

Decluttering for enhanced workplace performance: The 5S solution

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Abstract

Excessive clutter in the work environment can significantly hinder employee performance. The more items accumulate, the harder it becomes to maintain cleanliness, leading to a dirty and disorganized workspace. According to UCLA's Centre on Everyday Lives and Families, clutter can increase stress levels by elevating cortisol, which the brain interprets as a sign of failure. This stress reduces employees' cognitive abilities, further impacting their performance. Therefore, organizations must address this issue through decluttering. The 5S methodology—Seiri (Sort), Seiton (Set in order), Seiso (Shine), Seiketsu (Standardize), and Shitsuke (Sustain)—is an effective approach for decluttering and improving the work environment. This journal employs a literature review methodology, analyzing relevant sources such as previous journals, books, and articles. The review concludes that 5S is the most practical decluttering method for organizations. Various studies have demonstrated that 5S significantly enhances employee performance. Beyond performance improvements, 5S also boosts overall organizational efficiency, including time, energy, and cost savings.

Keywords: clutter; 5S; employee performance



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1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of technology, humans have developed a plethora of goods to meet their needs and simplify their lives. It has become increasingly easy for us to obtain the items we desire, often without any face-to-face interaction with the seller. Nowadays, buyers only need a smartphone, a few taps, and the goods will be delivered directly to their doorsteps. This convenience saves energy, time, and costs, providing an unparalleled level of ease in acquiring products. However, this seamless access to goods also fuels a heightened desire to own more, leading to an overwhelming quantity of items infiltrating our environment. This issue is not confined to individual households; it extends into workplaces, where the excessive accumulation of goods can significantly diminish employee performance.

A critical factor that influences employee performance is the work environment. According to Mangkunegara (2017), performance is the outcome of an employee's work, measured in both quality and quantity, while fulfilling their duties. Employees are required to develop positive attitudes and thoughts within a supportive work environment to perform optimally. In her research, Nela (2014) identified several components that constitute the physical work environment, such as lighting, air circulation, color, cleanliness, and security. The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) defines cleanliness as the absence of dirt, dust, garbage, and unpleasant odors. An unclean work environment inevitably leads to discomfort and decreased productivity. One primary cause of a messy or unclean workspace is the excessive accumulation of goods. Similar to waste in the human digestive system, piles of goods can have toxic effects if not promptly addressed. Ironically, the possession of goods, which was initially expected to bring positive effects, often turns into a new problem, causing stress and inefficiency in the workplace.

The accumulation of goods, if not managed properly, can create a cluttered and chaotic environment that hinders productivity and well-being. Cluttered workspaces can cause distractions, reduce focus, and increase stress levels among employees. The presence of excessive items can obstruct movement and create a sense of disorder, making it difficult for employees to find what they need and to concentrate on their tasks. This clutter not only affects the physical environment but also impacts the mental state of employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction and overall performance.

Addressing the issue of clutter and excessive accumulation of goods requires a strategic approach to decluttering and organizing the workspace. Decluttering involves removing non-value-added items from our surroundings and creating a more efficient and orderly environment. Various methods focus on efficient use and storage, collectively known as decluttering techniques. Popular decluttering methods include 5S, KonMari, and Danshari. These methods emphasize the importance of keeping only what is necessary and valuable, and discarding or donating items that no longer serve a purpose.

The 5S methodology, originating from Japan, is a systematic approach to workplace organization. It stands for Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain. This method aims to improve efficiency, safety, and morale by creating a clean and organized workspace. The first step, Sort, involves removing unnecessary items

and categorizing the remaining ones. The second step, Set in order, focuses on arranging items in a logical and accessible manner. The third step, Shine, emphasizes cleanliness and regular maintenance. The fourth step, Standardize, involves creating consistent procedures and guidelines for maintaining the organized state. Finally, the fifth step, Sustain, ensures that the improvements are maintained over time through regular audits and continuous improvement efforts.

