



LUND UNIVERSITY

Campus Helsingborg

Physical Surroundings and Their Effects on Employee Turnover in Humanitarian Assistance Service

Master Thesis
M.Sc. Service Management-Logistics 2015/2016
Lund University - Campus Helsingborg

By: Kenan Madi

Supervisor: Mia Larson

Abstract:

Title: Physical Surroundings and Their Effects on Employee Turnover in Humanitarian Assistance Service

Author: Kenan Madi

Aim of the study: Understand the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers' satisfaction, and develop a first step conceptual model explaining the effects of physical surroundings on employee job satisfaction and turnover rate in humanitarian assistance service.

Methodology: Qualitative multiple - case study design was adapted for this study to understand the effects of physical surroundings in humanitarian assistance service in South Sudan and Syria, with support from the abduction approach and hermeneutic epistemological stance.

Data collection: The empirical data were collected via seven semi-structured interviews with professional humanitarian assistance service workers currently working in South Sudan and Syria.

Theoretical and practical perspectives: This study is linking multiple Service management frameworks focused on employee satisfaction and business output with other theories developed in different disciplines and applies these models to the humanitarian service setting, a professional field that has not been evaluated often for the impact of staff well-being on organizational efficiency. Practically speaking, the study suggests that humanitarian agencies would benefit by addressing physical surroundings for their employees in order to promote greater efficiency and value for money, which is becoming more important as already limited resources must be spread across several protracted humanitarian emergencies.

Conclusion: The study findings emphasize that four primary dimensions of physical surroundings (i.e., safety, communication tools, physiological needs, and ambient conditions), affect humanitarian assistance service workers' job satisfaction, willingness to stay in the organizations and referral for employment. In addition to its direct effect on job satisfaction, physical surroundings affect self-esteem and create *moral stress*, which in turn affects overall satisfaction and willingness to remain in their position and organization.

Key words: physical surroundings, servicescape, humanitarian service, humanitarian aid, job satisfaction, turnover, moral stress, retention.

Acknowledgment:

This thesis was written in the spring of 2016 as the graduation project for the Master Degree in Service Management - logistics.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Mia Larson for her valuable guidelines, instructions and support during the thesis writing process.

Also, special thanks goes to Lauren Bienkowski for her support, caring, helping, and patience over the last year and her support during the thesis writing process in last two months as well. I would like also to thank humanitarian workers who took the time to participate in this study and to all humanitarian workers who are sacrificing a lot and trying their best to save human lives, reduce human suffering, and create a more equal world.

Lastly, I would like to thank Sweden as a country which has hosted me, opened the opportunity for doing this Master's program, and has been my new home after my hometown was destroyed due to war and a dictatorship's acts.

Malmö 8 June 2016
Kenan madi

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1. Introduction

“The outlook for 2016 is grim. Millions of civilians, uprooted from their homes by violent and prolonged conflict, will remain in desperate need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

About 60 million people are displaced around the world, and more than a quarter of these displacements are due to the conflicts in Iraq, South Sudan and Syria”(UNOCHA, 2016a)

These gloomy facts about the situation in 2016 reported by the United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) underline the huge challenge facing the world and its population in the coming years. In previous years, there has been significant increase in need for humanitarian assistance around the globe (UN, 2015). Natural disasters and armed conflicts in countries, such as Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of The Congo, Guatemala, and Yemen, have caused around 125.3 million people to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2016 (UNOCHA, 2016a). Moreover, the 2011 earthquake in Japan has shown that even the most economically powerful nation “can be thrust into humanitarian need” (Carr, MacLachlan, & Furnham, 2012, p. 3). The rising challenges have made it essential to find more effective ways to respond to these crises and challenges over the coming years and implement more efficient humanitarian intervention (UN, 2015).

Humanitarian assistance service can be traced back through history, where it started as voluntarily work primarily based in religious belief. Humanitarian services evolved over time but with massive changes to its structure, particularly after World War II, the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, and the emergence of large-scale humanitarian operation, such as Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and the humanitarian operations in Somalia (Eleanor, John, & Mathew, 2013). In order to respond to large-scale, complicated, and protracted crises, humanitarian organizations employ professionals with the prerequisite skills, experience, and cultural competency. Currently, in contrast to common perceptions, humanitarian assistance service is not based on volunteer efforts, but instead based on professional employees who perform humanitarian interventions as their career. Humanitarian service has become a paid profession, employing

thousands of professionals working in disaster and war zones in addition to development settings in poverty-stricken countries. Humanitarian service organizations (e.g., United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, etc.) are similar to the other business and human services, where they follow the same logic in areas such as organizational structure, human resources management, supply chain management, and leadership.

Humanitarian assistance service is facing several challenges, lack of efficiency among them. Efficiency is a serious challenge for humanitarian assistance service, as unpredictability of humanitarian crises, poor structure, lack of coordination, high employee turnover, little funding, and other operational challenges have made it difficult to proactively improve the efficiency of humanitarian assistance service (Balcik, Beamon, Krejci, Muramatsu, & Ramirez, 2010; Branczik, 2004; Kopinak, 2013). Also, the need for efficiency in humanitarian assistance service is exacerbated as it was noted that there is a risk to lose funds if donors noticed that there is “systemic inefficiencies” in such service (Tatham & Christopher, 2011, pp. 179-180).

High employee turnover is one of the factors hindering humanitarian assistance service from being efficient (David Loquercio, Hammersley, & Emmens, 2006) and also “has detrimental effects on organizational performance and continuity” (Korff, Balbo, Mills, Heyse, & Wittek, 2015, p. 522). However, high employee turnover is a challenge not only in humanitarian assistance service but also in similar “human services” sectors, such as social service and nursing, (Liu et al., 2016; Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001, p. 626; Parish, Berry, & Shun Yin, 2008) and business-related services, including restaurants, fast-food chains, and the hospitality and tourism industry (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). High employee turnover rate could be generated by a few factors, but one of the most important factors is job dissatisfaction (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 2008; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991).

Early marketing and service studies (e.g., Booms & Bitner, 1982; Grönroos, 1982, 1984; Gummesson, 1980; Kotler, 1973; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Shostack, 1977) have focused mainly on service quality, customers’ satisfaction and loyalty in order to increase

profitability, yet these studies have neglected employee satisfaction as a factor in successful service management. As a result of intangibility and simultaneity of production and consumption of services, later studies proved that there is a strong relation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Looy, Dierdonck, & Gemmel, 2013, p. 30; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991; Benjamin Schneider, 2004; Benjamin Schneider & Bowen, 1985, 1995). In fact, “employee perceptions about both service climate and HRM experiences within their organizations get reflected on how their customers experience service” (Benjamin Schneider & Bowen, 1993, p. 43). Schneider and Bowen conducted a number of studies to examine the relationship between employees’ satisfaction and customer satisfaction, and their findings point to the same results repeatedly: satisfied employees generate satisfied customers (Looy et al., 2013, p. 30; Benjamin Schneider & Bowen, 1995, p. 111).

The same conclusion was also highlighted by creating “The Cycle of Success” model, where the model and studies related to it have shown that creating good job conditions for employees, such as good salaries, training, and empowering staff, lead to satisfied employees, which, in turn, will lead to satisfied customers (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). Moreover, in light of the SERVQUAL five dimensions, which include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, we can note that each of the five dimensions explicitly or implicitly relates to the service organization’s employees (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). This clearly highlights the importance of addressing employee satisfaction in service management. In short, “the human resources - the staff - of a service firm are an integrated part of the service offering” (Skålén, 2010, p. 82).

Most recently, service dominant logic has emerged as a logic, which emphasizes that organizations have two types of resources: operand and operant resources. Operand resources refer to “generally static resources that require some action to be performed on them before they can provide value.” Operant resources “are resources capable of acting on other resources to create value” (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 13). Lusch and Vargo contend that successful organizations should focus on their operant resources (e.g., employees), particularly since the value that any organization provides is co-created value, meaning that value is co-created via employees and customers interaction (Lusch

& Vargo, 2014). We can see that focus has shifted more and more to the vital role of employees in service organizations as the view of the “employee” changed from a factor of service success to the core of success for any service organization. Taking the above into account, the urgency for studying the elements that influence employee satisfaction in the service industry has become both valuable and critical.

Employee dis/satisfaction in the service industry is affected by multiple factors, such as pay equity, teamwork, supervision, physical conditions, and other factors (Bitner, 1992; David & Lauren, 2009; Parish et al., 2008). However, despite the importance of physical settings’ effect on employee satisfaction, this issue has been rarely addressed in service organizations in general, as many consider it less important than other motivational factors for employees, like pay, supervision, team work, etc.... (Parish et al., 2008, pp. 220-221). As discussed previously, the focus of former studies was on customers’ satisfaction and not on employees’ satisfaction, where it was highlighted that physical surroundings have a direct effect on customer satisfaction and the evaluation of the service quality (Bitner, 1990; Grönroos, 1982, 1984). Since usually employees spend more time than customer in service facilities, they are exposed to the physical conditions more than customers. Therefore, it is highly probable that the effects of those conditions on employees could be higher than their effects on customers (Parish et al., 2008).

In a study conducted by Parish, Berry, & Shun Yin (Parish et al., 2008) on physical surroundings affecting nurses (a service that is similar to humanitarian service), they suggested that “ the time spent in the service place (immersion) and the demands of the service role (intensity) are key dimensions of service provider experience and that service work varies along those dimensions” (Parish et al., 2008, p. 222). In the same study, they called these service workers who perform services that require high intensity and immersion (e.g., nurses) “invested service workers” (Parish et al., 2008, p. 222), and they proved that physical surroundings have a considerable effect on invested service workers’ job satisfaction and commitment (Parish et al., 2008).

Going back to humanitarian assistance service, this field is characterized by a high employee turnover rate (Harvey, Stoddard, Harmer, & Taylor, 2010; Korff et al., 2015). In a study of the staff turnover rate within Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Holland, one of the largest international humanitarian agencies, it was discovered that the turnover rate in MSF Holland was more than the turnover rate in the hospitality industry, which is considered to be an industry with an extremely high turnover rate (Korff et al., 2015, p. 541). Also, humanitarian workers are typically service workers, with their job being similar to nursing as they must not only have the required knowledge and skills but they must also perform in physically and emotionally demanding work and perform for long working hours, sometimes exceeding twelve working hours per day (Parish et al., 2008, p. 222). In most cases, humanitarian workers live in the same location as their service provision area, including places such as refugee or internally displaced persons' camps, medical clinics, or houses in the disaster zone itself.

Accordingly, physical surroundings could significantly affect employee satisfaction within the humanitarian assistance service industry more than other factors, thus causing high turnover rates and potentially less efficient or effective service provision, particularly when humanitarian workers perform their duties in extreme physical environments, such as disaster or war zones. A good understanding of how the physical environment affects employee satisfaction and turnover may help us address retention strategies, which could, in turn, help to have more effective and efficient humanitarian assistance operations (David Loquercio et al., 2006; Korff et al., 2015).

2. Problem Discussion

The efficiency of humanitarian assistance intervention is affected by many factors, such as high turnover rates, limited funding, poor coordination, and other factors (Balcik et al., 2010; David Loquercio et al., 2006). One of the challenges in solving these problems is the need for a deeper understanding of their root causes and negative impacts as well as to have “evidence-based guidelines, which can only be developed through research into what works and doesn’t work”

(Levine, 2016, p. 80). However, conducting credible research in the humanitarian field is not simple or straightforward as there are multiple barriers facing both researchers and humanitarian organizations including: access and logistical constraints, little funding, inadequate resources, additional ethical considerations, and inability of humanitarian workers to help researchers as they often work seven days a week and for more than 12 hours per day. Though, the primary reason for not having such research could be the basic “cultural” differences between the researchers’ community and humanitarian workers’ community (Levine, 2016, pp. 80-81). Another factor leading to little research in this field could be that humanitarian service is typically occurring in less developed countries, where the sciences, in general, have neglected research in those countries (Harding, 2006).

In order to solve the efficiency and efficacy problems in humanitarian assistance, there should be greater emphasis on academic studies that explore and address the challenges specific to this type of service. It is noted that little research has been conducted in humanitarian assistance service (i.e., a survey of articles published in the *Academy of Management Journal* over the past ten years revealed that only 6% studied not-for-profit organizations). Given this lack of rigorous research and evaluation, it would benefit the humanitarian service industry to begin applying sound theories, innovative HR practices, and proven business techniques from business organization, so they can improve functionality and productivity since the business field has been studied extensively (Carr et al., 2012, p. 107). Moreover, some reports indicate the importance of learning from the business sector, including in areas such as leadership, needs assessments, human resources management, coordination, and partnerships (Tatham & Christopher, 2011, p. 16). Thus, conduction studies based on theories that were developed within the business sector will likely help us better understand problems in the humanitarian field.

High employee turnover in humanitarian assistance service is a serious issue, which should be studied in detail since high turnover has been shown to hinder the efficiency of such a service (Korff et al., 2015). Although humanitarian agencies welcome a certain degree of staff turnover as it allows some flexibility in managing multiple crises by relocating their staff, developing staff through more challenging missions, and promoting fresh perspectives, unplanned turnover is with

no question a problematic issue affecting not only efficiency but also affecting the capacity to respond to new crises (David Loquercio et al., 2006). The direct and indirect consequences of high turnover have mostly negative impacts on humanitarian organizations and their humanitarian interventions. For example, the direct costs of such turnover include the loss of investments made on training and orientation, replacement recruitment-related cost and time (advertising, filtering, interviews, travel cost ...etc.), operational disruption (David Loquercio et al., 2006; Staw, 1980) and indirect costs, such as “poor staff morale and possibly health problems; unfilled positions and a lack of handover, resulting in a lack of continuity, inefficiencies and mistakes, as well as delays in projects, and a loss of institutional memory” (David Loquercio et al., 2006, p. 9).

