Analysis of co-working space needs as an alternative learning environment for students

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Abstract: Co-working spaces, which were initially favored by freelancers and startups, are now starting to be eyed by students as a suitable place for alternative learning. This study involved a sample of Postgraduate students at the Masters and Doctoral levels from one of the Universities in Bandung. The purpose of this study was to see what students wanted from a collaborative workplace or co-working space as an alternative learning place. The data collected includes student preferences for facilities, atmosphere, and time flexibility offered by co-working spaces. The results of the study show that students in the midst of their busy learning activities really need a supportive place, the majority of students consider co-working spaces as a more productive place to study. This choice is influenced by several factors, including convenience, fast internet access, an environment that supports collaboration, and the existence of supporting facilities such as discussion rooms and the availability of food that can be ordered. These findings indicate that there is great potential to build a student-friendly workplace.

Keywords: Co-Working Space; learning environment; students

Introduction

The principle of a conducive learning environment is to foster and develop good and productive learning motivation (Ali, 2007). A conducive learning environment includes physical environment, social environment and psychological environment. The learning environment is formed from environmental factors. The learning environment has a direct and indirect effect on the process and results of individual behavior. Designing a learning environment for students should be a top priority for universities. The learning environment is a determining factor in the success of building students' behavioral abilities. Therefore, the learning environment is simply stated as a place or atmosphere (situation) that influences the process of changing human behavior (Lattu, 2022). (Bloom, 1964) define the environment as conditions, influences, and stimuli from outside including physical, social, and intellectual influences that affect individuals. (Hamalik, 2011) Saying that something in the natural environment that is meaningful and has an influence on an individual is called a learning environment.

The student learning environment is not a place of learning that is only seen as a rigid space that is limited to carry out the learning process. The place of learning is not only limited to the classroom on campus. Even now the place of learning is not limited by space and time. Students can do all their productive activities anywhere and anytime. Students usually face various problems both technical and non-technical while working on assignments. For example, students feel uncomfortable and bored with the campus atmosphere because they do not have a supply of drinks and other foods. As a result, they have to look for mini markets or coffee shops to get the food and drinks they need while working on their assignments (Rahmadiani, 2020).

A co-working space is a shared space where individuals, such as professionals or independent individuals, work in the same space or share a space by mutual agreement. There are two motivations for using a coworking space, namely the first emphasizing collaboration between coworking space members, and the second emphasizing the desire to work separately while still sharing a physical space. The most common user groups of co-working spaces are self-employed people, freelancers, and freelancers, but freelancers, small and

medium-sized enterprises, students, and employees of large companies are also target groups for co-working spaces.

Six types of co-working spaces based on business models and user access levels, namely: public offices (i.e. free co-working spaces such as libraries), third places (i.e. public spaces that require the purchase of services, such as cafes), collaboration centers (i.e. public offices that focus on collaboration between workers), co-working hotels (i.e. shared office spaces with short-term lease contracts and concise service packages), incubators (i.e. shared office spaces focused on entrepreneurship), and shared studios (i.e. shared offices where organizations or entrepreneurs rent office space under flexible lease contracts, with tenant requirements such as community fit) (Kojo & Nenonen, 2014). Study rooms are academic facilities that support learning (Matthews et al., 2011). Therefore, facilities are needed that can support student productivity. Therefore, academic spaces that are equivalent to co-working spaces must first become social learning spaces – places where students, researchers, and teaching staff can interact and learn (Kyrö & Artto, 2015).

Coworking spaces, reflecting changing student behaviors and needs, have become a popular concept in modern higher education environments (Ananda et al., 2018). Coworking spaces enable students to collaborate, network and innovate outside of the conventional campus environment, and cater to a variety of backgrounds and preferences (Setiani et al., 2020). Combining coworking space features such as community, multi-purpose offices, high accessibility, and an engaging workplace can enhance students' learning experience in an academic environment (Sankari et al., 2018). Universities can also adapt to changing student needs and encourage creativity and productivity in these co-working spaces (Nieliepova, 2019). In addition, co-working spaces can help students become more entrepreneurial and develop further as professionals (Sulistyan et al., 2022).