The KonMari method, developed by Marie Kondo, is another popular decluttering technique. This method encourages individuals to keep only those items that "spark joy" and to let go of those that do not. The KonMari method is not just about tidying up; it is about transforming one's mindset and relationship with possessions. By focusing on what truly brings happiness and value, individuals can create a more meaningful and clutter-free environment. This method involves a specific sequence of decluttering, starting with clothes, then books, papers, miscellaneous items, and finally sentimental items. By following this sequence, individuals can systematically and effectively declutter their spaces.

Danshari, another Japanese decluttering method, emphasizes minimalism and the importance of living with less. The term Danshari is derived from three Japanese characters: "Dan" meaning refusal, "Sha" meaning disposal, and "Ri" meaning separation. This method encourages individuals to refuse unnecessary items, dispose of what they do not need, and separate themselves from material possessions that do not add value to their lives. Danshari promotes a lifestyle of simplicity and mindfulness, helping individuals to focus on what truly matters and to create a more harmonious and clutter-free environment.

Decluttering is not just about physical organization; it also has a profound impact on mental and emotional well-being. According to UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives and Families, clutter can increase stress by raising cortisol levels, which the brain interprets as a sign of failure. Employees experiencing stress may see a decline in cognitive abilities, negatively affecting their performance at work. A clutter-free environment, on the other hand, can enhance focus, creativity, and productivity. It can create a sense of calm and order, allowing employees to perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Beyond being a method, decluttering can become a workplace culture that influences employees' daily lives. Schiffman and Kanuk state that consumptive behavior is influenced by culture—a combination of ideas, values, and taught habits. Schein argues that corporate culture helps group members solve fundamental survival problems in both internal and external environments, thereby reducing situational ambiguity. To ensure continuity, solutions are passed on to subsequent generations. Decluttering, which originated largely in Japan, has gradually gained global popularity for personal and professional reasons, proving to be highly effective.

Incorporating decluttering practices into the workplace can lead to significant improvements in employee performance and overall organizational success. A well-organized and clutter-free environment fosters a positive work culture, enhances job satisfaction, and boosts productivity. Employees are more likely to feel motivated and engaged when they work in a clean and orderly space. Moreover, decluttering can also

promote sustainability by encouraging the responsible use and disposal of resources, reducing waste, and minimizing the environmental impact.

In conclusion, the rapid development of technology has made it easier for individuals to acquire goods, leading to an overwhelming accumulation of items in both personal and professional environments. This clutter can negatively impact employee performance and well-being. By adopting effective decluttering methods such as 5S, KonMari, and Danshari, organizations can create a more efficient, organized, and positive work environment. Decluttering not only improves physical spaces but also enhances mental and emotional well-being, ultimately leading to better performance and job satisfaction. As decluttering becomes a part of workplace culture, it can have a lasting and transformative impact on employees and organizations alike.

2. Method

The research methodology used in this journal is descriptive qualitative library research. This involves collecting literature and conducting reviews from various relevant sources, including previous journals, books, and articles.

3. Empirical Result

Work Environment

Sedarmayanti (2001) categorizes the work environment into two types: physical and non-physical.

Physical Work Environment: Gie, as cited in Hamid (2014), defines the physical work environment as a set of physical factors and the physical atmosphere surrounding employees. This includes tangible elements such as lighting, temperature, noise levels, office layout, and equipment. The physical environment significantly affects how employees perform their tasks and can influence their comfort, safety, and efficiency. For example, adequate lighting reduces eye strain and fatigue, while ergonomic furniture can prevent musculoskeletal problems. A well-designed physical environment can enhance productivity by reducing distractions and providing a space conducive to focused work. Additionally, the availability of necessary tools and equipment ensures that employees can perform their duties effectively without unnecessary delays or frustration.

Non-Physical Work Environment: Sedarmayanti (2001) describes the non-physical work environment as encompassing all conditions related to work relationships, both vertical (superior-subordinate) and horizontal (co-workers). This includes elements such as organizational culture, communication patterns, management style, and social dynamics within the workplace. A positive non-physical environment fosters a sense of belonging and teamwork among employees, leading to higher job satisfaction and motivation. Effective communication and a supportive management style can enhance employee morale and reduce work-related stress. Conversely, a negative non-physical environment, characterized by poor communication, lack of support, and interpersonal conflicts, can lead to decreased job satisfaction and higher turnover rates.