As aforementioned, other studies have revealed that there is a negative relationship between employees’ satisfaction and an organization’s turnover rate (i.e., a company with dissatisfied employees will have higher turnover rates and vice versa) (Heskett et al., 2008; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). Thus, it is plausible that this theory would also be applicable in the humanitarian field. Since it has been proven in other studies that physical surroundings affect employees’ job satisfaction (Bitner, 1992; Davis, 1984; Ilozor, Love, & Treloar, 2002; Parish et al., 2008; Wineman, 1982) and since the physical surroundings for humanitarian aid workers are usually harsh as the work is concentrated in areas with insufficient infrastructure and resources (Korff et al., 2015, p. 526), it is likely that physical surroundings in humanitarian work could be one of the most important reasons for high turnover rates.

Based on this, we should understand what aspects of the physical environment most impact employee satisfaction and how the physical environment, in general and in relation to specific environment features, affects humanitarian assistance workers’ satisfaction and decisions to leave their job or organization. Therefore, once we understand the root of the problem related to high turnover, we can better support humanitarian agencies and their management to sufficiently address the negative aspects of physical environments in order to increase employee satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover and improving efficiency, efficacy, and overall value for money (which is now increasingly important given the high number of humanitarian crises requiring immense amounts of financial support in a context of growing humanitarian donor fatigue).

2.1 Aim of the study

Taking the above into account, the need for understanding which factors in the physical environment affect employee satisfaction and how those factors affect employees is at a critical point. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers' satisfaction and develop a preliminary conceptual model explaining the dimensions of those effects in order to help organizations better explore means of decreasing turnover rates in humanitarian assistance, thus improving organizational and programmatic success in the humanitarian assistance service industry.

2.2 Research question

What factors in the physical surroundings where humanitarian assistance services are performed most affect employee satisfaction, and how do these factors influence an employee's decision to stay or leave their job and the organization?

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter will review relevant research, literature, and the theoretical framework which is the study is embedded in. The review will be divided into four related sections, with each section focusing on different literature that discuss the effects of physical surroundings on employee job satisfaction as well as the effect of employee satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) on employee' turnover. The first section will explain the relationship between employee satisfaction and turnover rates in service organizations. The second section then moves on to explore how job satisfaction is affected by physical surroundings. The direct effect of physical surroundings on basic human needs and how satisfaction correlates with basic human needs is covered in the third section. Finally, the last section will emphasize how physical surroundings can create moral stress, which is associated with one's personal sense of obligation and ethics and, in turn, impacts employee satisfaction and willingness to stay in a particular position or with an organization.

3.1 Employee satisfaction, turnover rate, and efficiency

The challenge in organizations with high turnover rates is that such a problem is often seen most within organizations that tend to view personnel as dispensable and replaceable. Thus, organizations that encounter higher levels of this problem typically neglect necessary reflection that would allow them to address the root of the problem, thereby unintentionally reinforcing deficient strategies that do not address or enhance employee satisfaction or loyalty (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991, p. 17).

The Schelsinger and Heskett article “*Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Services*” was one of the most important articles, which clearly demonstrates how costly it is to have high employee turnover in a service organization (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). The empirical evidence which supported the study findings is abundant and conclusive (Looy et al., 2013, p. 31). Schelsinger and Heskett’s work has highlighted the importance of focusing on front line employees’ satisfaction in service organizations by providing them with the following: commensurate salaries, empowerment, adequate training, clear awareness of roles, and feedback about performance – all of which lead to increased satisfaction. Employee satisfaction, in turn, lowers employee turnover rates, increases employee productivity, and improves service quality. Once these factors improve, businesses tend to see more satisfied and loyal customers, which then increases profit margins (See Figure 1: The Cycle of Success) (Looy et al., 2013; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). However, when organizations focus more on cost reduction rather than employee satisfaction (e.g., provide low wages, do not offer trainings, focus more on company rules rather than on service, and do not encourage employee engagement in the company), organizations typically face dissatisfied and disloyal employees, leading to high turnover rates. The latter then impacts the service quality negatively, thus generating dissatisfied and disloyal customers and lowering company profits (See Figure 2: The Cycle of Failure) (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991).

Although this study has only shown the impact of dissatisfied employees in business service organizations where the focus is primarily on profit, the use of this model should come as no surprise as it holds clear relevance for the non-profit sector as well. As described earlier, the consequences of high employee turnover rates in humanitarian service, such as loss of institutional

memory and qualified personnel, have detrimental effects on the quality and efficiency of service delivery (David Loquercio et al., 2006). Even when success is not measured by profit margins as is the case in humanitarian assistance service, the notion of “good service quality” and efficiency remain essential for ensuring success in humanitarian service (i.e., where success is measured by vital, quality services reaching those most affected by a crisis).

In order for agencies to be successful, these frameworks suggest that employee satisfaction lowers staff turnover, which then leads to more successful outcomes. However, organizations as a whole typically demonstrate limited commitment by management to collect and understand accurate information regarding employee satisfaction and factors related to staff retention, which is significant in creating The Cycle of Failure (Looy et al., 2013, p. 33; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). The reason for this lack of information is that many organizations tend to be short-sighted and struggle to focus on goals that would likely lead to positive results in the long-term (e.g., investing in better recruitment, on-boarding, training, and capacity development strategies). Instead, these entities prioritize quick, tangible, and visible results that may lead to short-term success but eventual long-term failure (Looy et al., 2013, p. 33), which is also applicable in humanitarian service organizations where humanitarian organizations often do not emphasize (as much as they should) on their employees’ satisfaction and do not proactively work to understand or improve the factors that could increase satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover rates in humanitarian service. Moreover, the perception that humanitarian service is a value-based or “moral obligation” service often leads to organizational management to view employees as staff who should have few requirements, as their life is dedicated to “service for others.” Therefore, these models are even more applicable in the humanitarian sector.

These clear linkages between The Cycle of Failure and The Cycle of Success Frameworks findings and the non-profit sector prove their relevance for this topic, as this framework explains that the main factors behind high employee turnover rate is employee dissatisfaction. While Schlesinger & Heskett did not include the physical surroundings dimension and its possible effects on employee satisfaction and turnover rates, some studies have, in fact, revealed the effect of physical surroundings on an employee’s behavior, social interactions, and job satisfaction (Bitner, 1992;

Parish et al., 2008). This means that the Cycle of Success and Cycle of Failure frameworks could be extended to include the effects of physical surroundings on an employee’s satisfaction and an organization’s overall turnover rate and service quality. The latter will lead us to the second section of the theoretical framework, which is the physical surroundings and servicescape effects.

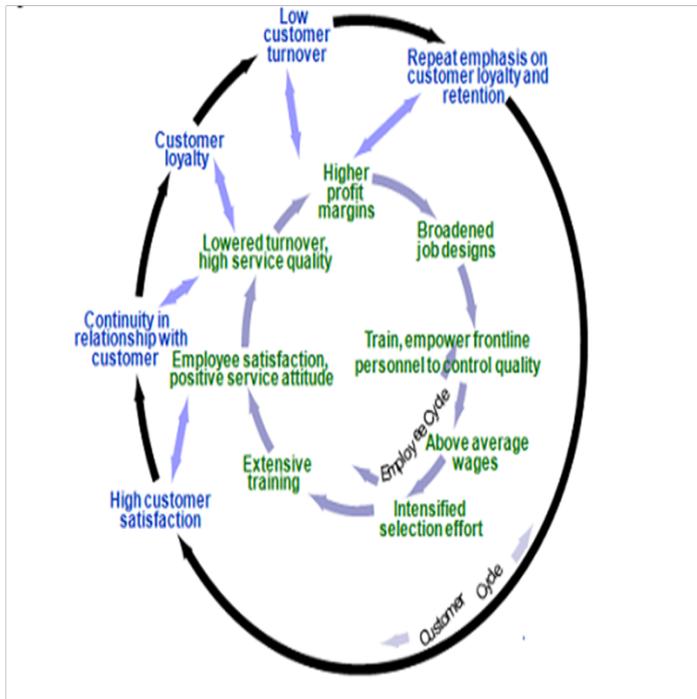


Figure 1: The Cycle of Success

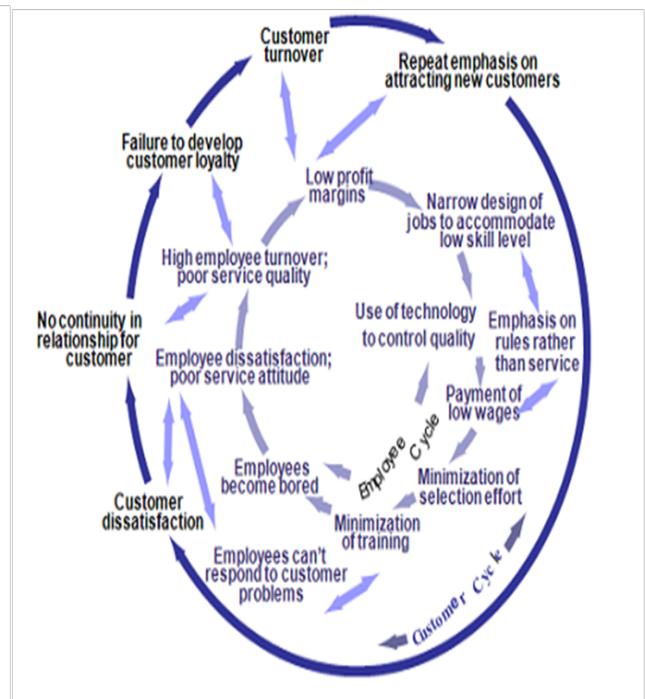


Figure 2: The Cycle of Failure

Source. Schlesinger, L. A., & Heskett, J. L. (1991). *Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Services*. *Sloan Management Review*, 32(3), 17-28.

3.2 Physical surroundings and Servicescape effects

Previous service management and marketing studies have highlighted the importance of physical surroundings, as it was proven that physical surroundings affect both employee and customer behavior and social interaction (or what Grönroos calls buyer-seller interactions), which is part of service quality (Bitner, 1992; Grönroos, 1982, 1984). Mehrabian and Russell were the first to put the effects of physical surroundings in a clear framework. In their book *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*, they discussed the effects of physical surroundings on a variety of

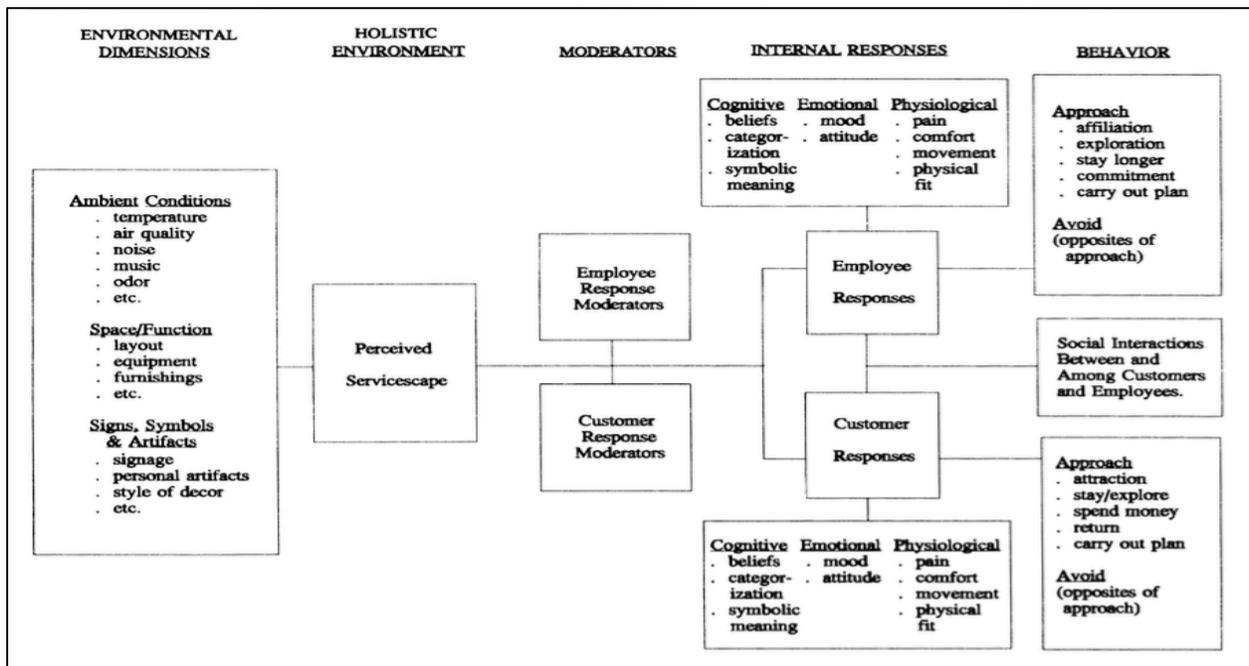
emotional responses and behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Mehrabian and Russell highlight that physical stimuli have a direct effect on the emotional state of the person, which influences her/his approach-avoidance behaviors. These types of behaviors include “physical approach, work performance, exploration, and social interaction” (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, pp. 7-8). The authors also indicate that “the more pleasant work settings can particularly help to increase the motivation to perform complex tasks” (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, p. 192). This book was possibly the first book that started to draw attention to the importance of physical surroundings on people’s behavior.

Later studies have since focused on the effects of the work environment and physical setting on employees related to office design (Davis, 1984; Ilozor et al., 2002; Wineman, 1982). Furthermore, other studies focused on physical surroundings and its effects on customer satisfaction and service quality, particularly given that a “physical surroundings” component was included in the marketing 7Ps (product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, participants and process) (e.g., Bitner, 1990, 1992; Booms & Bitner, 1982; Grönroos, 1984, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988; Shostack, 1977; Wakefield, 1994). Grönroos was the first to address the importance of physical surroundings in services as he explained the effects of physical environments on the functional quality of services and on customers’ satisfaction in the “buyer-seller interaction” (Grönroos, 1982, p. 34; 1984, p. 112). This attention towards the effects of physical surroundings on employees in service settings, however, was actually started with the famous Bitner 1992 article, “*Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees.*” In this article, Bitner described how physical surroundings (or what she called “servicescape”) affect both employees and customer interaction at the same time in the service encounter (Bitner, 1992).