As time goes by, students need more flexible and productive learning environments. There is a great demand for alternative learning environments other than the conventional classroom. This is shown by the fact that students often face difficulties in finding the right place to complete assignments, discuss, or do other productive activities. Co-working spaces, which were initially popular among freelancers and startups, are now an attractive option for students looking for a supportive learning environment. Co-working spaces offer a variety of facilities that make students feel comfortable and productive, such as fast internet access, discussion rooms, and other facilities. Therefore, this research is conducted to find out the needs of students for the presence of co-working space. What kind of preferences do students actually need that must be owned by a co-working space.

Method

This research is a descriptive research type with a qualitative approach using a survey method. This method is used to identify student preferences and needs for the presence of co-working space. The population in this study were postgraduate students from one of the Indonesian Education Universities. Samples were taken randomly to ensure proper representation of the existing population. The questionnaire was compiled with open and closed questions using Google Form. The data collected were then analyzed qualitatively based on the results obtained in the form of general trends or patterns found. Using this survey method helps in collecting relevant and comprehensive data regarding students' needs and preferences regarding the presence of co-working spaces, which can be used to design facilities that better suit students' needs.

Results and Discussion

Students often have difficulty finding a place where they can focus on assignments, discussions, or other productive activities. According to the Duke University Libraries website, some students prefer a quiet, secluded space to focus, while others prefer to be around other people to feel more motivated (Zoss et al., 2021). This means that alternative learning environments other than the classroom are highly sought after by students. One of the mainstay places for students is co-working space. The results of this research and discussion aim to find out what kind of co-working space is needed by students. The points in this study are about location accessibility, interior atmosphere and aesthetics, room layout, diversity in space, facilities, operating hours, menu variants, reception and hospitality. The study shows that students need alternative study spaces. According to research conducted by Wu et al., (2021), There are six important features in the design of informal learning spaces, including comfort, flexibility, functionality, spatial hierarchy, openness, and other supporting facilities. These factors influence students' choice to use alternative learning environments.

In the results of this study, the average co-working space user is in the age range of less than 24 to 34 years. As in the study conducted by Kintari et al., (2020), Co-working space users are mostly millennials, namely individuals in the productive age range who are familiar with digital technology and work in fields such as digital marketing, advertising, graphic design, and e-commerce (Hermawan, 2022). The age range between 24 to 34 years in this research finding is certainly a productive age, in line with the results of previous research.

The main activity of students is more focused only on studying, which is 64.4% and 36.6% who study while working. This is supported by the condition of students who only number 12.2% from the city of Bandung and the rest are students from outside the city of Bandung. Thus, it can be concluded that the largest number of co-working space users are students from out of town who are focused on studying, and they need a place that supports the process of completing their studies, with an average duration of 4-8 hours spent in a co-working space.

Transportation to co-working spaces usually uses private vehicles such as motorbikes or cars, walking, and also public transportation. The distance to the co-working space is quite close, because in the city of Bandung there are quite a lot of co-working spaces that are not far from campus or student residences. Location is related to accessibility value, where a co-working space should be in an easily accessible location. The location should be close to public facilities such as universities, office environments, residential areas, and locations that are easily accessible by public transportation (Nisrina & Handoyo, 2021) Easy accessibility is certainly the most important point for millennials in choosing a co-working space as a place to work (Nisrina & Handoyo, 2021).

In the selection of interior atmosphere and aesthetics, there are three choices, namely industrial, modern, and homelike. From the survey results, most chose the atmosphere and interior aesthetics of the homelike co-working space. As many as 53.7% of students chose homelike, modern as many as 41.5% and industrial as many as 4.9%. This is in line with the research results of Weijs-Perrée et al., (2019) which shows that co-working space users tend to prefer a home-like atmosphere and interior aesthetics, compared to a more modern interior.
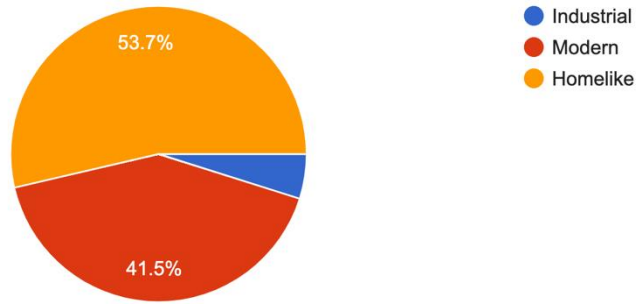
Figure 1. Interior Ambiance and Aesthetics