Extensive research has been conducted on the impact of the workplace environment on employee performance. Studies have demonstrated that both the physical and non-physical aspects of the workplace significantly influence employee productivity and overall job satisfaction. For instance, Hamdi's research, as cited by Nizar (2013), investigates the influence of physical work environment factors on employee productivity at the Lombok Post daily in Mataram. This study found that working conditions, equipment, and the completeness of facilities collectively have a substantial impact on employee productivity. Adequate and well-maintained physical resources enable employees to work more efficiently and effectively, contributing to higher productivity levels.

Additionally, research by Habib and Noval I.A. (2018) examined the effect of office design and work environment on employee performance at the Nganjuk Regency DPRD office. Their study involved distributing questionnaires to employees and analyzing the data to assess the impact of the work environment on employee performance. The results indicated that the work environment has a significant impact on employee performance, highlighting the importance of creating a conducive workplace atmosphere. A well-designed office that considers factors such as layout, lighting, and noise levels can enhance employee comfort and efficiency, leading to improved performance. Moreover, fostering positive work relationships and effective communication within the workplace can further boost employee morale and productivity.

Cluttering

The concept of clutter and its impact on daily life and work environments has been the subject of various studies. UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives of Families (CELFL) conducted a study on the effects of clutter on 32 families in Los Angeles, USA. The study concluded that clutter has a significant negative impact on life, contributing to increased stress levels, particularly among women. The study found that women are more prone to stress due to the accumulation of clutter, leading to frequent family disputes. Men, on the other hand, tend to be less affected by clutter, resulting in differing levels of concern and potential conflicts within the family.

Clutter contributes to a dirty and unhealthy environment, making it challenging to keep spaces clean and organized. As clutter accumulates, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain cleanliness and order. This disorganization can lead to difficulties in finding items, wasting time, energy, thoughts, and even money. The presence of clutter can create a chaotic and stressful environment, affecting not only the physical space but also the mental and emotional well-being of individuals. The stress associated with clutter can reduce overall quality of life and hinder productivity in both personal and professional settings.

This research illustrates how seemingly minor issues like clutter can significantly impact an organization, including family dynamics. When applied to a work environment, clutter on work desks can disrupt the ideal work environment, both physically and non-physically. A cluttered workspace can cause distractions, reduce focus, and increase stress levels among employees. The presence of excessive items can obstruct movement and create a sense of disorder, making it difficult for

employees to find what they need and to concentrate on their tasks. This clutter not only affects the physical environment but also impacts the mental state of employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction and overall performance.

Table 1. Comparison of 5S Danshari and KonMari

Comparison	5S	Danshari	KonMari
Author	Dr. W. Edwards Deming	Hideko Yamashita	Marie Kondo
Basic Concept	<i>Seiri</i> <i>Seiton</i> <i>Seiso</i> <i>Seiketsu</i> <i>Shitsuke</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing to bring unnecessary new items into our lives Discarding items in the home that we don't need Separating ourselves from the urge to accumulate or buy things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an ideal lifestyle Decluttering sequentially by category Indicators are useful and spark joy Focus on the items to be kept Say thank you before items are retired
Scope	Group, company, factory, industry, school	Individual, home, family	Individual, home, family
Decluttering Standard	Optimise goods	Set aside only what you need	useful and spark joy
Decluttering Focus	On objects to be disposed of	On objects to be disposed of	On stored goods
Start Decluttering	take turns, according to picket	<i>one in, one out, random</i>	Per category, one time massive

Setiawan (2019) notes that creating a good working environment involves considering factors like office buildings, spacious workspaces, ventilation, accessibility of places of worship, and convenient transportation options for staff. These factors contribute to a supportive and comfortable work environment, which can enhance employee productivity and well-being. A well-ventilated workspace with adequate natural light can improve air quality and reduce fatigue, while spacious work areas can facilitate movement and collaboration. Accessibility to places of worship and convenient transportation options can also contribute to employee satisfaction and overall work-life balance.