However, Bitner’s famous servicescape framework (figure 3) determined physical surroundings’ impact on employees and customers only in relation to the *service encounter*, in that Bitner discusses the effects of ambient conditions, spatial layout & functionality, and signs, symbols and artifacts on both customers’ and employees’ behavior and social interaction in addition to employee commitment and purpose of being in the organization. She explained that when employees and customers perceive the servicescape as positive, this perception will lead to an

“approach behavior,” which for employees means behaviors, such as affiliation, longer employment, and commitment. For customers, an “approach behavior” leads to staying longer, spending more money, and increasing their loyalty. On the other hand, negative perceptions of a servicescape will lead to avoidance, which represent the opposite behaviors (Bitner, 1992, p. 61). Although her focus was on the effects of the physical surrounding during the service encounter only, the use of her framework is important since humanitarian assistance workers spend a long time in the service encounter in order to provide ongoing, life-saving help and supplies to people in need, particularly where the crisis is a protracted emergency. Thus, the use of the Bitner framework will be essential to this thesis, but has limited influence as the humanitarian experience goes beyond the service encounter. Another reason for using the framework only partially is that Bitner’s framework includes the physical surroundings’ effects on customers, which is not applicable in this paper.

Figure 3: Framework for Understanding Environment-User relationship in Service Organization

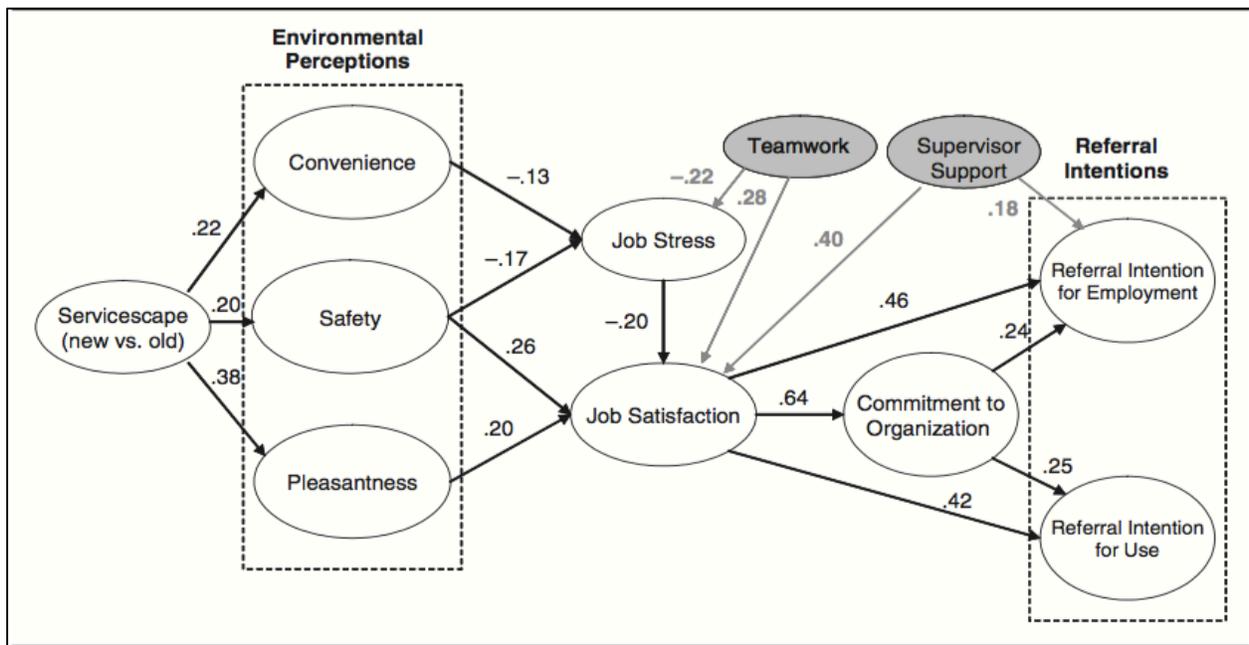


Source. Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57-71.

In using a framework which is more relevant for the topic of this thesis, the Parish, Berry, and Shun Yin 2008 (Parish et al., 2008) framework (Figure 4) was used for this purpose as their study

focused on nurses in medical service, which is a service significantly similar to the humanitarian service industry. The Parish et al. 2008 framework was created in order to explain the effects of physical environments on nurses' satisfaction and, thus, nurses' turnover rates. The framework clarified the relationship between the physical surrounding and turnover rates in hospitals where it proved that the perception of physical surroundings, including the three dimensions of safety, convenience, and pleasantness, affect nurses' satisfaction, job stress, and commitment to the organization. It was shown that nurses who perceived the physical surroundings as safe, convenient, and pleasant are more satisfied with their work and have less job stress, which increases their commitment to stay in the hospital. Moreover, they encourage other people to apply for jobs in their hospital and encourage patients to get treated at the hospital as well. While the opposite reaction occurs when employees perceive the physical surroundings in relation to the aforementioned dimensions as negative (Parish et al., 2008, p. 233). This study has drawn attention to the importance of physical surroundings in the medical service, where it highlighted that there is a strong link between physical surroundings and turnover rate through employee satisfaction.

Figure 4: Impact of Environmental Perception on Invested Service Workers



Source: Parish, J. T., Berry, L. L., & Shun Yin, L. (2008). *The Effect of the Servicescape on Service Workers*. *Journal of Service Research*, 10(3), 220-238.

The use of the Parish et al. (Parish et al., 2008) framework is coming from the belief that the health service is similar to humanitarian services since both services are ethically grounded services, in which the focus is on saving lives rather than profit and as workers are personally invested in their work. Additionally, the use of this framework is also related to the fact that, similar to nursing (Hewison, 1995), the power relationship between customers and employees in such services is different and not equally in the hand of customer, like in a business service. Lastly, the use of this framework is also based on the belief that, similar to nursing, physical surroundings is one of the most important factors behind employee satisfaction and turnover rates in humanitarian assistance service as the physical surroundings in this service is usually harsh. Therefore, the use of the Parish, Berry, and Shun Yin's (Parish et al., 2008) framework in this thesis becomes important.

However, with the emergence of the safety aspect in the Parish et al.(Parish et al., 2008) study, it was realized that, in some services, the physical surroundings not only affect an employee's behavior, social interaction, and satisfaction but also have an impact on the basic human needs outlined by Maslow in his theory, *A Theory of Human Motivations* (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Maslow indicated that "safety" needs are one of the basic needs of human beings (A. H. Maslow, 1943). As we have seen in the Parish et al (Parish et al., 2008) study, when nurses do not perceive their physical surrounding as safe, they feel worried about their health and wellbeing, which reflects negatively on their satisfaction. Then, they will leave the job in order to satisfy their safety needs and not be exposed to a work environment where their safety is threatened, so in case basic human needs were not satisfied (e.g., safety) the overall satisfaction level will be effected as well, and employees will look for other jobs where their basic needs can be satisfied which is also adding to the turnover rate. Taking the similarity between medical service and humanitarian service into account, physical surroundings in humanitarian assistance could be also touching some of the basic human needs of humanitarian workers, which leads to the third section of the theoretical framework which is focusing on physical surroundings' effect on basic human needs.

3.3 Physical surroundings' effect on basic human needs

As realized in the last section, physical surroundings also affect basic human needs indicated by Abraham Maslow in his famous theory about human motivation (A. H. Maslow, 1943). In his study, Maslow indicated that humans in general have four basic needs, which we are consistently looking to satisfy. These needs are categorized in terms of the most basic yet important to the least crucial and harder-to-attain needs, starting with: 1) Physiological needs, 2) Safety needs, 3) Social needs, and 4) Esteem needs. Maslow added a fifth dimension, the need for Self-Actualization, but he did not consider this as basic as the other four. The overall theory assumes that people start satisfying lower level basic needs (either partially or totally) before seeking to gratify higher needs (A. H. Maslow, 1943; McGregor, 2000). Maslow's theory has been studied deeply and applied to business organizations after it was adapted by Human Relations Approach proponents, where it was agreed that the use of this theory is important for raising employee satisfaction and having successful organizations by satisfying physiological needs with monetary rewards and satisfying safety needs through job security and welfare benefits (Burnes, 2014, p. 51).

While Maslow's theory was widely accepted, there seems to be a lack of evidence to support this theory. In fact, the theory was criticized for its limitation in relation to work behaviors, particularly after some studies have indicated that, Maslow's categories are overlapped, there is no support for his proposed hierarchy, the theory has serious culture limitation and most importantly there was no clear meaning of the concept of "need" itself (Hofstede, 1984; Wahba & Bridwell, 1973, 1976).

Since humanitarian workers perform their duties in extreme, insecure physical environments within disaster and war zones (as discussed earlier), "The main threats to the safety of aid workers pertain to politically motivated violence, crime, and unsafe physical conditions in terms of hygiene, landmines, medical facilities, and transportation" (Korff et al., 2015, p. 527). Moreover, as humanitarian workers are working in disaster zones, they can also face a shortage of essential life supplies, like water, food and medicine. Accordingly, physical surroundings for humanitarian workers also affect some of the basic human needs indicated by Maslow (i.e., physiological and safety needs). However, taking Maslow's theory limitation into consideration, the use of Maslow's

theory in this study will be limited to its proposed basic needs without reflecting its proposed hierarchy of those needs. In other words, this paper will deal with Maslow's proposed needs as basic human needs without touching the issue of which needs should be satisfied before the other. Moreover, Maslow's theory will be applied in its original form without reviewing remuneration, contract duration, and the like; this theory will, instead, be used to support the understanding of how physical surroundings affect the fundamental needs of humans and how fulfillment of those needs versus deficiencies in those areas decrease job satisfaction, thereby increasing turnover rates in humanitarian assistance service.

Lastly, it was realized that physical surroundings in the humanitarian field could also affect another basic need in Maslow's theory, which involves esteem needs. The esteem needs according to Maslow can be classified into two subsidiary sets: self-respect and respect of others (Abraham H. Maslow, 1970, p. 45). Physical surroundings in the humanitarian context could be affecting the first subsidiary, which is self-respect. Inaccessibility to people in need as a result of poor infrastructure or insecurity results in staff being unable to fulfill their duties and personal commitment, which then negatively affects their self-esteem and increases stress levels. Some studies refer to this type of stress as Moral Stress, which is the fourth and last section of the theoretical framework for this study.

3.4 Moral stress

Moral stress is a common occurrence among nurses. In fact, researchers in nursing and medical care fields have recently started to focus on the "moral stress" impacting workers in this field. Recent research shows "Moral distress occurs when the practitioner feels certain of the ethical course of action but is constrained from taking that action"(Hamric & Blackhall, 2007, p. 423) Moral stress in nursing was first highlighted by Jameton 1984 (Jameton, 1984), where he defined moral stress as painful feelings when nurses feel they can do more to save patients' lives but organizational practices and conditions such as lack of time, institutional policy, and legal limits prevent them from taking the necessary action (Corley, 2002, p. 637). This painful feeling leads to decreased job satisfaction and creates high turnover rates (de Veer, Francke, Struijs, & Willems, 2013; Elpern, Covert, & Kleinpell, 2005). More recently, it was recommended to expand moral

stress factors to include any circumstances beyond employee control and can lead to service failure (Corley, 2002, p. 637). However, the research on moral stress focuses primarily on the health care field but still has limited developed theories (Corley, 2002, p. 639).

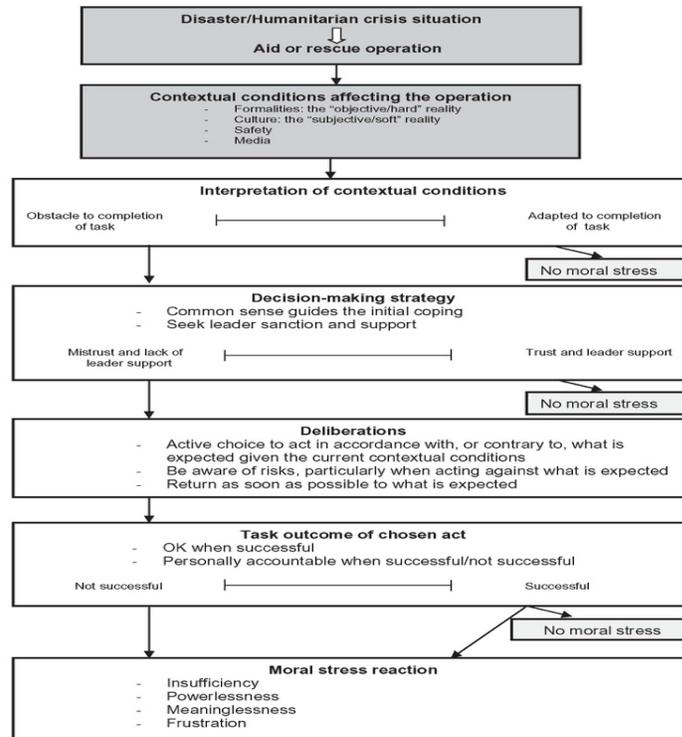
An even more relevant study conducted by the Swedish National Defence College and Karlstad University revealed the important role of moral stress on humanitarian assistance service workers (Nilsson, Sjöberg, Kallenberg, & Larsson, 2011). The study focused on factors that most generate moral stress among humanitarian aid workers, as employees who work in this field consistently face moral dilemmas which result in stress at an individual level, particularly since the primary goal of humanitarian assistance is meeting essential needs and saving human lives (Nilsson et al., 2011, p. 50). Moreover, humanitarian assistance service is an ethically grounded service where workers have a strong sense of commitment and obligation towards the people they are committed to serving, but, more frequently, they are faced with factors that are preventing them from providing adequate services. This struggle impacts their job satisfaction and could be a significant factor causing high turnover rates similar to that of nurses.

