

Creating a Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Workplace for Librarians

Roilingel P. Calilung

University Library and Archives, University of the Assumption, City of San Fernando, Pampanga

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the environmental wellness of librarians as part of a broader initiative to create a sustainable and eco-friendly workplace. Building on a previous wellness program designed for university library staff, this research specifically focuses on how librarians perceive and engage in environmental practices within their work setting. Through the use of a wellness assessment tool, the study identified existing habits and attitudes toward sustainability, revealing moderate engagement with eco-friendly behaviors. Based on these findings, a targeted environmental wellness program was developed, which includes sustainability initiatives, the formation of a Green Team, and nature-based activities to support both ecological responsibility and staff well-being. The study underscores the importance of integrating environmental wellness into institutional culture to enhance librarians' overall health and workplace satisfaction.

Keywords: Environmental wellness, sustainability, workplace wellness, librarians, eco-friendly practices

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in the workplace is increasingly recognized as a critical component of organizational responsibility and employee well-being. Libraries, as centers of knowledge and community engagement, are well-positioned to lead by example in adopting eco-friendly practices. While traditionally focused on access to information and academic support, modern libraries are evolving to incorporate environmentally conscious operations that reflect broader institutional and global sustainability goals. In doing so, libraries not only reduce their ecological footprint but also contribute to a healthier and more mindful work environment.

Librarians work in environments that often involve high levels of energy consumption, resource usage, and waste generation. Creating a sustainable and eco-friendly workplace addresses these challenges through practical changes in operations, infrastructure, and behavior. From reducing paper and energy use to promoting recycling and green procurement, these efforts align with both ecological responsibility and workplace wellness. When sustainability is embedded in the workplace culture, it fosters a shared sense of purpose and enhances employee engagement.

This study serves as a follow-up to the earlier research titled *Designing a Wellness Program for University Library Staff in an Archdiocesan Catholic University*. While the original study focused on multiple dimensions of wellness, this research zeroes in on environmental wellness, one of the eight key areas identified. It builds upon the foundation previously established, further exploring how environmental initiatives in the library setting can contribute to the holistic well-being of staff.

Specifically, the study aims to examine how librarians perceive and practice sustainability in their work environment and to identify targeted strategies that promote eco-friendly habits and institutional support. The goal is to develop a sustainable workplace model that not only addresses environmental concerns but also reinforces librarians' overall wellness and resilience within the academic community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability in the workplace has gained significant traction over the past two decades, particularly as institutions seek to align their operations with environmental responsibility and employee well-being. The

concept of a green workplace extends beyond infrastructure—it encompasses policies, behaviors, and organizational culture that support sustainable practices (Robertson & Barling, 2013). In the context of libraries, these practices may include energy conservation, waste reduction, green procurement, and promotion of environmental awareness among staff and users.

Academic libraries are uniquely positioned to model and promote sustainability due to their educational mandate and community engagement role. According to Lin and Lin (2020), libraries can function as catalysts for environmental literacy by integrating sustainability into their operations and outreach programs. Moreover, they serve as visible spaces where institutional sustainability goals are implemented and evaluated. Examples include LEED-certified library buildings, paperless circulation systems, and the use of environmentally friendly materials in library operations (Jankowska et al., 2014).

Employee participation in workplace sustainability has also been linked to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Studies show that when employees perceive their organization as environmentally responsible, they are more likely to engage in eco-friendly behaviors and feel a stronger connection to their workplace (Norton et al., 2014). This reinforces the idea that promoting environmental wellness can support not only ecological objectives but also employee morale and overall wellness.

Despite these developments, research on sustainability in libraries has often focused on infrastructure and systems, with less emphasis on staff practices and perceptions. There is a growing need to examine how librarians engage with environmental initiatives and how their workplaces support or hinder such practices. As highlighted by Jankowska and Marcum (2010), incorporating sustainability into library culture requires both administrative commitment and active participation from staff. This study, therefore, contributes to the literature by focusing on the environmental wellness of librarians—exploring not just what is done, but how and why sustainable practices are adopted or resisted within academic libraries.