Nanda A. Pangestuti's 2019 research on the impact of the physical and non-physical work environment, along with work stress, on bakery company employees' performance revealed that these factors significantly influence workplace performance. The study found that a positive physical work environment, characterized by adequate lighting, ventilation, and ergonomic design, can enhance employee comfort and efficiency. Similarly, a supportive non-physical work environment, with effective communication and positive work relationships, can boost employee morale and reduce stress. Managing work stress effectively is also crucial for maintaining high levels of employee performance. When employees feel comfortable in their work environment and experience low levels of stress, they are more likely to be productive and satisfied with their jobs.

Decluttering

Decluttering is a process that promotes a simpler lifestyle by reducing both material and non-material items that interfere with focus and productivity. Elgin, as cited in Zulicha (2021), defines decluttering as a means to streamline one's life by eliminating unnecessary items, thereby making it easier to consume only what is needed, manage finances, and create a sense of peace and happiness. Decluttering is not just about tidying up; it is about transforming one's mindset and relationship with possessions. By focusing on what truly brings happiness and value, individuals can create a more meaningful and clutter-free environment.

Zulicha's (2021) research on the effect of decluttering on increasing happiness in individuals with consumptive behavior found significant improvements in happiness scores after decluttering. The study identified that consumptive behavior factors often contradict true happiness. Consumptive behavior involves acquiring and accumulating items in excess of one's needs, leading to clutter and disorganization. This behavior can create a false sense of satisfaction that is temporary and does not contribute to long-term happiness. In contrast, decluttering can lead to a more intentional and mindful approach to consumption, fostering a sense of satisfaction and well-being.

The study found that decluttering positively affects satisfaction, happiness, and optimism. It helps in building positive relationships, gratitude, creativity, and other positive changes. Decluttering can reduce stress and anxiety by creating a more organized and harmonious environment. This can lead to improved mental clarity and focus, allowing individuals to perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively. Additionally, a clutter-free environment can enhance creativity by providing a clear and inspiring space for new ideas and projects.

Currently, popular decluttering methods include 5S, Danshari, and KonMari. The 5S methodology, originating from Japan, is a systematic approach to workplace organization. It stands for Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain. This method aims to improve efficiency, safety, and morale by creating a clean and organized workspace. The first step, Sort, involves removing unnecessary items and categorizing the remaining ones. The second step, Set in order, focuses on arranging items in a logical and accessible manner. The third step, Shine, emphasizes cleanliness and regular maintenance. The fourth step, Standardize, involves creating consistent procedures and guidelines for maintaining the organized state. Finally, the fifth step,

Sustain, ensures that the improvements are maintained over time through regular audits and continuous improvement efforts.

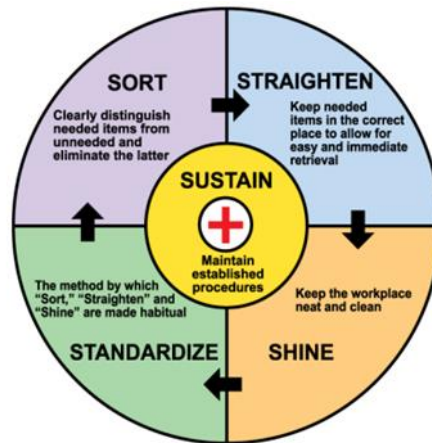


Figure 1. 5S diagram

Source: Muadzah, 2020

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While Danshari and KonMari are often applied to personal and home environments, 5S offers a systematic approach that is particularly relevant to work environments. The principles of 5S can be directly correlated with the work environment and employee performance. By implementing 5S, organizations can create a more efficient, organized, and positive work environment. Decluttering the workspace can reduce distractions, improve focus, and enhance overall productivity. Employees are more likely to feel motivated and engaged when they work in a clean and orderly space.