The study has developed a framework (see Figure 5), where they describe four conditions that affect humanitarian service or rescue operations. These conditions include the following: 1) formalities: relates to the codes and regulations which guide humanitarian assistance service on international and organizational levels; 2) culture: refers to cultural differences, such as clashes between norms, interests, work routines, and working methods of organizational culture and the country where the humanitarian service is taking place; 3) safety: refers to staff safety and security during operations; and 4) media: represents the media coverage of the humanitarian crisis and response, when humanitarian workers interpret the situation emerged by one or more of these conditions as not compatible with their own moral guidelines or principle, a “challenging decision-making process begins” (Nilsson et al., 2011, pp 54). First the employee will seek management support to make a decision which is in harmony with her/his own ethics. In the event that management did not take that decision, humanitarian workers have to take a decision either in harmony with her/his own ethical guidelines and against management stand or make the decision compatible with the management stand and in disharmony with her/his ethical stand. In case of

she/he took the latter decision and was not successful in helping the people in need, this tension creates what is called moral stress, which is represented by four primary feeling reactions: insufficiency, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and frustration (Nilsson et al., 2011).

The above study and its framework has shown how moral stress is common among humanitarian workers, which is the primary purpose for utilizing this theory as part of the theoretical framework. Physical surroundings could be a significant contributing factor leading to moral stress as the environment often inhibits humanitarian workers from implementing services in the way they want and forces them to take decisions that are incongruent with their ethics or values. This tension then breeds feelings of insufficiency, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and frustration. These negative and, sometimes, harmful reactions will likely decrease job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization.

Figure 5: Ethical decision making from a moral stress perspective during acute situation



Source: Nilsson, S., Sjöberg, M., Kallenberg, K., & Larsson, G. (2011). *Moral Stress in International Humanitarian Aid and Rescue Operations: A Grounded Theory Study*. *Ethics & Behavior*, 21(1).

3.5 Chapter summary:

This chapter was based on four theoretical frameworks that vary but are interconnected and show several linkages. The chapter started with the section which clarified the relation between employees' satisfaction and turnover rate where the core of the first section was Schlesinger and Heskett's Study (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991) which highlighted the direct relation between employees satisfaction and turnover rate in service firms and explained the factors affect that satisfaction. However, as The Cycle of Success and The Cycle of Failure did not include physical surroundings as one of the factors affecting employees' satisfaction, theories which have highlighted the vital role of the physical surroundings on employees' satisfaction were needed, which was the core concept of the second section. the second section started with Bitner' aricle (Bitner, 1992) as it was the first and one of the most important articles which indicated the physical surroundings effect on employee, then the same section had a second framework (Parish et al, 2008), which is critical to this study, the study recognize that the perception of physical surroundings in relation to its pleasantness, safety and convince also affecting employees' satisfaction. Moreover, Parish et al.'s study finding led the author to understand that safety aspect is important and influential to humans when determining satisfaction. However, as the safety aspect is among basic human needs indicated by Maslow. Thus, the author examined Maslow's theory, which, while somewhat flawed in terms of concrete evidence, remains useful to contextualize how powerful and influential safety and other basic human needs are for human satisfaction (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Therefore, Maslow's theory becomes relevant and significant to this study. Despite its limitations with regards to concrete definitions and the hierarchy itself, Maslow's theory of needs acknowledges various needs that are critical to human existence (i.e., physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteemed needs and self-Actualization needs) which some of them are also affected by the physical surroundings (i.e., physiological needs, safety needs) and hence adding to the effect of physical surroundings on employees' satisfaction as satisfying basic human needs also effect the overall satisfaction for human.

Finally, the last section has touched the issue of moral stress which directly linked to the effect of physical surroundings on another category of the basic human needs which the "esteemed-needs" as physical surroundings that hamper one's work can shake an employee's self-respect,

particularly when that employee is driven by a sense of personal or moral obligation to her/his service or work. This shaken self-respect creates moral stress, thereby affecting the employee's overall satisfaction and decreasing the willingness to stay in that position.

Accordingly, we can see how the four sections were interlocked and join together to form a solid foundation for the research, where the first section was clarifying the turnover rate relation to satisfaction, the second was explaining the direct effect of physical surrounding on satisfaction, the third was trying to explain how the physical surroundings have direct impact on human basic needs which by its turn affecting the satisfaction. While the last section was about how the effect of physical surroundings on another category of the basic needs (i.e., self-esteem) can create moral stress which by its turn effect the employees' satisfactions.

4. Methodology and Method of the study

This chapter discusses details of the research process and the logic behind choosing the study philosophy, approaches, and design and offers an explanation of the trustworthiness and limitations of the study. The design and methods included within this chapter were guided by Robert K. Yin's book *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (Yin, 2003) and *Research Methods for Business Students* book (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

4.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy is one of the most important parts of any study since it determines the way an author views the world. It also guides the research strategy and methods, and, most importantly, it affects the view of the relationship between knowledge itself and the process which developed it (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108).

The study on the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian service workers is focusing on the individual, where the aim is to understand how the surroundings are affecting the worker's inner mental and emotional state and their interpretations of the world they are working in. Therefore, a constructivist approach was adapted for this study.

Regarding the epistemological stance for this study, the author has adapted a hermeneutic approach in order to understand and explore the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers better than humanitarian workers understand it themselves. This was possible through “immersion” within the situation and way of thinking of the interviewed humanitarian workers, while, at the same time, the interviewer maintained a level of distance and distinction from the interviewees (Howell, 2013, p. 155). Moreover, the two main hermeneutic currents (i.e., Objectivist Hermeneutics and Alethic Hermeneutics) were joined in this research process as the author interpreted the research text (collected data) as part of the whole humanitarian service context in addition to having utilized previous understanding of the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers. The “pre-understanding” was then further developed and modified after analyzing and understanding the new text, which emerged from the interviews of this study. The above is based on the hermeneutic circle described by Alvesson & Sköldbberg (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 104).

[4.2 Research approach](#)

Since the research question is based on previous theories proving the relationship between the three variables of physical surroundings, employee satisfaction, and turnover rates, this thesis focuses on further developing and refining existing theories as opposed to creating new theories. This reasoning has prompted the use of an abduction approach for this study as it is the most suitable in such cases (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). Moreover, since the study utilizes theories developed in fields different from the humanitarian profession but yet are applicable for this field of study, the need for modification or expansion of current theoretical frameworks as a result of identifying unanticipated but related issues in the interview process is important in this study. This refinement process can be secured only by using an abduction approach as it is the singular approach which allows the researcher to “go back and forth” between empirical data and theory

(Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555). On the other hand, this study is mainly focused on understanding the effects of physical surroundings on employees' satisfaction, which also supports the use of the abduction approach as it is better than the other two shallower approaches (i.e., inductive and deductive approaches) for understanding. Additionally, the abduction approach is close to the hermeneutic approach, which is the epistemological stance for this research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4). For all of the reasons outlined above, the use of an abduction approach was essential for this study.

4.3 Research design

The aim of the research design is to set the general plan for how to answer the research question. This plan should be based on the research question, research objectives, and must be consistent with research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 136-137).

4.3.1 Research strategy

The study of the effects of physical surroundings is an explorative study since the aim of the study is to understand what factors most affect employee satisfaction and how this, in turn, affects the turnover rate. To be able to explore this broad area more in-depth, a case study research design was adopted as it is suitable for explorative studies (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 146). Moreover, a case study design was believed to be the most appropriate as the research question is multi-layered, focusing on both the “what” and the “how” aspects related to the effects of physical surroundings, and a case study design is an appropriate strategy for questions that seek to answer both aspects (Yin, 2003, p. 22; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 146).

Additionally, a **multiple-case study research design** was also considered for this thesis since the researcher of this paper has the resources to conduct a multiple-case study, which is better than a single case study for improved results, as according to Yin “even if you can only do a “two-case” case study, your chances of doing a good case study will be better than a single-case study design” (Yin, 2003, p. 53). Moreover “analytical conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from single case alone” and “the

contexts of the two cases are likely to differ to some extent.” (Yin, 2003, p. 53) This means that if the study finds common conclusions from multiple cases, there is a better possibility to expand the external generalizability of the study findings. Accordingly, this thesis was focused on two case studies, where it studied the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers in two different setups, namely South Sudan and Syria.

4.3.2 Sampling

The researcher conducted interviews with seven humanitarian workers who are working in two different setups, where the sampling process was based on purposive sampling method, meaning that the samples were selected after critical and careful thinking about the population sample to ensure they fit appropriately with the topic and criteria which the study is based on (Silverman, 2013, p. 148). Accordingly, participants of this study were professional humanitarian aid workers currently working in South Sudan or Syria, representing different nationalities, sex (i.e., female and male), educational background, experience in humanitarian field (some had three years and others twenty years), positions, duty stations inside the country, and perspectives as either a national staff or international staff member (See Participants List below). However, the participants are also working in different organizations, where the author made sure to interview humanitarian workers who are working in United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and local non-governmental organization as organizations in those agencies provide different types of intervention and receive varied amounts of funding, thereby impacting the level of support given to their staff. The researcher previously worked as a humanitarian worker, which allowed greater access to relevant participants through personal connections or referrals (i.e., snowball sampling).

Participants List

Country	Name	sex	Interview length/minutes
pilot	Emilie	Female	32:28
South Sudan	Mark	Male	30:10
	Adam	Male	21:04
	Julia	Female	19:20
	Elizabeth	Female	27:15
Syria	Toni	Male	35:14
	Zaid	Male	21:07
	Solomon	Male	22:36

*Names given are pseudonyms.

4.3.3 Data collection

Since the study is focused on understanding 1) what factors in the physical surroundings and 2) how these factors affect employee satisfaction, a qualitative method was considered to be the best method to follow for the study, as a qualitative method is best for answering ‘how’ questions since this method is concerned with the words and nuanced experiences not numbers (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2013). Moreover, a qualitative approach was considered the only suitable for this study as such an approach is coherent with the epistemological and ontological stance of this study, and it is considered also the most suitable for the abduction approach (Bryman, 2012, p. 380).

According to Yin (Yin, 2003), there are six main sources of evidence when conducting case study research: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003, p. 85). However, the issue of the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers has barely been touched before, so documentation and archival records were not available as sources of data collection for this study. On the other hand, as the study is focused on two setups which are in different geographic locations from the researcher, the other

three sources (i.e., direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts) were also not available for this study. According to the above, interviews were the only source of evidence which can be used in this study.

The study's interviews were based on a semi-structured interview technique, where the first interview was a face to face semi-structured interview conducted with a humanitarian worker who works in South Sudan and was coincidentally spending seven days' vacation in Sweden. This interview was used as a pilot interview to allow the researcher to test the adequacy of the interview instructions and questions in addition to providing more experience in using the interview guide (Bryman, 2012, pp. 263-264).

After that, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with four humanitarian workers working in South Sudan and three humanitarian workers working in Syria. The reason behind choosing a semi-structured data collection method was to allow interviewees to explain the problem in their own terms, drawing on their perceptions in addition to giving the interviewee more space to go beyond the main topic and bring attention to other problems in this type of service (May, 2011, p. 134), which is in line with the abduction approach.

As the participants of this study were humanitarian workers who are currently on humanitarian mission in South Sudan or Syria, conducting face to face interviews was not possible due to the geographic constraints. Accordingly the researcher used the internet as a "medium of communication" (Silverman, 2013, p. 224), and the interviews were conducted via Skype with humanitarian assistance service workers currently working in the aforementioned countries.

During the interview process, the interviewer followed Yin's advice (Yin, 2003, p. 90) by first following the study "line of inquiry" and, at the same time, asking the question in an "unbiased manner" in order to give freedom to the interviewees to reflect their own opinions and experiences and draw attention to new ideas, which is the main reason for using semi-structured interviews and the abduction approach.

According to the above, an initial interview guide based on the first two sections of the theoretical framework was prepared before the pilot study. Then amendments were made to the interview guide based on a thorough review of the pilot interview process and discussion with the pilot interviewee, in which the first question set included general questions about the interviewee background and related information and the second set addressed the second theoretical framework, specifically Bitner and Parish et al. studies (Bitner, 1992; Parish et al., 2008). The third set of questions were not based on a particular theory, but were asked to allow space for interviewees to draw attention to new dimensions of the impact of physical surroundings in humanitarian service, if any. The fourth set was based on the first theoretical framework, which emphasized the linkage between job satisfaction and turnover rates based on Schlesinger and Heskett' study (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). The last set of questions was based on the Parish et al. (Parish et al., 2008) study where the aim was to try to understand the link between satisfaction and the likelihood of referral for employment in humanitarian service (See Appendix I).

After the first three interviews with humanitarian workers in South Sudan, the author noticed that the three interviewees touched on new dimensions (i.e., physical surroundings effect on basic human needs and moral stress) that were not mentioned in the initial theoretical framework of the study, which means that these aspects were not reflected in the interview guide (since the interview questions were based on the theoretical framework of the study). Based on this critical data, the theoretical framework of the study was expanded, and the fifth questions set, which is touching the Moral stress, was added to the interview guide and used in the four remaining interviews (See Appendix I).

Before the interview process started, a clear explanation was provided to the interviewees either via email, phone call, or both, informing them about the main purpose of the interview, the expected length of the interview, benefits from participating in the interview, and privacy issues, including a request for permission to record, clarifying who will have access to interview data, and guarantee of anonymity for participants and their organizations (See Appendix II). It is also worthwhile to note that three persons originally contacted opted not to participate in the study as

they had to obtain consent from their organization first in order to be able to participate in a recorded interview, which caused them to opt out.

As Silverman described, “it goes without saying that your interviews should always be recorded” (Silverman, 2013, p. 208), so, in that light, all interviews were recorded using two recording machines. Recording use two devices turned out to be extremely valuable as technical problems occurred on one device during two interviews, but the other device recorded successfully. After that all interviews were transcribed in a Microsoft word file.

Three among the seven interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic as the interviewees shared the same mother tongue (Arabic) as the interviewer. Quotations referenced in the study were translated into English after ensuring the translated quotes match the meaning of the original text. It is important to note that the rest of the interviewees are non-native English speakers, and all quotations within the findings section are direct quotes as the interviewees stated. The researcher also made sure to transcribe the interviews in the same day of the interview since “it is helpful if your interviews are transcribed as soon as possible after they are undertaken in order to avoid a build-up of audio recording and associated transcription work” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 485) and also since remembering what unclear words in the audio recording is easier if transcription is completed on the same day.