Postgraduate students tend to prefer a semi-open layout that is a combination of open and closed workspaces, with a percentage of 61%. This means that there is a preference for students towards open and closed spaces that can be used at any time according to the conditions and enthusiasm of the students. In the study of Weijs-Perrée et al. (2019) showed similar results. Co-working space users prefer a semi-open layout consisting of an open workspace combined with a concentration/meeting room.
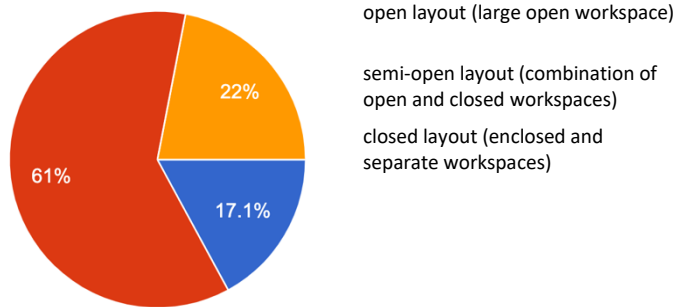

Figure 2. Space Layout

In the diversity of space in co-working spaces, there are three choices, namely Basic co-working space (collaborative workspace, meeting rooms and kitchen areas), Standard co-working space (collaborative workspace, meeting rooms, kitchen areas and informal spaces), premium co-working spaces (collaborative workspace, meeting rooms, kitchen areas, informal spaces, fitness center and bar. Of the three choices, the most choices are Standard co-working space (collaborative workspace, meeting rooms, kitchen areas and informal spaces) as much as 53%, as many as 24.4% choose premium co-working spaces, and 22% choose basic co-working space.
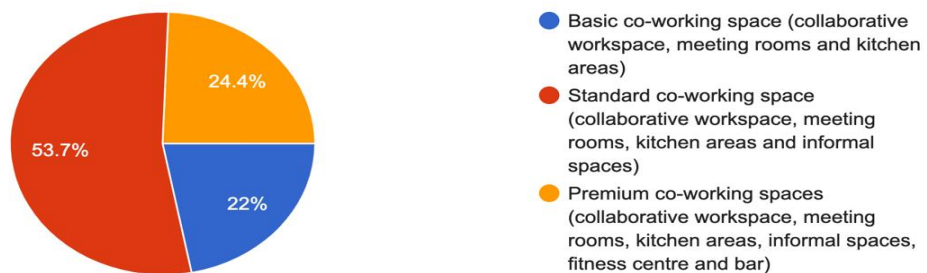

Figure 3. Diversity of Space

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In the facilities section, researchers collected input in the form of three facilities that must be present in a co-working space. The most common answers include wanting adequate wifi, the availability of power outlets and stakers, and a prayer room. Usually students do their activities with several electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, cellphones, or other electronic devices. All of that can be used optimally, if there is stable wifi and adequate battery conditions. Likewise, because it is quite long in the co-working space, the presence of a prayer room is considered important as a supporter of worship activities so that when prayer time comes, you don't need to look outside. In addition, there is one input that is considered unique and different, namely the holding of a mini library to support references for lecture assignments. It can also be an alternative when students feel a little bored with doing assignments, diverted by reading other books outside of lecture topics. So in this case, the mini library contains lecture reference books as well as non-lecture books such as novels and others.

For the ideal opening and closing hours of co-working space, on average students want it to open at 08.00 am and close at 22.00 pm. These operating hours are considered ideal with opening conditions that are not too early and not too late, as well as closing hours that are not too early and not too late at night. However, in the next question there is a question that refers to the opinion whether a 24-hour co-working space is necessary, the most answers of 53.7% answered yes and the remaining 46.3% answered no. This shows that students need a place that can accommodate them if at any time, when doing productive activities they need more time to complete them.
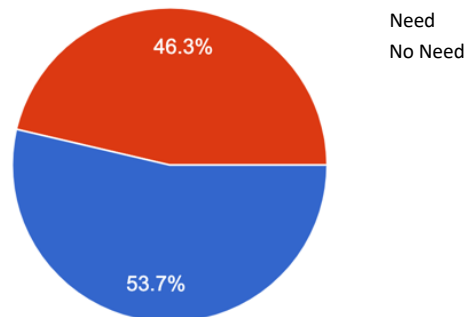

Figure 4. Co-working Space Open 24 Hours

The types of dishes that must be present in a co-working space consist of three types of choices, namely appetizers, main courses and desserts. Most want all three types of dishes to be present in a co-working space, with a variety of types of course, also do not forget the mandatory presence of coffee dishes. Coffee is believed to be able to make someone more focused, especially students who need more focus.

