The Integration of Virtual Reality (VR) and User Experience Design (UXD) in The Design of Shared Office Spaces

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Abstract

Users' satisfaction in the design of shared office spaces is one of the important aspects that every enterprise should seek. The research provides and validates a new mechanism that could be used in the design process of shared office spaces, by integrating the tool of Virtual Reality (VR) and User Experience Design (UXD). The proposed mechanism consists of three phases. The first phase (the experiment articulation) illustrates the correlation between the satisfaction factors of users and the physical setting of shared office spaces. In the second phase (the experiment tool preparation), the research articulates the programing scripts which are necessary for the users' interaction in the experiment using the VR tool, called User Interaction Tool (UIT), where these scripts are: Movement Script; Rotation Script; Stretch Script; and Material Script. The third phase (the experiment implementation and tool evaluation) consists of three steps; the first one is an oriented questionnaire for determining users' needs in shared office space while establishing relative weight for every aspect, and the second step is the experiment implementation for an existing office space to explore the suggested scenarios using the proposed tool, and the third step is crucial for comparing between the existing design model and the deduced one from the proposed mechanism to evaluate the validity of the proposed tool. After testing the tool, the research finds that users' satisfaction before the experiment is about 43.352 %, while it has been raised to 86.5825 % after using the proposed mechanism. Hence, the users' satisfaction is almost doubled after using the virtual reality tool in the design process of office space design.

Key Words: User Experience Design (UXD) – User Interaction Tool (UIT) – Virtual Reality (VR)

1. Introduction

Shared office spaces are considered the main unit of office buildings which have the main effect on user satisfaction, as users spend major of their time in these spaces. Many changes have occurred in the articulation of shared office spaces from closed offices to open ones (Wineman, 1985). Shared office design is important for productivity as it facilitates the workflow in the space while improving the users' health and energy (Moore, 1984). There are some improvements in the technological tool that could be reflected in the design process of shared office spaces. Virtual reality is the most important tool which could improve the design process, as it has a sincere change in the final product by using digital models (Bruno, Cosco, & Luchi, 2010).

2. Research Problem

The research problem concentrates in the decreasing of users' satisfaction levels as a result of shared office spaces, as there are many problems that affect user satisfaction such as privacy, distraction, noise, etc. On the other hand, user exclusion from the design process makes the final product far away from users' needs.

3. Research importance

The importance of research deduced from making a design tool used in the design process of shared office spaces, that could involve the users in the design process to explicit their needs and desires.

As a result, this design tool could improve and increase the user satisfaction and productivity, as well as enhancing the final product of the design shared office spaces.

4. Research objective

The main objective is to develop and validate a digital design tool -with the help of VR- that could involve users' participation in the design process of shared office spaces to increase users' satisfaction and meet their needs.

5. Methodology

For reaching out the research objective, firstly; a qualitative approach has been used to understand the virtual reality and user experience design concepts, as well as applying the UXD concept in the design process.

Secondly, a quantitative approach is used to measure users' satisfaction before and after the experiment to validate and evaluate the proposed design tool.

6. Virtual reality concept

Virtual reality is the environment created by computer with a high level of reality where user can live a real experiment virtually. From the seventies, VR represents an interaction experiment to the user, a tool that has been developed dramatically due to the recent technological improvement (Hill, 2019).

Virtual reality has been used in different fields, many studies and experiences made in architecture field to benefit from VR Possibilities, in which VR saves effort, time and cost. One of the most important experiment has done is the effect of interior spaces in perception of the human brain and its activity, that has been proved its success as tool (Hatami & Banaei, 2017).

The tool has been used in the final phases of the design process to represent the final product to the client (George & Summerlin, 2018). In which, the user can express his opinion and make the modification to the design. There are many studies use VR in the early phases of the design process but it is not complete (George & Sleipness, 2017). Accordingly, some improvements could be made for 2d&3d drawings to help enhancing the final product, however the result some is not fulfilling the user satisfaction (2019 ،Hill).

7. User Experience Design (UXD) Concept

User Experience Design is a concept that has many sides, it includes a different specialties such as Interactive design, information engineering and visual design (Klien , 2020), the design process in UXD mainly depend on the user, in which the user be a part of design process to involve his opinion, to make the final product meets his needs. The effectiveness of the UXD depends on the interactive between user and the product, as the architecture product is a visual one, hence there are many interactions do exist between users and the architecture product. As a result, applying the UXD concept to the architecture product increasing the user satisfaction.

Different ways are used to apply the UXD concept on exist product, mobile phones applications, for example, is used for the interaction happen between users and the interface of the application to modify it. Otherwise, when applying the concept on the architecture product, the user needs an actual scale for the product to interact with, to hit the target as a livable space to increase users satisfaction, this concept could be applied with the help of VR -as shown in Fig. 1. VR is one of the feasible applications making simulation to the surrounding environment with actual details without manufacturing cost (Ma , Chablat , & Bennis , 2010).
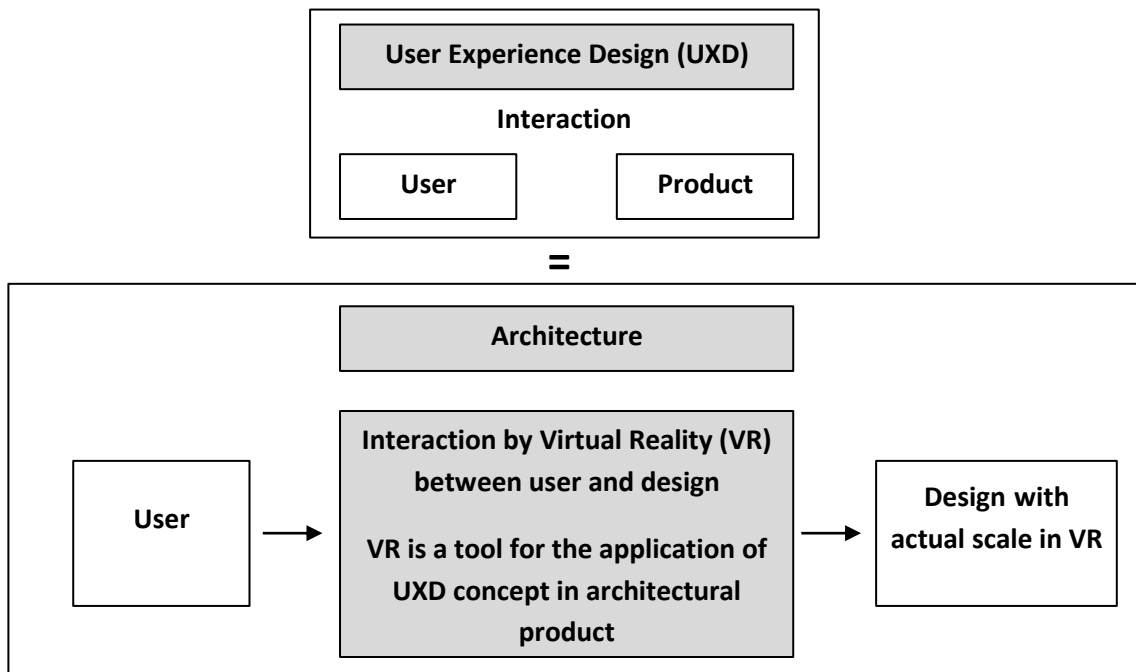