4.3.4 Data analysis

As indicated earlier, the abduction approach was considered the most suitable approach for this study since it offers the possibility to go back and forth between collected data and the theoretical framework in order to continually develop and elaborate on the theories after obtaining new information from the empirical materials (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Yin (Yin, 2003) emphasized that the researcher ought to have an analytical strategy prior to beginning data analysis as “the strategy will help you to treat the evidence fairly, produce

compelling analytic conclusions, and rule out alternative interpretations” (Yin, 2003, p. 111). The general analytical strategy for this thesis relied on the theoretical propositions for the study. As aforementioned, the theoretical propositions were also reflected in the research question, literature reviews, and the new propositions; moreover, these propositions also helped to focus on certain data during the analysis phase and neglect others (Yin, 2003, p. 112).

After the first three interviews with interviewees working in South Sudan were completed, the collected data was classified into meaningful categories based on terms from the initial theoretical framework, which consisted of the following five categories in the context of physical surroundings: safety dimension, ambient conditions, functionality, relationship between job dis/satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization, and, finally, relationship between job dis/satisfaction and employment referral. As a result of the emerging data, two additional categories were added after expanding the theoretical framework. These included “moral stress” and the ability of the physical surroundings to facilitate the fulfillment or gratification of basic physiological needs. Additionally, the category of physical surroundings’ functionality was replaced by the functionality of communication tools. All categories for analysis were based on the initial study framework and then on the expanded theoretical framework, which made for more meaningful results in relation to the data and in relation to each other as categories. This strategy gave the opportunity to have a well-structured analytical framework, which is based on Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis research process procedures (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 493).

[4.4 Trustworthiness](#)

Bryman (Bryman, 2012) set four criteria for the trustworthiness of any qualitative research,. In order to assure trustworthiness of this study, the researcher made sure to take Bryman criteria, outlined below, in consideration when conducting the study (Bryman, 2012, pp. 390-396).

Credibility: Findings were shared with six out of the seven participants as well as the pilot study participant in order to seek their approval or disapproval of the findings. All participants agreed and were satisfied with the findings.

Transferability: The primary aim of this study is “analytical generalization” where the study is trying to develop theories for the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers and turnover rates within humanitarian assistance service, rather than generalizing the study results to all humanitarian workers in the world. However, replication of the findings was warranted by getting the same or similar results across the two studied setups (i.e., South Sudan and Syria) after drawing cross-case conclusions (Yin, 2003, p. 37).

Dependability: All procedures and phases followed in this study were documented in order to offer the possibility to other researchers to repeat the study with the same steps.

Confirmability: As the researcher worked in South Sudan (November 2014 to August 2015) and Syria (February 2013 to September 2013) as a humanitarian aid worker, personal experience was used as a starting point for this research (Silverman, 2013, p. 80). Being a previous humanitarian worker had positive and negative implications for the confirmability of this study. Having worked in the case-study locations, the researcher had a good frame of reference for understanding the situation and challenges in the humanitarian field, which was helpful for evaluating responses, asking critical and relevant follow-up questions during the interview discussion, and analyzing data as part of the whole, in addition to the ability to understand humanitarian acronyms and terms specific to this field. Moreover, being a former colleague for some of the interviewees also helped to gain more trust and acceptance, thus making it easier for the participants to share their inner mental situation more freely (May, 2011, p. 173). On the other hand, the findings of the research could be biased as previous experience could lead to preconceived notions related to the study outcomes and affect the objectivity of the research. Accordingly, the author made sure that the results were guided by the collected data, which was also supported by using abduction and hermeneutics approaches. Since the hermeneutics approach helps to understand the situation through the interviewees’ lens via dialogue, it is believed that prejudices, subjectivity, and biases are reduced and mitigated, thereby supporting the confirmability of this study (Howell, 2013, p. 158).

[4.5 Ethical issues](#)

The researcher of this study made sure to follow the codes of ethical research suggested by Silverman, (Silverman, 2013, p. 161):

Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw: Information in the form of email, phone call or via both were delivered to the participants before the interview process. During this introduction and informational period, the researcher made sure to explain the purpose of the research and the right of the participant to withdraw from the interview or the study at any time (See Appendix II which was also based on Silverman's book (Silverman, 2013, p. 166)).

Protection of research participants: Anonymity of both personal name and organizational name was guaranteed to all participants. Accordingly, all of the names in the analysis are pseudonyms, and the nationality, age, positions, duty stations inside the country (city) in addition to organizational names have been deleted from the interview transcript. Also, as Syria is a country with high restrictions on freedom of speech (Human Rights Watch, 2016), the interviews with national Syrian humanitarian workers were conducted when they were visiting a neighboring country in order to guarantee the interviewees' safety.

Assessment of potential benefits and risks to participants: A careful assessment of risks was discussed with the participants, and all were confident that the interview and research posed no added risks as long as they were guaranteed anonymity by not referencing specific individual or organizational names. However, two of the people contacted in Syria reported an inability to participate after the risk assessment as such an interview could lead to arrest in Syria. Benefits were also explained in the email (See Appendix II).

Obtaining informed consent: The researcher made sure to have direct, free, and informed consent from the participants whether by email or phone conversation, even in case a third party assured the acceptance of the interviewee.

No doing harm: This research poses no threat or harm to interviewees or the humanitarian community as the personal names are pseudonyms, organizational names are not provided, and interviews with Syrian workers were conducted while they were outside Syria.

[4.6 Limitations](#)

Due to the shortage of academic studies focused on the humanitarian field, it was extremely challenging and time-consuming to find academic research in this field. Accordingly, some of the materials related to humanitarian assistance service referenced in this thesis were derived from

non-academic articles (i.e., websites, reports). Although the use of multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) was recommended to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of any research (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2003), this technique could not be followed in this study as a result of the unavailability of other sources of evidence like documents or archived records. The inability to carry out direct observation or participant observation due to geographic and time constraints also inhibited the ability to gain deeper perspectives, look for inconsistencies between interviews and reality, and add to the list of physical surrounding factors that may affect employees but were not mentioned during the interviews. The use of Skype as the medium of communication for interviews also hindered the ability to record the non-verbal gestures of the respondents, which one has the advantage of in face to face interviews (May, 2011, p. 105).

In terms of study sample limitation from gender perspective, two female interviewees were included in South Sudan case-study, but no female interviewees from Syria were included as no female aid workers were out of the country during the research period. Additionally, the interviewer's guide did not include questions specifically related to the effects of physical surroundings from a gender perspective. Interviewees were free to share these experiences, but few direct comments regarding the relationship between gender and experiences as an aid worker were brought up during the interviews itself. However, some interviewees raised this point following the review of the study (credibility process), stating that there are particular safety and physical concerns unique to females that would be helpful to address. An age perspective is limited for these same reasons.

However, it is also important to note that in the Syria case-study the three interviews were conducted with professional humanitarian workers living and working in government-controlled areas only, which are more secure, stable environments. Interviews with humanitarian workers who work in opposition-controlled areas were not possible, which could reflect on the study findings.

5. Background

This chapter provides general background about South Sudan and Syria in addition to a brief explanation about humanitarian crises and the humanitarian needs in the two countries.

5.1 South Sudan

Officially the Republic of South Sudan, South Sudan is considered the newest country in the world after the country declared independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011, following a devastating war lasting twenty years and ending in 2005 (South Sudan country profile, 2016). The estimated population in South Sudan is around twelve million people (Worldbank, 2014).

After independence in 2011, an inter-ethnic conflict broke out in December 2013 between Dinka and Nuer ethnic group, resulting 1.66 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and around 644,900 refugees in neighboring countries. Around 185,000 IDPs have sought refuge in UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites, while around 90 per cent of IDPs are on the run or sheltering outside PoC sites (UNOCHA, 2016b). The humanitarian needs across South Sudan are vast and involve multiple, intertwined threats, including armed conflict, inter- and intra-communal violence, economic decline, disease, and climactic shocks.



(Google maps, 2016a)

More specifically, urgent humanitarian needs in South Sudan revolve around serious health concerns, such as malaria, malnutrition, cholera, and diarrheal diseases, lack of access to primary and secondary schools, crowded living conditions in camps, inadequate shelter, unavailability of nonfood items (e.g., pots, pans, water containers), inadequate and non-nutritious food, non-potable water, poor sanitation, and protection risks (e.g., gender-based violence, family separation, child recruitment into armed forces). The needs are clearly massive and require 1.3 billion US dollars

for 114 humanitarian agencies to respond to these needs in the year 2016 alone (UNOCHA, 2016c).

5.2 Syria

Officially the Syrian Arab Republic, Syria is one of the biggest countries in the Middle East, which is witnessing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world since World War II (ECHO, 2016).

Before the war, the Syrian population was twenty-two million people, with a healthy economy and good infrastructure. However, since 2011, Syria has been facing a devastated political and humanitarian crisis, in which an estimated 2.3 million have been killed or wounded, thousands are arbitrarily detained and arrested, 6.5 million are internally-displaced, and around 6 million persons have sought refuge in neighboring countries. In addition, the estimated cost of five years of conflict is at \$259.6 billion US dollars (UNESCWA, 2016). Humanitarian needs in Syria are dire where the United Nation had requested \$3.18 billion US dollars to cover humanitarian needs for 2016 alone, which would cover food, health, protection, education, water and sanitation, nonfood items, nutrition, shelter, camps, and protection services (UNOCHA, 2016d).



(Google maps, 2016b)

6. Findings

This chapter represents the empirical data collected from seven semi-structured interviews with professional humanitarian assistance service workers based in South Sudan and Syria. Following the approach suggested by Saunders (Saunders et al., 2009), the categories below were first derived from the initial theoretical framework then were expanded based on the emergence of new categories from the empirical data that was used to expand the theoretical framework.

6.1 Physical surroundings dimensions

Analysis of the empirical data has shown that the physical surroundings of humanitarian assistance service can be categorized using four main dimensions, which are discussed in the following:

6.1.1 Physiological needs

“The problem in South Sudan is that we are going on missions to the field to isolated areas where there is nothing. As example, the basic life necessities, the basic needs for humans which you cannot live without like water and electricity - those things are not available.” (Adam)

The physiological needs dimension is derived from Maslow’s theory, where it was among the basic human needs proposed by him (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Physiological needs - such as the need for food, water, sleep, sex. etc.- were among the basic needs in Maslow’s theory (A. H. Maslow, 1943, p. 373). This dimension was not included in the initial theoretical framework for this study but was added to the framework after analyzing the collected data, since most participants mentioned how their physiological needs are not facilitated and fulfilled by the physical surroundings.

South Sudan:

The importance of the effect of physical surroundings on physiological needs for humanitarian workers was clear in all of the interviews with humanitarian workers in South Sudan. All interviewees described how the shortage of food and water in the environments where they work is affecting their job satisfaction and ability to perform their duties.

“If you do not have comfortable food and you do not have comfortable things with you which can make your daily things you can be very active. Maybe for one day or two days you can be active, but then on other day it will slow down your enthusiasm.” (Mark)

Interviewees consistently described that they do not have enough supplies to satisfy their physiological needs, which is very important to survive as they described:

“They [the staff] do not have vegetables. No food, no milk, Basic things are not there. So it is really difficult to survive. You can understand too because I am a nutritionist, so to survive and to eat those healthy –these kind of things are necessary. And we don’t have these kinds.” (Julia)

Moreover, lack of sleep due to clashes between conflicted factions or the accommodation setups (as they mainly stay in personal tents or containers due to the unavailability of building structures) is one of the major sources of their dissatisfaction and limits their ability to perform to their wishes.

“Good accommodation and bathrooms are the basics, it makes huge difference.” (Elizabeth)

“You have to be very conservative over there, like you have to be very limited in your food and water. Those things affect you somehow in negative way and also affects the quality of the program you have to deliver at the field.” (Mark)

Syria:

In the case of interviewees working in Syria, the physiological needs for the employees were generally satisfied, primarily because of the different dynamics of the country itself and the living conditions for international humanitarian workers as they are staying in five star hotels in government-controlled areas where life is still somewhat normal (Syria is divided into two areas: one part controlled by the government and the other by the opposition). One described the situation in this way:

“The food is always available, most of the restaurants are still functioning, and good food is always there.” (Solomon)

As opposed interviews with South Sudan workers, interviewees in Syria did not mention food, water, sleep, or any other dimension of physiological needs. The reason behind this could be that humans generally only feel unsatisfied if a need is not there, and then once that need is satisfied, the need becomes “unimportant” (Abraham H. Maslow, 1970, p. 38).

It was clear that the physical surroundings in humanitarian service should facilitate satisfying humanitarian workers’ physiological needs in order to be perceived as positive and have a positive effect on job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization. Otherwise, humanitarian workers will avoid being in setups that do not support satisfying her/his physiological needs.

6.1.2 Safety and health

“Sometimes you have to walk in swamps, swamp water is really dirty and full of disease, which is really affect your health.” (Adam)

The safety and health dimension is mainly driven by Parish, Berry, and Shun Yin’s framework about the effect of physical surroundings on nurses (Parish et al., 2008), where it was indicated that safety is a basic need and includes certain risks and hazards within the work space itself, particularly in dangerous working environments (Parish et al., 2008, p. 224). This is also supported by Maslow’s Theory of Human Motivations, as it was explained that the need for safety and security is one of the basic human needs. Aspects of “safety needs” are as follows: “security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector and so on”(Abraham H. Maslow, 1970, p. 39).