Incorporating decluttering practices into the workplace can lead to significant improvements in employee performance and overall organizational success. A well-organized and clutter-free environment fosters a positive work culture

5S (Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke)

The Kaizen work ethic, embraced by the Japanese after the devastation of World War II, forms the basis of the 5S system. According to Asti Usman's book *Kaizen for Life: The Key to Continuous Improvement in Era 4.0* (2019), Japan's defeat by the Allies was largely due to ineffective manufacturing processes. In 1970, Dr. Edward Deming, an American quality control expert, was invited to help Japan recover from its economic collapse. He introduced a series of management principles known as 'Dr. Deming's 14 Points for Management.' This approach was integrated into Japanese industry and became widely known as 'Kaizen,' a term coined by Masaaki Imai in his book *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success* (1986). Kaizen (改善) combines two kanji characters: 改 (kai) meaning change and 善 (zen) meaning good. Thus, Kaizen signifies a philosophy of continuous improvement.

Kaizen emphasizes small, incremental changes that do not require substantial investment but necessitate continuous effort and responsibility. It is a holistic approach to organizing the workplace, encompassing all levels of the organization, from top management to frontline employees. A pivotal element within Kaizen is the 5S methodology, which stands for Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke. In Indonesia, these principles are known as the 5Rs (Ringkas, Rapi, Resik, Rawat, and Rajin).

1. **Seiri / Summarization:** This step involves sorting items to differentiate between what is needed and what is not. Unnecessary items are removed from the workspace to enhance efficiency. According to Osada (2004), Seiri indicators include (1) sorting goods/equipment and (2) disposing of unnecessary goods/equipment. By eliminating clutter, Seiri helps create a more organized and functional workspace, reducing the time and effort required to locate items and minimizing distractions.
2. **Seiton / Neatness:** Following Seiri, the next step is to arrange necessary items in an orderly manner. This ensures that everything has a designated place, facilitating easy retrieval and efficient use of space. The indicators of Seiton, as noted by Osada (2004), include (1) the systematic arrangement of goods/equipment and (2) the logical grouping of related items. Proper labeling and storage solutions play a crucial role in Seiton, making it easier for employees to maintain an organized environment and quickly find what they need.
3. **Seiso / Cleanliness:** This involves thoroughly cleaning the workspace and all items within it to eliminate dust, dirt, and other contaminants. A clean environment not only promotes better health and safety but also enhances overall productivity. Osada (2004) identifies Seiso indicators as (1) regular cleaning of the workspace and (2) periodic checks to maintain cleanliness. Seiso encourages employees to take pride in their workspace and fosters a culture of cleanliness and orderliness.
4. **Seiketsu / Standardization:** Seiketsu focuses on maintaining and standardizing the first three S's through consistent practices such as tagging, labeling, and coding. It ensures that the improvements made through Seiri, Seiton, and Seiso

are sustained over time. Osada (2004) states that Seiketsu indicators include (1) maintaining an organized workplace and (2) adhering to established procedures and regulations. By creating visual management systems and standard operating procedures, Seiketsu helps prevent the deterioration of the workspace and promotes continuous improvement.

5. Shitsuke / Discipline: The final step is instilling discipline to ensure that 5S practices become habitual for everyone in the work environment. Shitsuke involves training and developing employees to consistently follow the 5S principles, creating a culture of discipline and continuous improvement. Employees must ensure that the first four S's are carried out consistently and continuously. This step fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, empowering employees to take responsibility for their work environment and strive for excellence.

The Impact of 5S on Employee Performance

Numerous studies have explored the impact of 5S on employee performance, demonstrating its effectiveness across various industries. One notable study by Saidah, A. R. and Tinik Sugianti (2019) examined the effect of the Kaizen concept on employee performance in the External Relations Division of PT Adaro Indonesia. The results revealed that Seiri and Shitsuke significantly improved employee performance, highlighting the importance of sorting and discipline in enhancing productivity. The study also found that the other three S's, while beneficial, did not have as significant an impact, suggesting that certain elements of 5S may be more critical in specific contexts. Another study by Achmad R. Huda (2022) investigated the influence of the 5S Method (Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke) on employee performance at Amstirdam Coffee & Roastery in Malang. The findings indicated that Seiri, Seiton, and Shitsuke had a major effect on performance, while Seiso and Seiketsu were less impactful. This study underscores the variability in the effectiveness of different 5S components depending on the nature of the work environment and the specific challenges faced by employees.