Figure 1: application of UXD concept in the architectural product

8. Factors Effecting the user satisfaction in office spaces

According to unpublished study established by the authors to define the Factors effecting user satisfaction in a given office spaces three main levels has been conclude (Ashry, Abdelrasoul, & Hendy, 2022) -as shown in fig. 2: the first level explains the correlation between the building and its context, the second level explains the correlation between the different floors within the building, and the third level explains the design of the office spaces while determine the relation between its physical setting altogether. The study also finds that user satisfaction mainly depends on the third level, as the user spends the major time in these spaces at that level, so the research scope will be on the third level.

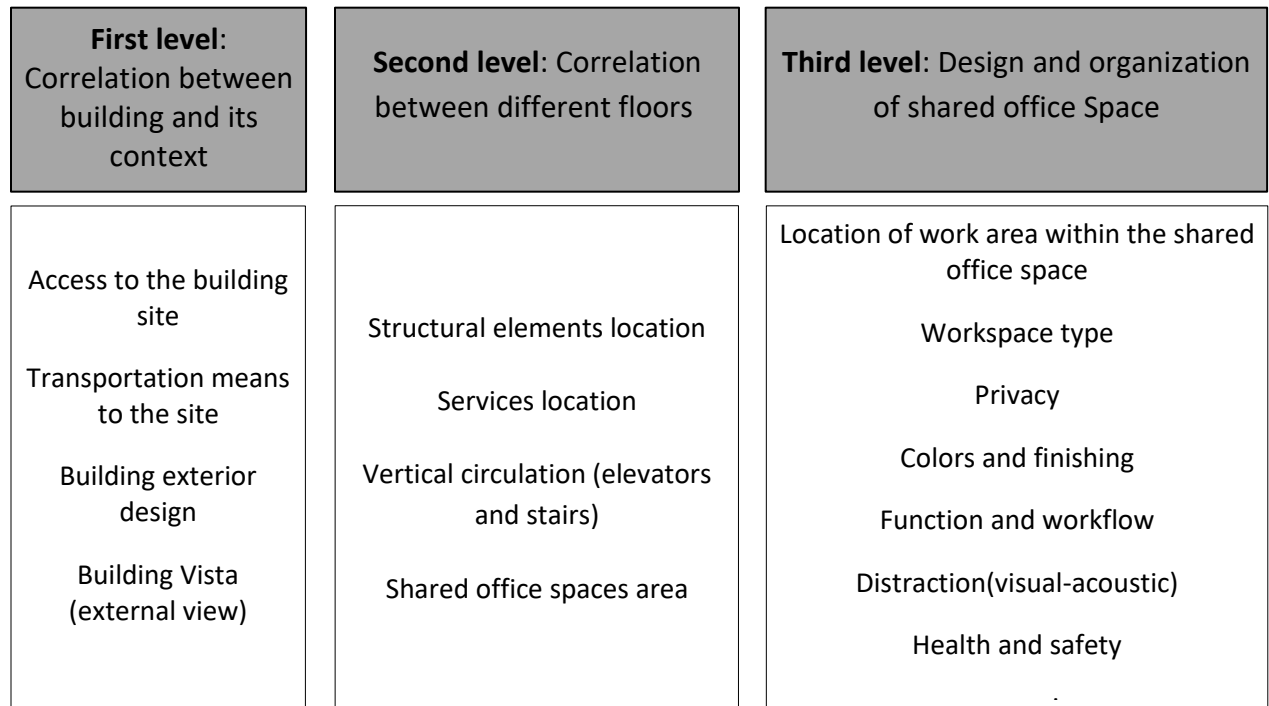| **First level**: Correlation between building and its context	**Second level**: Correlation between different floors	**Third level**: Design and organization of shared office Space
Access to the building site Transportation means to the site Building exterior design Building Vista (external view)	Structural elements location Services location Vertical circulation (elevators and stairs) Shared office spaces area	Location of work area within the shared office space Workspace type Privacy Colors and finishing Function and workflow Distraction(visual-acoustic) Health and safety .

Figure 2: user satisfaction levels in office spaces design

9. The mechanism of UXD and VR

The proposed mechanism of integrating UXD and VR for the design of shared office spaces is consisting of three phases in series (fig.3): the experiment articulation, the experiment tool preparation, and the experiment implementation and tool evaluation.