South Sudan

As explained earlier, humanitarian workers perform their duties in high risk areas where the physical surroundings are harsh and safety is hard to guarantee. Although humanitarian workers are aware that this is a part of their job, the danger and risks play an important role in job

satisfaction. In answering the question of how they perceive their current job's physical surroundings in relation to safety, two interviewees started the answer by stating:

“Some people say that we should work in safe environment, but the safe environment is hard to arrange, we are in area where there is ongoing conflict.” (Adam)

“As humanitarian worker, you accept some kind of risk that you have chosen, but I think all of us have limits in to what we can accept.” (Elizabeth)

Even though employees might be aware of the risks, the experience of these risks still affect job satisfaction. All participants described clearly that they do not feel safe in their current locations, and they feel that they have real health threats, which is in turn affecting their performance, job satisfaction, and willingness to stay in their current job. In answering the question regarding how the security situation is affecting their job satisfaction, Julia said:

“Actually, this is directly affects our life, no? Because if you have security, you have satisfaction, then you will be willing to stay there. But if you do not have and you have another option, definitely, you will try to move away from these kind of situations.” (Julia)

While discussing how physical surroundings from a safety perspective affect his decision to stay, one interviewee explained:

“It is very hard to stay here. There is no safety, I always talk to my self and say I have to leave. No one among the people I know here -including me and my partner - is saying that they want to stay ... most of them say 6 or 5 months, and I will leave, no one is planning to stay more.” (Adam)

All participants mentioned how risky it is to work in areas with dangerous or potentially harmful physical surroundings like the one in South Sudan as it is full of hazards, with poor medical facilities, no anti-venom medicine (but numerous venomous snakes), and difficulties evacuating staff in case of emergencies:

“One more challenge we have, like in this kind of areas, many snakes are there, scorpions are there. And there is no availability of anti-venom, which is really a big challenge and is really scary. If anything happens, nothing is there.” (Julia)

“In case you were in the field and got bitten by a snake this could harm you or kill you or do long term harm for your body, and 100 % there is no hospitals or medicines around you. Second the evacuation to the nearest hospital will take one-day minimum. For that, I consider this issue is very risky.” (Adam)

It was also indicated that in order to be able to implement their duties, staff want to feel safe or, at least, to feel that they have backup plans to save their lives.

“Staff should have a peace of mind that is if anything happened, the organization can evacuate him at any time, whether it is medical emergency or whether it is a security emergency. Like you should have trust in your own organization that is there ... someone is there, that sort of feelings. Mentally, the staff should have such sort of comfortableness mind and by that only they can deliver their best.”

(Mark)

Syria

In Syria, the safety dimension was also affecting employees job satisfactions but in a different way. There is no risk of snake bites or unavailability of medical care, as Syria is mainly an urban setup with good infrastructure and a medical care system (this is particularly true in government-controlled areas). The risk in Syria, however, is mainly from gunfire, shelling, and artillery fire. One interviewee explained:

“The safety aspect is one of the most important things which is affecting us among all the other physical surroundings dimensions. All the other dimensions we can cope with, except this one. Especially when we are working in frontlines zones, so we are exposed to gunfire and shells this is really difficult. And it is psychosocially paralysis you and we are facing this a lot in Syria.” (Zaid)

While another interviewee who is working in a mostly “safe” location in Syria reported that he believes the safety aspect of his duty station reflects positively on job satisfaction and turnover rates, after explaining the factors that supported staff in his duty station to stay for a long time. Specifically, he mentioned:

“We do not have to forget very important issue, which is safety because we have high safety here - you feel safe.” (Solomon)

In a different duty station inside Syria, another interviewee described that his colleagues left Syria because of safety as they had significant movement restrictions and were on lockdown within a hotel, without the ability to move around due to the poor security situation. This interviewee stated:

“The environment for sure had huge impact on them because it is limited, it is [name of duty station removed]. They cannot go beyond two kilometers. They cannot have weekend. If they have a guest house, they are stuck in the guest house, or, if they are in hotel, they are stuck in the hotel on Friday

and Saturday. On Sunday they go to the office till Thursday and then weekend, they just get locked up in their rooms.” (Toni)

The empirical data has shown that, in both cases, the safety aspect of the physical surroundings has an effect on employee job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the duty station, as the perception of a safe physical environment will increase the job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization, which will lower the turnover rate. However, perceiving physical surroundings as unsafe will decrease job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization, which then increases organizational turnover.

6.1.3 Ambient condition (weather)

“If they are not comfortable and standing under direct sun [the staff] how can they be effectively providing their services to the beneficiaries at that same time?” (Mark)

The dimension of ambient conditions is based mainly on Bitner’s framework, where she explained how the physical surroundings in the service encounter are affecting employee’s behavior and also the employee-customer interaction (Bitner, 1992). In Bitner’s framework, it was shown how the three dimensions of the service encounter’s physical surroundings (i.e., ambient conditions, spatial layout & functionality, and signs, symbols, and artifacts) affect the employees and customers at the same time, with either approach or avoidance behaviors (Bitner, 1992).

South Sudan

During the interview process with humanitarian workers in South Sudan, it was clear that ambient conditions of the service encounter have a significant effect, where almost all interviewees mentioned that extreme weather has a negative effect on their job. An interviewee phrased it this way:

“The climate situation of this country is very, very severe. It will be either too hot or too rainy. When it rains, you cannot maybe imagine. You cannot stand outside and cannot provide the services.”

(Mark)

Another interviewee mentioned how poor physical surroundings impact the service encounter, in that the service quality is affected because staff get tired more quickly due to harsh ambient conditions and being exposed to direct sun and extreme heat for long hours during service provision. When answering the question of how physical surroundings are affecting his behavior, satisfaction, and interaction with beneficiaries, he stated:

“We are working under the direct sun for the whole day, so this is affecting us and affecting the quality of our services, because you will be tired, feeling hot, and have headache as result of exposing your body to the sun. So beneficiaries sometimes try to speak about their needs or complain about something, but you cannot hear them anymore, you are tired, you want to, but you do not have the energy anymore so you will ask them to come later or just avoid them.” (Adam)

The statements above clearly illustrate that the ambient conditions in South Sudan have an impact on humanitarian assistance service workers’ job satisfaction and their willingness to stay in the job. In South Sudan, their satisfaction is mostly negatively impacted by extreme weather conditions.

Syria

As Syria has Mediterranean weather, the effect of ambient conditions was different. Better weather seemed to affect the willingness to stay longer in a duty station, thus decreasing the desire to leave their position and the overall turnover rate. An aid worker working in Syria reported:

“Our duty station is preferable work place, the environment of the place for example, the weather - it is preferable weather for most of the people regardless from where they are coming around the world, at least you have four seasons here.” (Solomon)

Another interviewee described how the weather has had a positive effect on their work since it is relatively mild weather; he stated:

“The weather factor here does not affect us, because you are working in place with nice weather so the effect is mainly positive.” (Zaid)

It was evident that the effects of ambient conditions, specifically the weather, were positive in the case of Syria but not in the South Sudan where the climate and conditions are vastly different.

This means that humanitarian workers are searching for locations where they are less likely to be exposed to harsh weather, especially when most of their activities are provided outside, in the open without any covering.

6.1.4 Communication tools

“There is nothing, not even communication tools or mobile network or internet. There is nothing over there.” (Adam)

The importance of the functionality within physical surroundings and its effect on employees was highlighted in Bitner’s article (Bitner, 1992), where she explained that the functionality of physical surroundings refers to the ability of machinery, equipment, and furnishing to facilitate the performance and goals of the service (Bitner, 1992, p. 66).

South Sudan

In South Sudan, almost all interviewees touched on the issue of the effects of poor or nonexistent communication equipment or tools in relation to their job satisfaction as well as the need to have functional communication means, such as internet access.

“These kind of things - small small things are affecting the life. Like, internet, the quality of internet – if it is not good, you are not able to communicate with your family. You will not feel comfortable.”
(Julia)

Another interviewee was explaining how she could be more satisfied by the physical surroundings:

“Decent means of communication with the outside, like internet, and again it is not something like very costly that support us to deal with thing back home.” (Elizabeth)

Syria:

In Syria, a place with good means of communication due to the availability of substantial infrastructure before the war, the functionality of the physical surroundings was considered to be positive. In answering the question about how he defines good physical surroundings in humanitarian service which could raise his satisfaction level, one interviewee said:

“I can also consider the communication, it is secured and you are connected in any minute like here.”
(Solomon)

Therefore, the effect of functional communication equipment was clear in both cases, where for South Sudan, it had a negative effect on employee satisfaction but it was the opposite in Syria because communication tools are available and secure. Having reliable communication tools, which facilitate communication between humanitarian workers, their colleagues in the event of an emergency or other important situation, and the “outside” world (e.g., family members), is crucial, particularly as humanitarian service is provided primarily in hard-to-reach, isolated, disaster areas, far away from family and friends and, even, their organization, head offices, etc. Thus, the need for usable, reliable communication tools is the only way to keep them in contact with their offices and families.

6.2 Moral stress and self-esteem

“It has really affected our satisfaction level, that we are able to help, we have supplies, we have sufficient things, but we are not able to serve them [people in need] because of inaccessibility due to weather and security and other things.” (Julia)

Empirical data has shown a new effect of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers that probably does not exist in many other services. This aspect is called “Moral Stress” Due to the uniqueness of humanitarian goals compared with other types of services, humanitarian workers are deeply and emotionally affected as a result of being unable to reach all people who are affected by the crisis due to constraints within the physical environment. Moral stress is also linked to one of the basic human needs, which is self-esteem (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Inaccessibility (i.e., not being able to reach certain affected populations) is negatively affecting the self-respect

among humanitarian workers. Moral Stress was first studied in the healthcare service, where researchers noticed that nurses were facing enormous stress because of dilemmas related to what they were allowed yet what they wanted or “needed” to do (Corley, 2002; de Veer et al., 2013; Elpern et al., 2005; Hamric & Blackhall, 2007; Jameton, 1984). However, the effect of physical surroundings on moral stress is only partial, as there are many other factors generating moral stress in humanitarian service (Nilsson et al., 2011).

South Sudan

During the first three interviews with humanitarian workers living in South Sudan, it was noticed that these interviewees highlighted elements of distress that were not originally included in the theoretical framework. More specifically, they explicitly mentioned the stress related to the inability to reach people in need due to the constraints within and due to the physical environment. Participants stated how difficult it was for them not to be able to provide the services to devastated populations as result of the constraints created by the physical surroundings and how this inability also affected their job satisfaction. As result of moral stress, humanitarian workers started to look for duty stations where the physical surroundings would be easier and allow them to feel that they are performing better (i.e., able to effectively serve the affected population). As it was stated by an interviewee:

“Whenever you go to a place, you go with clear objective that what you are supposed to deliver and to do over there. Later on, when you find out that there are multiple activities going on over there, and you try to do - put your full effort on those activities because you want the best of the activities to happen in all the encounters. But, because of certain reasons, you are not able to deliver. So it makes like, you came for particular assignments, and you are not able to deliver that effectively in the field, so it frustrates you at some angles. And it gives you a second thought that you should work more on areas where the surroundings are supportive and are more organized and you can best deliver from your end.” (Mark)

Syria

The unsafe physical surroundings for humanitarian workers in Syria, apart from other reasons, are hindering the ability of humanitarian workers to access the most vulnerable people in the country, which is reflecting on their self-respect as humanitarian workers and human beings. Many feel

that they are useless and that they could leave their jobs as a result of this particular factor. After he explained that physical surroundings did not support them to reach the people in need, one interviewee answered the question about how he felt by responding:

“I met some people when they joined the humanitarian work their goal was to serve the most vulnerable people. Then when they were not able to reach that goal after all the effort, they are reaching only the wrong people because they are not able to reach the most vulnerable, so they leave as they are not obliged to take all the stress they get from working in the humanitarian field. And, at the end, they are not delivering the right service, so they will say let me pull out and find a job with less stress at least and without moral stress.” (Zaid)

Another participant described how the physical constraints affected his self-respect and pushed people to leave:

“I can only make decisions based on the evidences that you have, and the more you read the more you get confused about the things that you have not seen. But if you have physical kind of present and visits and tool to collect stories and have interviews with people what they need, I can guarantee you that 50% for the response we have in Syria, people do not need it. Because we cannot ask the people what they need. We just decide and then send the people 20, 30, 40 trucks of supplies, and we are not able to do face to face interviews to ask what a boy of 7 years old needs or what a girl of 17 years old needs or what a man of 80 years old needs. And if this is not really complemented by having face to face surveys and interviews and studies, this is a lot of waste of resources, and this has a cost because no one, as you know, would like to continue and doing things like that forever, and people get stressed. And then, at the end, they just quit and leave, and this is probably adding to the turnover.”

(Toni)

Based on this feedback, it was realized that physical surroundings are also creating another type of stress on humanitarian workers, which is not necessarily directly related to an organization or employer, but is related to the people who they are committed to serving. Therefore, the employee begins to think about leaving the field location for another site or posting with better physical surroundings where they can deliver services more conveniently and avoid feelings of guilt. This type of feeling and response is uniquely linked to humanitarian aid as it aims to save people’s lives and dignity through creating accessible services to any human being needs to survive. Moral stress is then another critical factor that influences job dis/satisfaction and also has an effect on the willingness of an employee to stay within the organization and/or field location.

6.3 Job Satisfaction and Turnover

“When it comes to the responsibility of the organization, I think that they know that, like they will find people who stay short term, then another person, and then another person with the same conditions. Not necessarily to work on improving them, while, if they would improve them, we might stay longer... so I am not sure that is a good deal both for the organization and for the staff, to stay for such short term missions” (Elizabeth)

This category stems from The Cycle of Failure and The Cycle of Success frameworks, where it was suggested that dissatisfied employees do not tend to stay for a long time in their jobs, which then leads to poor service quality (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). Collectively, the interviewees report that physical surroundings are some of the most important reasons affecting their level of job satisfaction, and all stated that they would prefer to work in a place with better physical surroundings where they can not only be more comfortable and safe but also be in a place where they can perform better and provide good services for the people they have committed to serve.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, one of the interviewees conveyed that the physical environment is the only reason for a high turnover rate, because being in harsh conditions, like in South Sudan, is not supporting the decision to stay.

“I think that the high turnover rate in humanitarian field during this whole assignment [South Sudan] is due the external surroundings only, and the conditions which make the person somehow feels like if he goes to another duty station, maybe he will perform much better and much comfortably because being in harsh condition and also in non-family duty station on the top of the surroundings also is not favorable so definitely it leads us to search for other options consistently, Because we want to be comfortable and do better job.” (Mark)

A female interviewee was also clear that she cannot work for a long period of time in a place like South Sudan, as she can accept these conditions in the short-term but not in the long-term.