Research conducted by Yudhanto and Purwanto on PT Samsung Electronics Indonesia in Bekasi, titled "Analysis of the Effect of 5S Culture Implementation on Employee Productivity," provided further evidence of the positive impact of 5S. The study found that all five variables positively influenced employee productivity, with Shitsuke emerging as the most significant. This comprehensive assessment highlights the holistic benefits of 5S, emphasizing the importance of discipline and continuous improvement in achieving sustainable productivity gains.

A study by Ahyadi, Harwan, Rudi Saputra, and Eliya N. P. (2023) on the application of the Kaizen 5S Method in a chemical testing service laboratory found notable improvements in employee performance post-implementation. The study observed an increase in KPI (Key Performance Indicator) scores, indicating enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, the standardized work environment created by 5S fostered more efficient work patterns, reducing the time required for employees to search for items and indirectly saving costs for the company. This research

underscores the potential of 5S to transform work environments, making them more organized, efficient, and conducive to high performance.

Broader Implications of 5S Implementation

The implementation of 5S has broader implications beyond immediate productivity gains. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where employees are encouraged to take ownership of their work environment and strive for excellence. This cultural shift can lead to long-term benefits, including higher employee engagement, reduced turnover, and improved organizational resilience. By instilling discipline and promoting a systematic approach to workplace organization, 5S helps create a more agile and responsive organization capable of adapting to changing market conditions and customer demands.

Moreover, the principles of 5S can extend beyond the workplace, influencing personal habits and lifestyle choices. Employees who practice 5S at work may adopt similar practices at home, leading to more organized and efficient personal lives. This holistic approach to organization and efficiency can contribute to overall well-being, reducing stress and enhancing life satisfaction.

Challenges and Considerations in 5S Implementation

While the benefits of 5S are well-documented, successful implementation requires careful planning and commitment. Organizations must invest in training and development to ensure that employees understand and embrace the principles of 5S. Leadership support is crucial in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and ensuring that 5S practices are consistently applied.

Resistance to change is a common challenge in 5S implementation. Employees may be skeptical of new practices or reluctant to alter long-standing habits. Overcoming this resistance requires effective communication, demonstrating the tangible benefits of 5S, and involving employees in the implementation process. By engaging employees and addressing their concerns, organizations can build buy-in and foster a sense of ownership and accountability.

Sustaining 5S practices over the long term also requires ongoing monitoring and reinforcement. Organizations should establish regular audits and feedback mechanisms to ensure that 5S principles are maintained and continuously improved. Celebrating successes and recognizing employees' contributions to maintaining an organized and efficient workplace can further reinforce the importance of 5S and encourage ongoing commitment.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results of the literature review on cluttering, the 5S methodology, and its impact on employee performance, several key conclusions have been reached. First and foremost, both individuals and organizations must recognize the importance of addressing clutter, as even minor issues can have a significant domino effect on the work environment, ultimately affecting employee performance. Clutter, often overlooked, can disrupt the order and functionality of a workspace, leading to inefficiencies and stress among employees.

The literature strongly suggests that the 5S methodology is the most practical and effective decluttering approach for companies at present. Due to its structured nature and focus on continuous improvement, 5S stands out as a feasible solution for maintaining an organized and efficient work environment. One of the notable advantages of 5S is its relative ease of implementation. Unlike other methodologies that may require extensive resources or time, 5S can be adopted without significant financial investment, making it accessible for organizations of varying sizes and capacities.

Furthermore, the implementation of 5S has far-reaching effects on organizational efficiency. By systematically organizing the workspace and maintaining cleanliness and order, 5S enhances time management, conserves energy, and reduces costs. These improvements contribute to a more efficient and productive work environment, where employees can perform their tasks more effectively. The 5S methodology not only addresses immediate clutter issues but also fosters a culture of discipline and continuous improvement, leading to sustained organizational benefits.

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