In phase one: the experiment articulation, the research conducts a questionnaire for space users to determine their needs, and to determine the required physical elements that should be guaranteed within the VR environment. Then the experiment tool prepared based on integrating the UXD and VR tool while producing a simulation model to complete the experiment in VR environment. Finally, the third phase in which the comparison happened between the existing situation and the explored design from the experience.
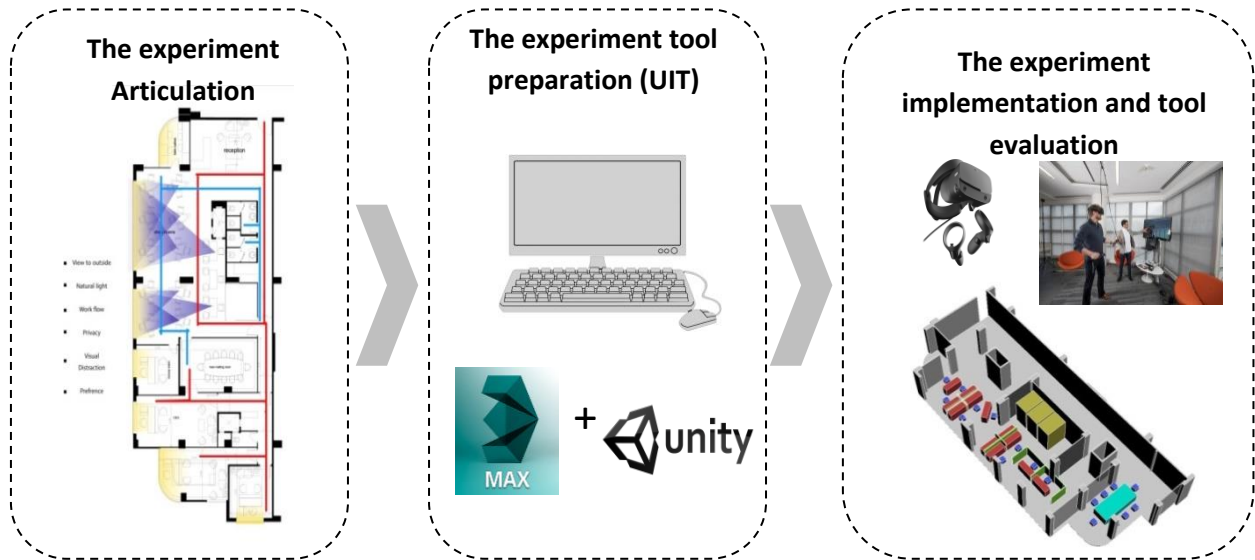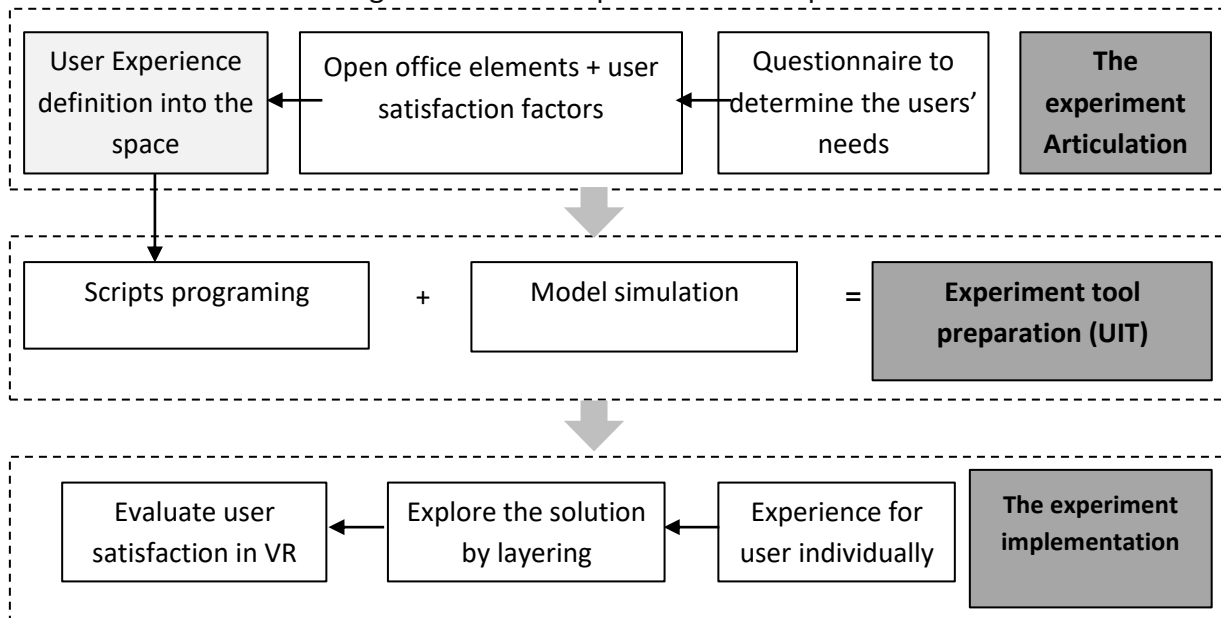
Figure 3: the three phases of the experiment

Figure 3: Experiment Design structure for shared office space

9.1. First Phase: Experiment Articulation (interaction between user and space)

It is a vision of how the user interacts with the space in VR, and how this affecting the space design (Fig. 4). Based on the explored user satisfaction levels with the corresponding physical setting of the space articulation, it is necessary to figure out this correlation to determine the tool which help user to make the interaction, and table 1 explain this relation.

Figure 4: The experiment Articulation

| User satisfaction factors | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Open office elements |
| Level 3 | | | | | | | | | Level 2 | | | | | | Level 1 | | | | |
ergonomics	Safty and health	distraction	Function & work flow	Color & finishing	light	privacy	Work space type	Element location in the space	Required work space	Departments relations	Vertical circulation	Services location	Structure elements location	Floors relation	Building exterior	Transportation to site	Building site accsses	Building and surroundings	Space limiting elements
																			Coloumns and walls
																			cieling
																			flooring
																			office space division elements
																			Open office
																			Team work space
																			Individual work space
																			Private close office
																			Shared office
																			Team work office
																			office space for study
																			Work hall
																			Individual or group work space
																			Small meeting room
																			large meeting room
																			Large meeting area
																			Small meeting area
																			Brainstorming room
																			Archive area
																			Storage area
																			Printing area
																			postal area

