a wider range of variables related to people, their work and the organization, which would better guide the design of the workplace, and clarify its link with people, their functions and specific needs.

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Appendix 1

Factorial Loadings in the Confirmatory Factorial Analysis

Variable / Headings	Non-standardized Factorial loadings	Standardized Factorial loadings
Visual aesthetics of the workplace		
I like the aesthetics of this place	1.000	.812
The furniture of this place is well combined	1.018	.827
I like the colors of this place	1.084	.88
If I look at the walls, I like what I see	1.061	.862
I like the decoration of this place	1.009	.819
I like the style of furniture	0.883	.717
This place is beautiful	0.954	.775
Affective organizational commitment		
I feel committed to my organization	1.000	.859
I really care about the fate of this organization	1.001	.860
I am willing to make additional efforts for the good of the organization	0.998	.857
I am extremely happy to work in this organization	0.787	.676
Job crafting – Increasing social job resources		
I wonder if my supervisor is satisfied with my work	1.000	.593
I ask my supervisor to train me and teach me new things	0.936	.555
I ask others for feedback on my job performance	0.800	.474
Job crafting – Increasing challenging job demands		
When an interesting project comes along, I offer myself proactively as project co-worker	1.000	.699
If there are new developments, I am one of the first to learn about them and try them	0.724	.506
I like to take on very difficult tasks to improve the understanding of my work	0.8	.474
Job crafting – Increasing structural job resources		
I try to develop my skills	1.000	.835
I try to develop professionally	1.021	.853
I try to learn new things at work	0.936	.782
Job crafting – Decreasing hindering job demands		
I make sure my work is emotionally less intense	1.000	.742
I make sure my work is mentally less intense	0.998	.741
I organize my work to minimize contact with people whose expectations are unrealistic	0.617	.458