“You cannot take really, really challenging environment without any comfort without anything during long period of time, so obviously something you are willing to accept during few months is maybe not something that you can accept during longer time. And, again, it is not requesting for things that are

useless or unnecessary. Like, for instance, if we are talking about food, obviously being in an environment where you cannot have any fruit or vegetables, so you are just tired because your body is not getting the minimum vitamins.” (Elizabeth)

While a different aid worker explained that people will move from such surroundings whenever they get a better opportunity to work in other places.

“People are trying to move because, if they will get good opportunity, they will definitely move from this kind of places.” (Julia)

Syria

In Syria, it was also indicated that physical surroundings have a direct impact on job satisfaction, whether directly or through moral stress.

“The physical environments that has put a lot of pressure on me is living and working in the same building without the ability to move outside, even though it is a five-star hotel living in the same hotel, Working in the same hotel, eating in the same hotel, not able to have a direct contact, direct interaction with the people who we provide service to, on regular basis has, I think, had a negative value, had bit of impact on my performance because I do not really get the energy to be able to continue to be able to push.” (Toni)

Another participant described how good physical surroundings have positively affected the turnover rate in his duty station, saying

“Actually, as I have seen the number of employees was increasing, and people tended to stay for long time as the duty station was desirable.” (Solomon)

It is clear that there is a direct link between employee satisfaction with the physical surroundings and their willingness to stay in their organization and location. Employees who are satisfied by their surroundings are typically willing to stay for a long time in their duty station, whereas dissatisfied employees are not only willing to leave but also wishing to leave as soon as they have another potential job opportunity. In other words, physical surroundings have a considerable effect on the turnover rate within humanitarian assistance service.

6.4 Referral of employment

The Parish et al 2008 (Parish et al., 2008) study indicated that the relationship between job satisfaction and job referrals is positive in that satisfied employees encourage friends to apply for jobs in the same organization or locations. This principle applies to the converse as well (i.e., dissatisfied employees will not encourage friends to apply in the same organization or location). This is similar to the notation that satisfied customers deliver positive word of mouth, thus satisfied employees do the same (Parish et al., 2008, p. 225).

South Sudan

The findings of this study were almost the same as that of Parish et al (Parish et al., 2008), where two among the four interviewees explicitly said that they would not recommend anyone to apply for jobs in their duty station unless the organization improved the physical surroundings. The two interviewees who did not recommend people to apply at all were also dissatisfied with their physical surroundings. In answering the question about if she would recommend other people to apply for jobs in her duty stations, Julia said:

“In this current situation, of course not. If it will improve [physical surroundings], definitely, I will recommend.” (Julia)

While, the other two said they would recommend friends to apply since the location is good for professional experience, but they both mentioned that it should be for a short-term contract (e.g., six months) as it is hard to work in these conditions for a longer period. One went as far as to say that he would only advise young friends who are under the age of thirty-five to apply.

“If I was asked by my management how they could recruit someone to replace me, I will advise them to advertise only for six months and not for a year because it will be more difficult for them to find someone who is willing to stay more than that in this situation.” (Elizabeth)

“I will for sure recommend my friends because the experience they get here, it is very good for them in the long run, but I only recommend friends who are young, like less than thirty-five-years-old, and they have to know that they cannot stay here for a long time.” (Adam)

Syria

The analysis for the Syrian context found the same results, in which the employees who perceived their physical surroundings to be good surroundings said that they would recommend their friends to apply for positions in their duty stations.

“Yes, for sure I recommend friends to apply, for all the reasons I told you. Because the physical surroundings are really comfortable here in our duty station and anyone can stay for long-term here.”

(Solomon)

While, employees who were dissatisfied were clear that they would not recommend:

“If I want to be logical, not emotional, I do not recommend anyone to apply.” (Zaid)

Therefore, humanitarian workers who perceive their physical surroundings as negative would not tend to recommend their friends to apply, or, in the best case, they would recommend their friends to apply for a short length of time. By this, however, they would perpetuate the high turnover rate and problems associated with high turnover rates. Of course, the opposite is true for humanitarian workers who perceive their surroundings as positive in that they would certainly recommend others to apply.

6.5 Summary of the Chapter

The empirical data shows what factors in the physical surroundings most affect employee job satisfaction and how these factors influence an employee’s willingness to stay in the organization. It was clear that four dimensions of the physical surroundings have the most impact. When physical surroundings are perceived as 1) safe for employees in terms of personal security and health or, at least, where employees feel like they have safety mitigation measures in their surroundings (hospitals, medicine); 2) facilitate gratification of physiological needs where they do not have water or food shortages and proper accommodation conducive to sound sleep; 3) ambient conditions (weather) are normal and not extreme (or, at least, facilities are in place to combat extreme conditions); and 4) availability of adequate, reliable communication tools which enable necessary communication for both professional and personal purposes, there will be a positive impact on employees’ overall job satisfaction. In turn, this positive feeling will be reflected in their willingness to stay in the job or duty station for lengthier period of time, which, by default,

decreases the turnover rate. Moreover, when employees are generally satisfied with their physical surroundings, they will also recommend their friends to apply for jobs in the same duty station and organization, which is more likely to promote committed, loyal, and qualified teams within organizations.

On the other hand, when physical surroundings are perceived as 1) unsafe for personal security and health; 2) not facilitating basic physiological needs, such as poor accommodation (or no accommodation only tents) and limited food and water supply; 3) extreme ambient conditions (weather); and 4) unavailability of reliable means of communication to communicate, this will have a severe negative impact on employees' overall job satisfaction. This negative feeling will be reflected in their willingness to stay in their job, which, by default, increases the turnover rate. Additionally, it can be said that employees who perceive their physical surroundings in a negative way will not likely recommend people to apply for jobs in their duty station or, at least, they will advise them to apply for only a short time, which will keep the turnover rate high.

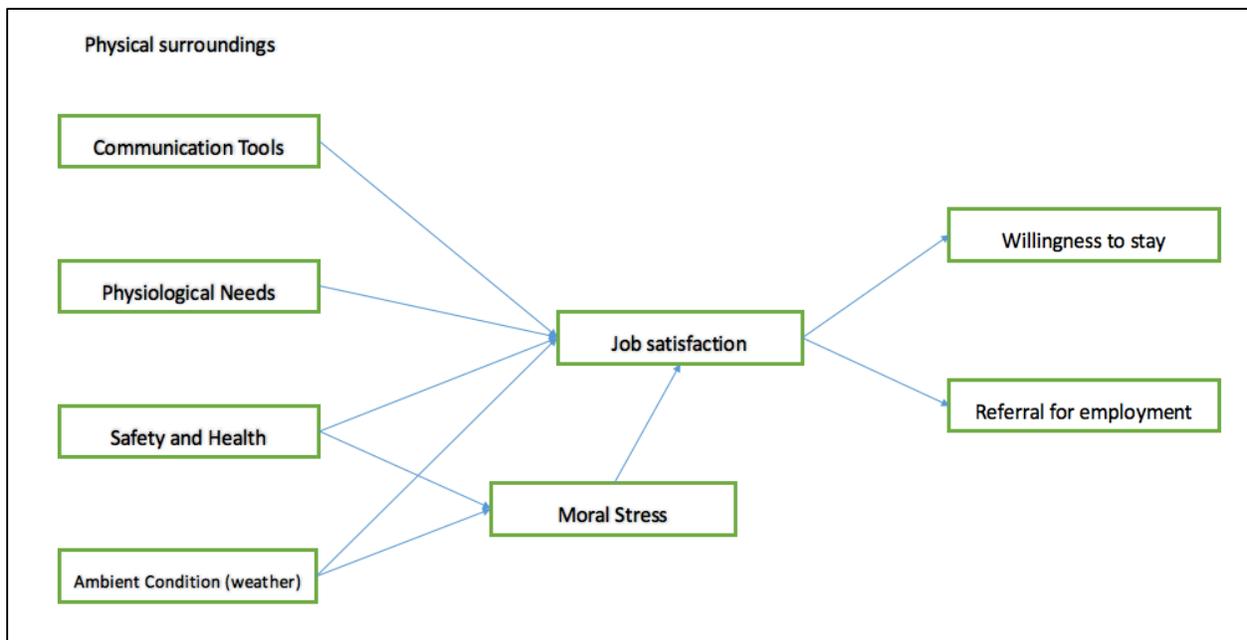
The last effect of physical surroundings on a humanitarian aid worker is moral stress, as identified in the cases where the physical surroundings (e.g., impassible roads, no roads, insecurity and active conflict, limited resources, etc....) do not allow workers to reach affected communities and people in need. When this occurs, the self-esteem of humanitarian workers is negatively affected, and they often encounter and endure moral stress, which impacts job satisfaction negatively. When the physical environment does not hamper access to persons in need, moral stress is not created, and humanitarians will likely have greater job satisfaction and willingness to stay in their organization.

7. Conclusion discussion

As result of the analysis of collected data, the below model (Figure 6) was created as a conceptual framework to clarify what factors in physical surroundings most affect employee job satisfaction and how these factors influence an employee's willingness to stay in the organization. In order to

understand and clarify this specific effect on humanitarian workers, empirical data was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with seven professional humanitarian assistance service workers working in South Sudan and Syria. The analysis of the collected data shows that, similar to the findings of previous service studies, physical surroundings have a significant effect on humanitarian workers' job satisfaction and willingness to stay in their jobs. The analysis has also shown that apart from the direct effect on job satisfaction, physical surroundings also have other kinds of effects on humanitarian workers, which could only be related to the human service industry (e.g., medical care, social service), which is *moral stress*. It is clear that job satisfaction is not only affecting employees' willingness to stay, but it also affects referral for employment, where satisfied employees recommend people to apply for jobs in their duty station and vice versa for dissatisfied employees.

Figure 6: Effect of Physical Surroundings on Humanitarian Assistance Service Workers



The new and most interesting findings of this study involve the effect of physical surroundings on self-esteem and the creation of moral stress. This study is, perhaps, the first to reveal the link between physical surroundings and moral stress. Previous studies on moral stress have not highlighted any link between physical surroundings and moral stress, but the finding of this study

has drawn attention to this dynamic based on one of the basic human needs according to Maslow's (i.e., need for self-esteem), which can later create moral stress if this need is not met (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Moral stress in humanitarian assistance service is special in nature since the primarily goal of any humanitarian service is to save people's lives, promote dignity, alleviate suffering, and provide adequate life supplies (Defining humanitarian assistance, n.d). Thus, humanitarian workers are committed to delivering these service to people in need and vulnerable communities, but, in cases when physical surroundings are preventing humanitarian workers from delivering necessary services and reaching their goals (where, in many cases, people would suffer and have to endure starvation, diseases, etc...), humanitarian workers' self-esteem will be shaken, which leads to the aforementioned moral stress and significantly reduces job satisfaction.

The dimensions of physical surroundings that have a direct effect on humanitarian workers share similar dimensions with other human services, such as is the case with safety, ambient conditions, and functional communication tools. However, new and unique dimensions, physiological needs and moral stress specifically, were not emphasized in previous studies focused on other types of services but were found in this particular study. Hence, the model for the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers is a mixture of previous service theories (i.e., Bitner, 1992; Parish et al., 2008; Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991) and theories that were developed for other disciplines (i.e., A. H. Maslow, 1943; Nilsson et al., 2011). These theories link, though, and provide the basis for a coherent framework that reflect the findings of this study as well as the uniqueness of the humanitarian assistance service industry.

In summary, the physical surroundings in areas where humanitarian assistance service is performed have a direct effect on humanitarian workers' job satisfaction. The four dimensions of that affect humanitarian service workers the most include safety & health, communication tools, physiological needs, and ambient conditions (weather). For workers to feel satisfied and have a desire to stay in the duty station, they must feel a sense of safety and feel confident that mitigation measures in case of accidents or emergency are in place. Aid workers must also have 1) reliable and functional communication equipment, 2) adequate water, food, and accommodation for sleep, and 3) reasonable ambient conditions or, if extreme conditions, support to overcome these harsh

conditions. In addition, humanitarian workers' physical surroundings should allow for and facilitate access to people in need, so they can maintain fulfil their sense of professional and personal duty to the people they have come to serve, which will then support a positive sense of self and their self-esteem and allow them to continue the job. If these factors are satisfactory, then humanitarian workers can perceive their physical surroundings as positive and, they will then have the willingness to stay for a longer period of time in their duty stations and will recommend others to take jobs in their duty station. Hence, the turnover rate will be low, and the humanitarian organization will likely have more efficient humanitarian interventions and better service quality.

As this is the first study to clarify the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers, the contribution of the above conclusion and model (Figure 6) can be used as a first-step, conceptual model to understand the effects of the physical environment on humanitarian workers. Moreover, the finding about the effects of physical surroundings on self-esteem and the creation of moral stress could be applicable in other human service settings (e.g. medical care) or possibly in relevant business services. Additionally, the findings of this study can be used by management within humanitarian organization to put policies in place that can overcome or reduce high turnover rates in humanitarian service by improving the physical conditions in relation to the four dimensions in Figure 6. If this action takes place, humanitarian intervention stands to be more efficient and of higher quality, which means saving more lives.

The aim of the study was to understand the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian assistance service workers' satisfaction and develop a preliminary conceptual model explaining the dimensions of those effects in order to help organizations better explore means of decreasing turnover rates in humanitarian assistance service, thus improving organizational and programmatic success in the humanitarian assistance service industry. As there were no previous studies on the effect of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers, the theoretical framework was primarily based on a study focusing on nursing, a similar service to humanitarian work (Parish et al., 2008), in addition to theories developed in business service organizations. These theories include The Cycle of Failure (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991) and Servicescape Effects on employees and customers (Bitner, 1992). Then, with the support of the abduction approach and the emergence of

new ideas and dimensions during the data analysis process, the theoretical framework of this study was expanded to include other dimensions, Moral Stress and physical surroundings effect on basic human needs specifically (A. H. Maslow, 1943; Nilsson et al., 2011).