Work zone / Meeting zone / Supportive zone — Office spaces

Pantry area

Rest area

Cabinet

Phone and smooking area

the library

Gaming area

Waiting area

Vertical circulation

Service elements

Weak correlation ☐   Medium correlation ▨   Strong correlation ■
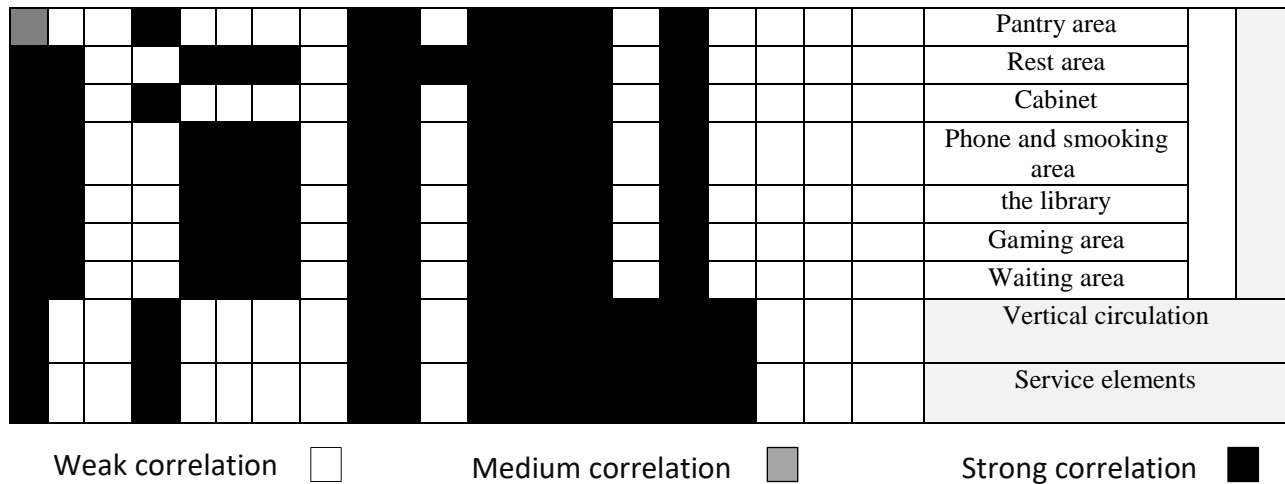
Table 1: Correlation between user satisfaction levels and space elements

Calculation the effect of each satisfaction level from the previous correlation table 1, in which the strong correlation calculated by full point, the medium correlation calculated by half point, and the weak correlation with no points. By collecting all points, the third level was the effective one in the user satisfaction.
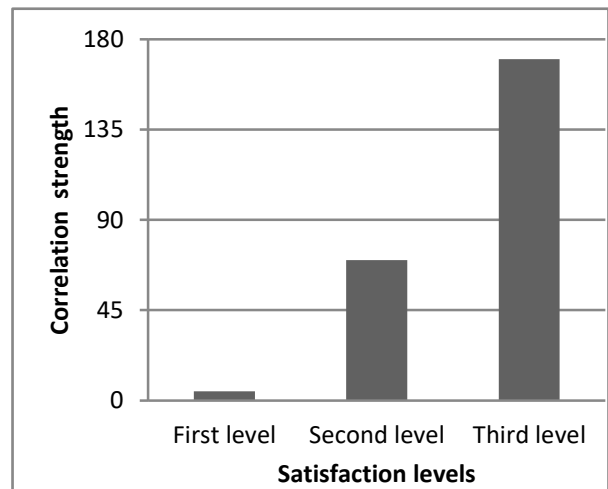
Figure 5: The correlation strength of levels of user satisfaction

Second phase: the experiment tool preparation (User Interaction Tool – UIT)

From the previous correlations table 1, the research articulates the required tools (table 2) based on the third level of user satisfaction. The deduced tool shows the main factors affecting user satisfaction, and its secondary factors.

Tools	The experience definition	Secondary factors		Main factors of user satisfaction
Movement Script	Move and rotate the partition in the open space to make the work zone	Work zone location	Level A	**location of space elements**
Rotation script				
Movement	Move and rotate the partition in the	Meeting zone		

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Script **Rotation script**	open space to make the meeting zone	location	
Movement **Script** **Rotation script**	Move and rotate the partition in the open space to make the rest zone	Service and rest zone	
Movement **Script** **Rotation script**	Move the office furniture and rotate it to the required direction	The work space location into work zone	
Movement **Script** **Rotation script**	Move storage furniture in the space and rotate it to the required direction	Storage location	Level B
Movement **Script** **Rotation script**	Move meeting table and rotate it to the required direction	Meeting furniture location in meeting zone	
Movement **Script**	Move the screen to suitable location	Projection screen location	
Movement **Script**	Choose and move the work space into the space	Work space type choise(single-double-group)	
Movement **Script** **Stretch Script**	Choose partition type and stretch it to make the required hieght	Work space type choise (open-close-semiclose)	**work space type**
Movement **Script**	Choose the rush meeting table to the required location	Choise of rush meeting location	
Movement **Script** **Stretch Script**	Partition type choise and its height ,compisition	Visual privacy	**privacy**
Movement **Script**	Choose phone area far way from work space	Acoustic privacy	
Movement **Script**	Choise work space direction, and its location from light source	Light type into space (direct &indirect)	
Movement **Script**	Artificial light location choise	Artificial light location	**light**
Movement **Script**	Move façade units to specify voids and natural light	Façade voids to get natural light	
		Natural light direction	
Material Script	Specify ceiling color and finishing	Ceiling color and finishing	
	Specify walls color and finishing	Walls color and ceiling	**colors and finishing**
	Specify flooring color and finishing	Flooring colors and ceiling	
	Specify spacework color and finishing	Work space colors and finish	