When entering a co-working space, students among them do not want to be greeted formally and excessively, but simply with the usual treatment with a greeting. This shows that students want to get a relaxed and non-rigid atmosphere, namely 82.9% of them want this. While the remaining 17.1% want a greeting when they arrive.
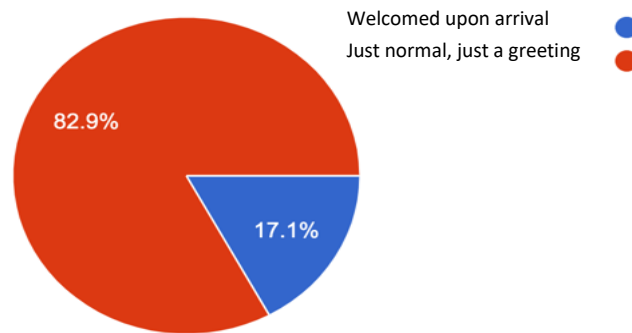
Figure 5. Reception and Hospitality

Regarding whether or not co-working space needs to hold an event, based on students' answers, it is considered unnecessary. Students consider their main purpose of visiting a co-working space is to find a comfortable environment to carry out their productive activities. So, when a co-working space holds an event, it is considered to be disturbing or uncomfortable and makes students lose focus.

A co-working space is certainly visited by various kinds of visitors who come from different regions and backgrounds. Of course, it requires management from the co-working space to arrange it in such a way with a supportive setting. To support focus, students expect other visitors who refer to the character of being calm, polite, not disturbing or making noise, respecting each other, having the same goal, namely in the sense of focusing on each goal, honest, polite, friendly, and finally people who are not at risk. These characters are characters that are considered to make students comfortable with their presence.

In order to ensure focus, the researcher asked questions about the rental system by paying to be able to focus on doing tasks or other productive things. It turned out that the most common answer that emerged was that it was not necessary. The manager only needs to make rules that can make the situation conducive. But the answerer needs to justify that if there are conditions that make it not conducive, then it is necessary to rent in order to get a calm condition. It could also be that the rental system only applies to a group that will hold a meeting which means that only the meeting room is subject to the rental system. This is in line with the results of previous research, namely that the average user has a higher preference for not renting a contract. This is logical because one of the main motivations for working in a co-working space is the affordable price of accommodation (Fuzi, 2015).

The main thing that students consider in choosing a co-working space is comfort. As previously discussed, students prefer a comfortable place even though the distance is quite far. Then, the next thing to consider is cleanliness and tranquility, because that will create comfort that is felt and support student focus.

Researchers have also collected concerns about co-working spaces that students have visited. So far, students have felt uneasy with places that are not spacious enough, an unconducive atmosphere, buskers coming in, visitors who smoke, dirty and limited bathrooms, inadequate or even non-existent prayer rooms or prayer rooms, lack of electrical outlets, tables that are too low, food that is not tasty, expensive food prices, and some have no wifi or inadequate wifi. All of these things make students uncomfortable so that they end up avoiding places like that.

Next is input from students for all co-working spaces wherever they are, namely (1) co-working spaces must always prioritize comfort, (2) spacious, clean and comfortable places to work with adequate chair and table facilities, (3) co-working spaces have standard rules related to the comfort of fellow visitors, for example for groups in meetings, it is mandatory

to use a closed room so as not to disturb others (4) use a layout with an ergonomic sitting position, (5) food prices that are not too cheap, (6) provide lockers that have keys so that visitors who come alone can leave their belongings in peace, and (7) prayer rooms and ablution areas that are closed for women.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Students need a comfortable environment to support their productive activities. Adequate space is needed that suits their needs. The consideration in determining which co-working space will be visited by students is a comfortable place. Each person's comfort standards are certainly different, but at least in terms of easy access, it is also supported by facilities that students really need. No matter how far the distance is, it will not be an obstacle when there is comfort offered. Based on this study, we can find out the form of co-working space that students need in carrying out their productive activities.

For co-working space managers, the results of this study can be used as a consideration in improving the best service to specifically attract students and the public in general. It is very important for a co-working space to make updates and innovations in accordance with the times and also based on the community segments around the co-working space. If the location is around a campus, then consider what needs are required by students.

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