Similar to other services, the empirical data clearly illustrated a direct relationship between job satisfaction, turnover rate, and willingness to stay in the organization or duty station in humanitarian service. The results of this study were similar to The Cycle of Failure outcome, which emphasized that dissatisfied employees tend to leave an organization, thereby creating high turnover rate. The opposite is true for satisfied employees (Schlesinger & Heskett, 1991). Although The Cycle of Failure did not include physical surroundings as a factor affecting employee satisfaction, this study has shown that physical surroundings directly affect job satisfaction in humanitarian assistance service. Additionally, analysis of the data has helped in developing a theoretical framework regarding the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers (Figure 6), which includes four physical surroundings dimensions: physiological needs, safety & health, ambient conditions (weather) and communication tools. These dimensions have shown to affect job satisfaction and, hence, an employee's willingness to stay in the organization.

The physiological needs dimension specific to this study does not typically play a significant role in affecting employees in the majority of services. This dimension is uniquely related to the areas where humanitarian service is occurring, since humanitarian work occurs in emergency zones with shortages in basic life needs, including food and water, as well as safe and secure accommodation for required sleep. The unavailability of adequate, clean water, appropriate accommodation away from active conflict, and nutritious, safe-to-eat food during humanitarian missions affects the basic physiological needs of humanitarian workers in the long-term. As Maslow described in his theory, physiological needs are among the most basic human needs, and satisfying this need is essential for any human (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Based on this study, it is evident that humanitarian workers will not be fulfilled or mollified until their physiological needs are met and will, therefore, look for duty stations or jobs in which the environment can guarantee that their physiological needs will be met consistently.

The other dimension explored in this study is the safety and health dimension, which is also among the human basic needs according to Maslow (A. H. Maslow, 1943). Participants revealed that they do not perceive their physical surroundings to be safe, and they consistently live in fear of shelling, snake and scorpion bites, and other dangers, which affects their job satisfaction and causes them to search for jobs in safer duty stations where they can live without fear as a daily part of their jobs. This dimension is similar to the result found in the Parish et al 2008 study (Parish et al., 2008), focusing on nurses, where it was highlighted that the physical surroundings' safety dimension has a direct impact on nurses' job satisfaction, job stress, and, in turn, commitment to their jobs. While taking risks is often an expected aspect of humanitarian work that sometimes cannot be changed by organizations, participants understood that organizations can and should take more proactive action and put appropriate security and health-related measures in place that would mitigate safety risks (e.g., anti-venom, first aid kits, etc.) and support staff in feeling more secure. As staff feel safer and less at risk, their job satisfaction would increase, leading to lengthier stays in their current employment and an overall reduction in the turnover rate in humanitarian service.

Empirical data show that ambient conditions, particularly weather, affect job satisfaction in humanitarian services. This aspect or dynamic has the most impact during the service encounter, which is similar to Bitner's findings concerning ambient conditions' effects on employees in the service encounter (Bitner, 1992). As humanitarian service encounters often occur outside with no shelter to protect against the elements, organizations find it challenging to address this dimension, but, as aforementioned, there are steps organizations can take to reduce the impact of harsh conditions, such as provide workers with large, sturdy tents during distributions, registrations, and other service provision activities, which can protect them from exposure to the direct sun, rain, or other extreme conditions, which will also reflect positively on humanitarian workers' job satisfaction.

The dimension of communications tools in humanitarian service is also extremely important, in that it is a cross-cutting issue impacting safety and health, moral stress, and other dimensions. This aspect becomes even more significant in the context of humanitarian work when employees are

based in isolated, remote locations for lengthy periods of time. Having useful, reliable communication tools for connection with the “outside” world becomes essential for an employee’s mental health and well-being, job satisfaction, and ability to stay in the duty station for a long period, as we cannot, nor should we, expect humanitarian staff to live without emergency and social communication, particularly in light of the various communication devices and tools available in today’s world.

The empirical data have also demonstrated another level of effect of physical surroundings on job satisfaction, which is “moral stress” among humanitarian workers. This factor is not a part in many types of services, but, since humanitarian service is an ethically-grounded service, humanitarian workers, by nature, are more likely to link professional success and fulfillment with personal ethics. When unable to fulfill their commitments as humanitarians, their sense of self-esteem is deeply affected, and they are left frustrated in their inability, or their organization’s inability, to perform their duties and fulfill their expected roles due to factors beyond their control. It was noted that constraints within the physical surroundings that limit or impede essential work and services impairs self-esteem, hence reduces job satisfaction. This lessened satisfaction leads employees to seek other employment in locations where their services are less likely to be hampered and where they can have improved, frequent access to beneficiaries. Thus, again, we find that high moral stress increases the turnover rate in humanitarian assistance service.

The last result of the empirical data also demonstrates the relationship between physical surroundings, job satisfaction, and referral intention. It was clear in the study that in duty stations where employees perceived the physical surroundings as positive, they expressed that they would recommend their friends to apply for jobs in the same duty station. While in duty stations where the physical surroundings were perceived as negative, participants expressed that they would not recommend friend to apply, or, if they were to refer their friends, they would advise them to apply only for short term contracts. This result is congruent with the results of the Parish et al 2008 (Parish et al., 2008) study on nurses, where the association between physical surroundings, job satisfaction, and referral intention showed positive connections, as nurses who were satisfied by their physical surrounding recommended others to apply to their hospital (Parish et al., 2008).

It is important to remember that humanitarian organizations try to stay in the crisis-affected community until the humanitarian situation has improved and the community is more stabilized, which means staying for years in the same location, particularly in manmade disasters, as conflicts and wars could last for years. While humanitarian intervention was initially designed to continue for a limited timeframe at the height of an emergency, this is often not the case anymore due to complex crises. Therefore, the need for staff to stay in their positions for longer periods of time has become more critical. Humanitarian workers have ethical motivations to save people lives and dignity, which means that they often have a higher capacity to tolerate dangerous, harsh physical surroundings for a lengthier period of time. On the other hand, humanitarian work has become the type of profession in which humanitarian workers frequently move from duty station to duty station throughout their careers in order to respond to different crises, with tolerance levels for harsher conditions likely reducing over the course of their careers. Subsequently, it follows that having good physical surroundings will not only support their willingness to stay longer but will also reflect positively on their long-term health and well-being.

According to the above, humanitarian service organization should start to take into account the importance of improving physical surroundings for their employees, as it was noted that during humanitarian interventions the primary focus of most organizations is predominantly on affected communities, with little focus on staff job satisfaction. This pointed focus is generally logical for short interventions or at the beginning of an emergency, but, without simultaneous, long-term investment in employee job satisfaction and well-being, the efficiency and efficacy of these organizations declines due to dissatisfied staff and high turnover, leading to reduced or lost funding and valuable resources as the emergency or crisis persists. Thus, improving the aforementioned core aspects of physical surroundings for humanitarian workers becomes a non-negotiable for organizations aiming to provide the best quality services for beneficiaries and demonstrate “value for money” with their donors.

The focus, however, on employees’ well-being or satisfaction in humanitarian service is not a straightforward task since humanitarian workers’ satisfaction is affected also by moral stress, which is directly linked to the ethical and personally-invested nature of humanitarian service where

humanitarian staff do not feel satisfied only by satisfying their personal needs but also by reaching affected communities with essential supplies and services and saving people's lives. As was seen among participants working in Syria, humanitarian organizations have restricted their employees from being in direct contact with the affected populations to protect staff from risky physical surroundings in Syria, but this has had an unanticipated but considerable negative effect on humanitarian workers as they felt useless and decided to leave to other countries and jobs. In this specific case, staff did not leave because they did not feel safe but left because they did not find meaning in their jobs anymore, which has shaken their self-esteem and created deep moral stress. The above then indicates that in dealing with physical surroundings, organizations should maintain a balance between addressing and accommodating humanitarian workers' needs and also the affected population's needs. In other words, the physical surroundings should support staff well-being as well as staff duties at the same time.

Although physical surroundings are not the only factor behind unplanned employee turnover rate in humanitarian service as there are other factors which have detrimental effects (e.g., being away from family and home), it is a crucial and extremely influential factor. Of course, some of the dimensions of physical surroundings within the humanitarian field are impossible to solve, such as in the case of certain safety and health and ambient conditions, but organizations can, at least, actively develop plans and risk mitigation measures to support perceptions of safety and security among employees. Plans could include appropriate medication and treatment for the country context, quality clinics for their staff, temporary structures for situations in which services will be delivered outside where protection from the sun or rain will be necessary. The other two dimensions, specifically facilitating physiological needs and communication tools, are more within the organization's control, where organizations can – with little logistical and technical effort – arrange adequate, nutritious food, water, secure accommodation, and functional communication equipment.

Similar to the systems, policies, and standard operating procedures that humanitarian agencies put in place to serve beneficiaries in the best possible ways, so these agencies must also put such systems, policies, and standard operating procedures in place to address the physical conditions

and support the people within their organization, notably in locations where the humanitarian service will continue for a long time. Therefore, based on previous, corresponding research and this new study, it is clear that new policies within humanitarian organizations that strike a balance between employee well-being and the well-being of those the organization is mandated to serve, would benefit organizations. Yet, the design of these policies is an area requiring academics to conduct further studies of the humanitarian service field, which is even more important now as the scale of humanitarian need and intervention does not give any indication of decreasing over the coming years.

8. Limitations and further studies

Although this research was successful in answering the research question and creating a new model illustrating the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers, this research was not without limitations. As mentioned, earlier triangulation of the data was not possible. In addition, there were difficulties in interviewing humanitarian workers who are currently working in South Sudan and Syria; such difficulties included organizational policies, insecurity, unreliable internet, and a limited timeframe to accommodate the varying schedules of participants. Another limitation is the ability to generalize research findings to other humanitarian service locations, which are not similar to the type of crises or geographical contexts of the two studied locations.

Generally speaking, more service management research related to humanitarian assistance service should be conducted as there is few studies which have focused on this service before. However as this research is the first study to link physical surroundings with turnover in humanitarian assistance service it would be beneficial to conduct future studies based on a deductive approach to confirm whether the findings of this study are applicable for other humanitarian setups in order to reach a solid theory or conclusion about the effects of physical surroundings on humanitarian workers' job satisfaction and how to enhance the ability of humanitarian organizations to increase job satisfaction and willingness to stay in the organization among employees. If more concrete findings are discovered related to “what works” for improving employee satisfaction and

willingness to stay, then organizations are more likely to benefit from lowered unplanned turnover rates, reduced humanitarian operational costs, and increased service quality (which are already the current goals and failures within most humanitarian organizations). Future research must also start examining the impact of physical surroundings on one's "moral stress" in human services (e.g., nursing, social work, etc.) and how organizations can overcome such kind of stress.

Also other considerations that require more in-depth study are the short-term versus long-term effects of physical surroundings and how this affects personnel over time. This study focuses on the short-term effects of physical surroundings while an employee is in her/his current duty station. However, effects that go beyond the length of an assignment are likely to influence and possibly reduce an employee's tolerance level for this profession or hardship duty stations. These types of consequences might be secondary or vicarious trauma, chronic disease, or other long-term health problems.

Finally, it is interesting and valuable to note that while nearly all participants reported low job satisfaction and little willingness to stay in their current post related to their physical surroundings, they were seemingly planning to stay in their current jobs for the foreseeable future. Participants may have been seeking alternative employment, but this was not shared during the interview and is, therefore, unable to be confirmed. Therefore, future quantitative and qualitative studies should study should compare and contrast participants' perceptions versus their actual decisions to stay or leave their positions in order to verify that consistently poor physical surroundings do, in fact, impact staff turnover.

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10. Appendices

Appendix I – Interview Guide

The interview questions were set up in consideration with the theoretical framework for the study:

1. Could you tell me more about yourself?
 - 1.1. how many years have you been doing humanitarian service work?
 - 1.2. The positions you have had during your career in humanitarian work
 - 1.3. the countries you have worked in before.
 - 1.4. how many months/years have you been in your current duty station.

2. Some scholars in service management field think that physical surroundings in services affect employees' behavior, interaction with customer and satisfaction, how do you think this is applicable in humanitarian field?

note: provide definition for physical surroundings

- 2.1. How the physical surroundings are affecting your behavior, interaction with beneficiaries and satisfaction?
 - 2.2. How do you perceive the physical surroundings in your current post in relation to safety?
 - 2.3. How the physical surroundings are affecting your job stress?
 - 2.4. Can you describe how the physical surroundings is affecting or has effected your dis/satisfaction in your current job or previous humanitarian jobs?
 - 2.5. Can you describe an incident where you have left the job as result of bad physical surroundings or vice versa?
 - 2.6. How are physical surroundings affecting your decision to stay or leave your current position?

3. How do you define good physical surroundings in humanitarian service which could rise your satisfaction level?
 - 3.1. Do you usually give suggestion to your organization to improve physical surroundings?

4. Some reports have indicated that humanitarian assistance is a service characterized with high employees' turnover rate.
 - 4.1. How do you think that dis/satisfaction are affecting employees turnover rate in humanitarian service?

5. Are physical surroundings supporting you to reach people in need?
 - 5.1. how do you feel about that?

6. Do you usually advice friends who work in other duty stations to apply for job in your duty station?

Appendix II – Information E-mail

Dear,

hope that you are doing well.

I am a Master's student in the Service Management Program at Lund University in Sweden. At the moment, I am wrapping up my program and working on the thesis. The purpose of my thesis is to look at how the physical surroundings or environment might affect humanitarian assistance workers and influence the turnover rate. Results from this study will give the opportunity to provide new information on the role of physical surroundings in the humanitarian field, and it is hoped that this will enhance our understanding of how to work on those conditions in order to improve the efficiency and efficacy of humanitarian service.

I am requesting your assistance by participating in the study through a 30 to 45 minutes Skype interview. If you participate in the interview, the Skype interview will be recorded, and we will talk about your personal experience in the field of humanitarian aid. Participation of this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time, at which time the recording would be destroyed. Your name, organization, or any other information that might identify you will not be used in any publication or documentation arising from the research.

The original recording will be kept with me, but, in the event the University requests for proof of research, the written transcript only would be shared. However, the written transcript that is made from the recording will contain no names or details that might identify you or your organization.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me, and thank you in advance for assisting me with this research

Many thanks and best regards,

Kenan Madi