	Specify ceiling color and finishing	Partition finishing	
Movement Script	Move space furniture	Horizontal circulation	**function of furniture**
Stretch Script	Stretch work space in two access(x,y)	Work space dimension	
Movement Script	Furniture choise	Users relations toghther (work flow)	
Movement Script	Specify and rotate partition type and its hieght	Visual distraction	**distraction**
Stretch Script			
Rotation script	Use partiitons to decrease noise	Acoustic distraction	
Movement Script	Choose an locate natural elements	Natural elements in the space (biophilic)	**Health and safety.**
	Choose work space location	View to outside	
	Choose location of rest space and its furniture	Supportive space (spirit room – games room)	
	Choose elements which increase user foucus	User attention space navigation	
Stretch Script	Stretch work space	Work space dimention	**Ergonomics**
Movement Script		Need side table	
Movement Script	Specify Possibilities of work space to chieve User convenience	Nessecary dimention in work space (computer screen height)	
Stretch Script			

Table 2: The Articulation of the experiment Tool

In the second phase the user interaction tool is prepared, based on the first phase (the experiment preparation). It includes two steps, the first one: an open space is prepared by make the model simulation, using 3ds max software to simulate the space with the actual scale, then importing the model into unity program to prepare it to the VR Fig. 6. The second step uses the virtual reality programming language to make the required scripts by C++ programming fig.7, to do the interactions in the open space between user and the space elements.
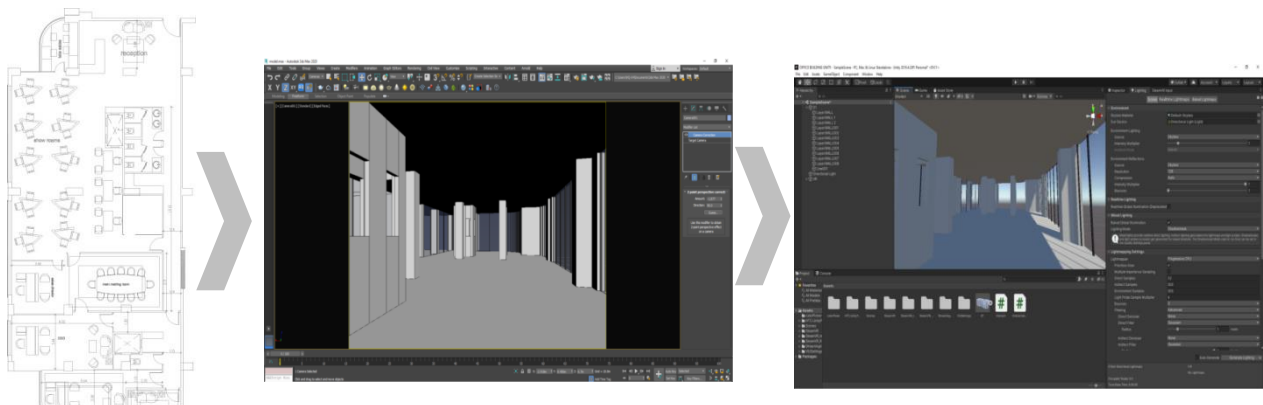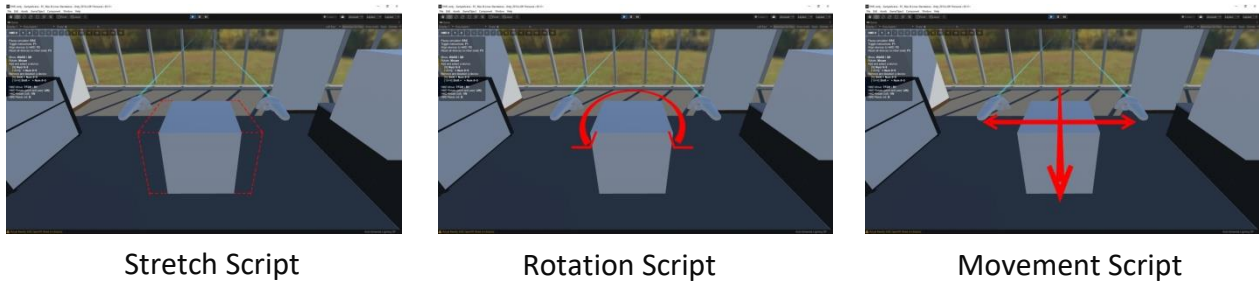
Figure 6: the preparation of simulation model from 3dmax to Unity

Stretch Script   Rotation Script   Movement Script

```
1    using System.Collections;
2    using System.Collections.Generic;
3    using UnityEngine;
4    using HTC.UnityPlugin.Vive;
5
     @ UnityScript | 0 references
6    public class Interact : MonoBehaviour
7    {
8        // Start is called before the first frame update
9        public Transform rightHand, leftHand;
10       public int clicked = 0;
11       Transform helperObj;
12
13       Transform grabbed;
14       Transform grabbingHand;
15       Transform prevParent;
         @ Unity Message | 0 references
16       void Start()
17       {
18
19       }
         @ Unity Message | 0 references
20       void Update()
21       {
22           TakeInput(HandRole.RightHand);
23           TakeInput(HandRole.LeftHand);
24       }
25
         2 references
26       void TakeInput(HandRole hr)
27       {
28           if (ViveInput.GetPressDown(hr, ControllerButton.Trigger))
29           {
30               if (clicked == 0)
31                   Grab(hr == HandRole.RightHand ? rightHand : leftHand);
32               else Grab2();
```

Figure 7: part of movement script programming

9.3. Third Phase :the experiment implementation and tool evaluation

   User experience design -UXD- is used to participate user in the design process of office shared spaces as where user spends the major of his work time in it. UXD depends on the visual interactive design process by applying the experiment on existing office spaces to measure users' current satisfaction-before the experiment- and the expected satisfaction after the experiment. The purpose of the experiment is to evaluate and validate a new tool to guide the user satisfaction of new office spaces while participating them on the early design phase, otherwise for further development to the existing office spaces.

   The selected case study on an existing office located in 5th settlement in New Cairo. The office is consisting of five departments that works as a real-estate developer. The experiments is done through passing by three steps: the first step stands for conducting a questionnaire to determine users' needs for their workspace. At the same time the conducting questionnaire measures' user

satisfaction before implementing the experiment. The second step is used to participate users for allocating their needs from the workspace via VR environment. The third step investigates the concluding scenarios via the VR experience to compare it to the existing design.

9.3.1. The First Step : Conducting the Questionnaire

The conducted Questionnaire is a set of questions measuring users' satisfaction factor, in addition to determine the required office furniture that users need in the workspace. The Questionnaire was applied on 15 users from different departments, and the result is as follows in table 3:

User interests			Secondary factors		User satisfaction factors
strong %100	medium %50	weak %0			
72.7%	18.2%	9.1%	Work zone location	Level A	location of item in the space
11 user	3 user	1 user			
27.3%	27.3%	45.4%	Meeting zone location		
4 user	4 user	7 user			
90.9%	9.1%	0%	Service and rest area location		
14 user	1 user	0 user			
81.8%	18.2%	0%	Work space location into work zone	Level B	
12 مستخدم	3 مستخدم	0 مستخدم			
81.8%	18.2%	0%	Storage location		
12 user	3 user	0 user			
63.6%	27.3%	9.1%	Work space type choise(single-double-group)		work space type
10 user	4 user	1 user			
72.7%	18.2%	9.1%	(Work space type choise (open-close-semi close		
11 user	3 user	1 user			
54.6%	27.3%	18.2%	Choise of rush meeting location		
8 user	4 user	3 user			
81.8%	9.1%	9.1%	visual privacy		privacy
11 user	2 user	2 user			
81.8%	9.1%	9.1%	Partition height		
11 user	2 user	2 user			
72.7%	18.2%	9.1%	(acoustic privacy) Phone Cell existence		
11 user	3 user	1 user			
63.5%	27.4%	9.1%	.Colors and finishing		
10 user	4 user	1 user			
81.8%	18.2%	0%	distraction		
11 user	4 user	0 user			

				view to outside	**Health and safety.**
72.6%	18.2%	18.2%			
14 user	**1 user**	**0 user**			
63.6%	18.2%	18.2%		Work space dimensions	**Ergonomics**
10 user	**3 user**	**2 user**			

Table 3: users Questionnaire results

It is possible to calculate the median of each factor of user satisfaction in shared office spaces, in which strong relation scored by full point, and medium relation by half point, and weak relation with no points fig. 8.
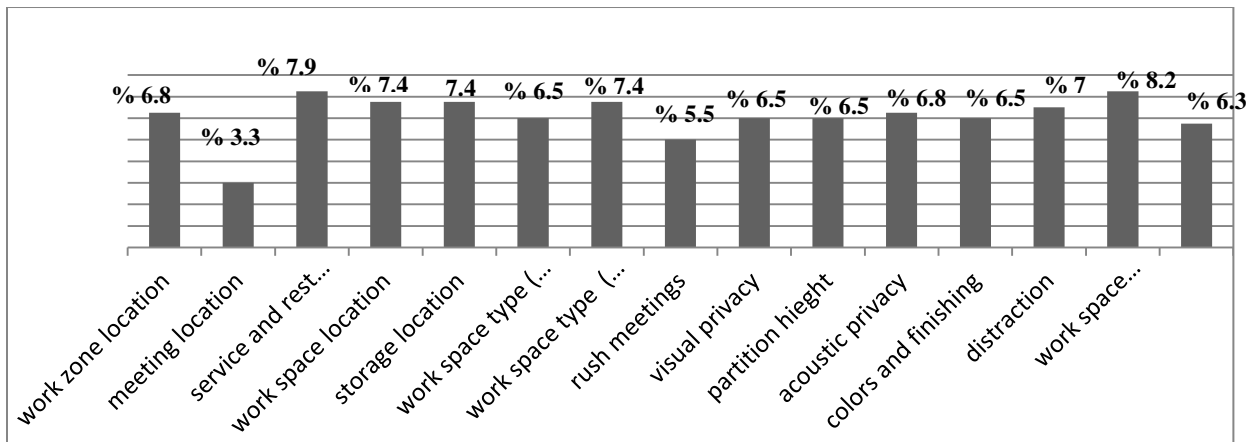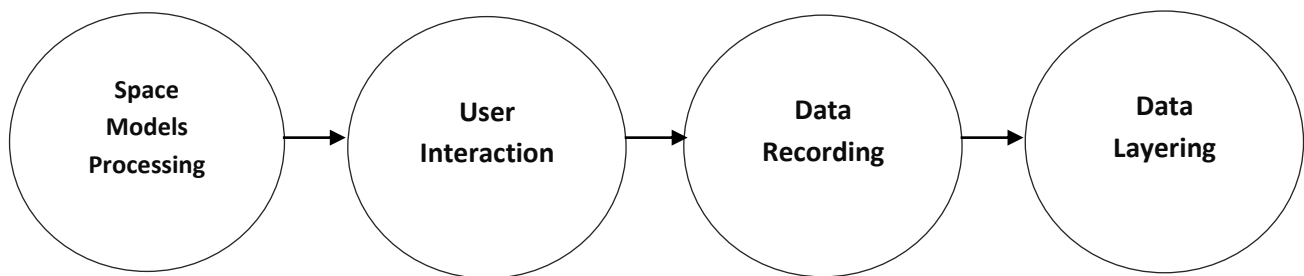

Figure 8: The weights of user satisfaction factors in shared office spaces

9.3.2. The Second Step: Experiment Implementation

In this step, the selected case study was modeled as a free space with only the structure support points (columns). Firstly, fixed zones are settled including services and facilitators, then the rest of the space is divided into different zones that have different advantages according to their location within the plan. Upon that, four users get involved into the space using the VR Tool to select the appropriate zone for them according to the workflow fig. 9. The study focuses on one department (Engineering Department) to implement the experiment.
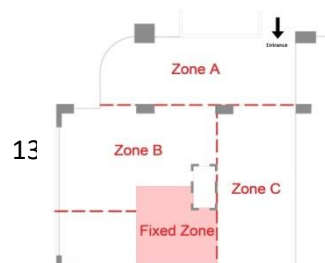
zones	function

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Fig. 9: user choices to departments zones

Zone H	Chairman
Zone I	Chairman vice
Zone A	Reception
Zone E	Rest zone
Zone G	Meeting zone
Zone B	financial management
Zone C	Marketing Management
Zone D	Engineering Management
Zone F	customers service

- The first user (dept manager) got into the VR Environment and choose a workspace from the predefined zones (shown in figure 9), then he chose the suitable furniture for his workspace; a desk, a side table, a small storage, a partition, meanwhile he allocating each piece place, size direction into the workspace using the developed VR tool. Observingly, the whole set of the first user was oriented to the inside view instead of to the view outside.

- The second user got into the VR Environment to select his workspace set in relation to the first user selection. He placed his workspace (with high partition) in the other side of the work-zone away from the manager, while oriented his desk to the outside view as well as picking a natural elements (planting pot) beside him.

- The third user got into the VR Environment and select a double workspace with other user, he choose a partition with medium height between the two work space, and a storage unit beside the workspace.

- The fourth user share the double workspace with the third user, and choose a storage unit beside the workspace.

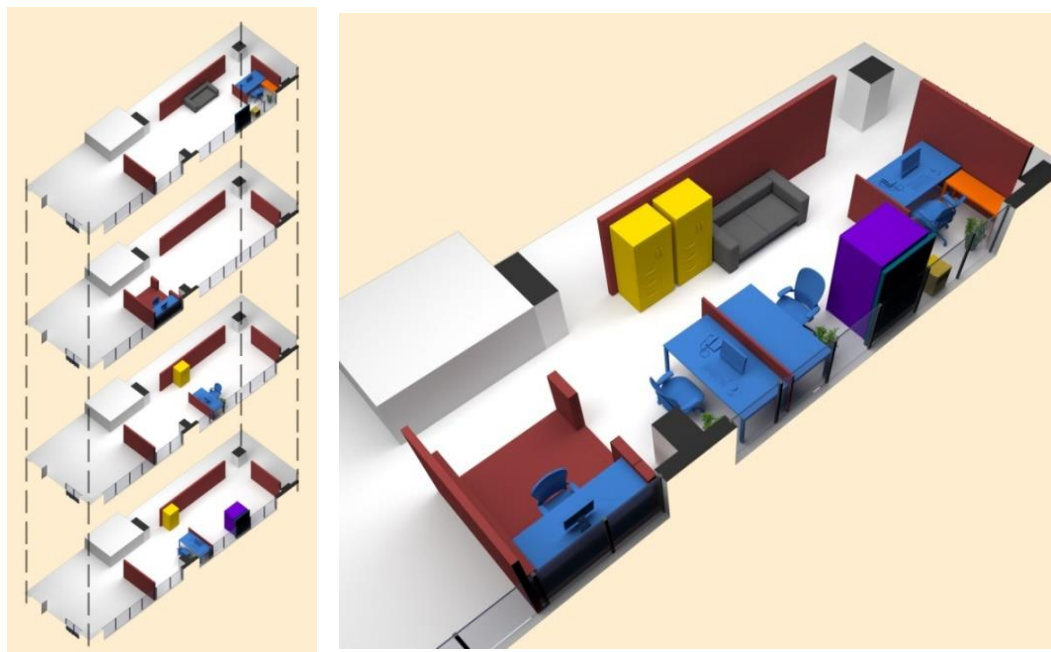Figure 10: Users in the VR experience making their choices based on instructions
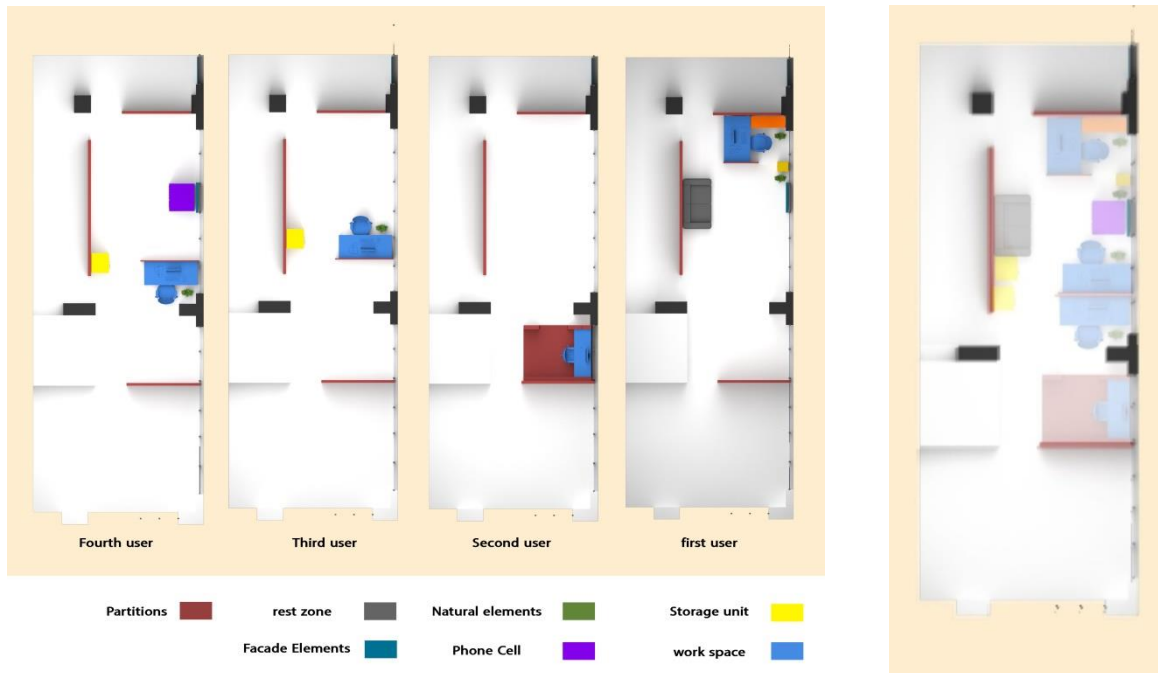
Figure 10: Layering the users choices scenarios to investigate the experienced design solution

Partitions ⬛   rest zone ⬛   Natural elements ⬛   Storage unit ⬛

Facade Elements ⬛   Phone Cell ⬛   work space ⬛

Fourth user   Third user   Second user   first user

10. Investgating user satisfaction

The user satisfaction is investigated two times; one before and one after the experiment. Hence, two questionnaires were conducted before and after the experiment to measure users satisfaction for comparing the concluded results to

figure out and evaluate the validity of the proposed VR tool in office spaces design.

user satisfaction calculated by calculate each factor for four users in engineering sector. based on each factor weight. It is possible to calculate each factor before and after the experiment by this equation:

$$\text{Factor percentage} = \frac{\text{Sum of this factor for four users*factor weight}}{400 \text{ (four users)}}$$

Factor percentage (after)	Factor percentage (before)	User 4 after	User 4 before	User 3 after	User 3 before	User 2 after	User 2 before	User 1 after	User 1 before	Factor weight	Satisfaction factors	
*(60+80+80+75) =400/6.8 5.015	*(50+25+50+50) 2.975=400/6.8	60	50	80	25	80	50	75	50	%6.8	Work zone choice satisfaction rate	
(50+85+75+100) =400/3.3* 2.5575	*(50+25+40+25) 1.155=400/3.3	50	50	85	25	75	40	100	25	%3.3	Meeting zone choice satisfaction rate	
(70+90+90+100) =400/7.9* 6.9125	*(20+25+20+50) 2.27=400/7.9	70	20	90	25	90	20	100	50	%7.9	Rest zone choice satisfaction rate	
70+90+100+100) =400/7.4*(6.66	*(30+25+25+50) 2.405=400/7.4	70	30	90	25	100	25	100	50	%7.4	Work space location choice in work zone	
*(50+70+75+75) =400/7.4 4.995	*(50+60+75+75) 4.81=400/7.4	50	50	70	60	75	75	75	75	%7.4	Storage location choice	
80+90+100+100) =400/7.4*(6.845	*(20+30+50+50) 2.775=400/7.4	80	20	90	30	100	50	100	50	%7.4	Work space type (open – closed – semi close)	
(75+80+90+100) *6.5/400= 5.61	*(50+30+50+50) 2.925=400/6.5	100	50	90	30	80	50	75	50	%6.5	Work space type (single double – group)	
(100+90+95+60) *6.5/400= 5.61	*(30+70+70+75) 3.98=400/6.5	60	30	95	70	90	70	100	75	%6.5	Partition type	privacy
(100+90+95+80) *6.5/400= 5.93	*(40+70+50+75) 3.82=400/6.5	80	40	95	70	90	50	100	75	%6.5	Partition height	
(100+100+100+70)*6.8/400= 6.29	/6.8*(0+0+0+0) 0.017=400	70	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	%6.8	Phone cell existence	
(100+95+95+50) *6.5/400= 5.525	*(50+70+50+50) 3.575=400/6.5	50	50	95	70	95	50	100	50	%5.5	Façade voids satisfaction rate	
(100+90+90+40) *6.5/400= 5.2	*(90+40+80+25) 3.82=400/6.5	40	90	90	40	90	80	100	25	%6.5	Finishing satisfaction rate	
(100+100+95+100)*6.3/400= 6.22	*(50+50+80+25) 3.3=400/6.3	100	50	95	50	100	80	100	25	%6.3	Work space dimension satisfaction rate	
(100+75+80+70) *7/400= 6.0375	/7*(40+25+25+50) 2.45=400	70	40	80	25	75	25	100	50	%7	Distraction satisfaction rate	

(75+100+95+80) *8.2/400= 7.175	*(50+25+50+25) 3.075=400/8.2	80	50	95	25	10 0	50	75	25	%8.2	View to outside
86.5825	**43.352**	**Satisfaction rate before the experience**									

11. Conclusions

The study shows how users satisfaction increases when the user gets involved into the design process of the shared office spaces. As the user could participate in the articulation of his needs and the nature of workflow which is the sincere effect on his satisfaction when achieved, using UIT tool.

the research finds that users' satisfaction before the experiment is about 43.352 %, while it has been raised to 86.5825 % after using the proposed mechanism. Hence, the users' satisfaction is almost doubled after using the virtual reality tool in the design process of office space design
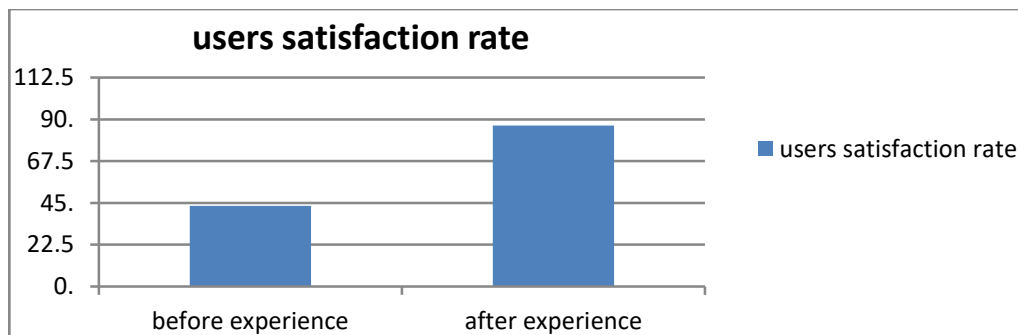
Accordingly, the study prove the validity of using the VR Tool with the integration of user experience design-UXD- in the design process of shared office spaces to satisfy users satisfaction.

On the other hand, the study finds that:

High percentage of users (90.9%) choose work-zone where users could look to facade opened to the outdoors.

- It is necessary to provide a wide selection of workspaces for users into the work area variant in groping type and privacy issues (single-double-group) or (close – open -semi close).

- It is necessary to provide offices work areas with natural elements, such as planting post, and suitable rest spaces.

- It is necessary to provide a secluded cabinet for cell phone callings to avoid acoustic distraction.

- Natural light is necessary for users in office work areas.

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