Research Questions

The study aims to assess the environmental wellness of librarians at the University of the Assumption with the view of creating a sustainable and eco-friendly workplace for librarians. Specifically, it aims to answer the following:

1. How may the environmental wellness of library staff be assessed and described?
2. What activities may be proposed for library staff to improve their environmental wellness?
3. What program can possibly be formulated for the improvement of library staff's wellness?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to assess librarians' perceptions and practices related to environmental wellness in the workplace. It aims to quantify observations and gather measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive method, a type of quantitative research, aims to accurately portray the characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or group. It focuses on describing and summarizing existing conditions, behaviors, or phenomena (Trochim, 2006). The study serves as a follow-up to the earlier research titled *Designing a Wellness Program for University Library Staff in an Archdiocesan Catholic University*, which developed a holistic wellness program encompassing the eight dimensions of wellness. The present research narrows the focus to the environmental dimension, with the goal of designing a sustainable and eco-friendly workplace tailored to the needs of library personnel.

Sources of Data / Respondents

The respondents of this study were the same library staff who participated in the original wellness program study. They include librarians and library personnel from the grade school, junior high school, senior high school, and university-level libraries of the University of the Assumption. Their firsthand experience with institutional wellness initiatives provided a valuable foundation for evaluating environmental wellness in the workplace.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured survey adapted from the environmental wellness dimension of the Personal Wellness Assessment (2018) developed by Colorado State University Pueblo. The questionnaire was designed to capture perceptions, practices, and levels of engagement with sustainability-related activities in the library workplace. In addition to Likert-type questions, the instrument included open-ended prompts to allow librarians to share specific ideas or concerns regarding environmental initiatives.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data gathered from the survey were tabulated and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, and average scores. These statistical tools helped identify common patterns, strengths, and gaps in environmental practices among the respondents. The qualitative responses were reviewed for recurring themes and suggestions, which informed the development of the proposed eco-friendly workplace program.

RESULTS

The results presented in Table 1 highlight the environmental wellness practices of librarians based on their self-assessed behaviors and perceptions. Overall, the respondents demonstrated a consistent and moderate level of engagement with environmentally conscious habits, with a total score of 30 out of a possible 40. The highest-rated item, “I feel content in my environments (class, home, work, etc.),” received a score of 4, indicating a general sense of satisfaction and comfort in their surroundings. This suggests that librarians feel emotionally and physically supported in their current workspaces and personal environments.

Other items, such as reducing, reusing, and recycling products; showing concern for climate impacts; and using sustainable transportation options like walking or carpooling, consistently scored 3. This reflects an awareness of eco-friendly practices, although there may be room for more active participation. Respondents also indicated moderate involvement in community events and local consumption, suggesting a balanced level of social responsibility and environmental mindfulness. These findings provide a useful foundation for enhancing environmental wellness initiatives in the library workplace.

Table 1 Environmental Dimension of Wellness

ENVIRONMENTAL	Scores
I spend time outdoors enjoying nature.	3
I reduce, reuse and recycle products.	3
I try to lessen my environmental impact.	3
I walk, bike, use public transportation or carpool when possible.	3
I am concerned about impacts on my local, national and world climate.	3
I have space to call my own.	3
I am comfortable in the space I occupy.	3

I feel content in my environments (class home, work, etc.)	4
I shop locally.	3
I participate in campus events that help my community (food drives, fundraisers, etc.).	3
TOTAL	30

Table 2 outlines the proposed activities aimed at strengthening the environmental wellness of library staff. These initiatives are designed to cultivate an eco-conscious workplace culture while encouraging sustainable behaviors. One of the key strategies is the implementation of recycling and composting programs, which can significantly reduce waste and promote responsible consumption habits within the library setting. These programs not only manage resources efficiently but also serve as daily reminders of the staff’s role in environmental stewardship.

Another proposed initiative is the introduction of energy conservation measures, such as turning off unused equipment, optimizing lighting systems, and encouraging mindful energy use. These efforts are essential in reducing the library’s ecological footprint and can lead to long-term savings in operational costs. Furthermore, establishing a “Green Team”—a staff-led committee focused on sustainability efforts—can enhance participation and accountability. This group can organize awareness campaigns, spearhead eco-projects, and foster collaboration toward a greener and healthier work environment. Collectively, these activities support a more sustainable workplace while contributing to the overall well-being and engagement of librarians.

Table 2 Proposed Activities for Environmental Wellness

Dimension of Wellness	Proposed Activities
Environmental	Recycling and composting programs, energy conservation initiatives, establishment of a "Green Team" to promote sustainability.

Table 3 outlines the Green Librarian Program, a proposed initiative aimed at strengthening the environmental wellness of library staff through a combination of sustainability practices and nature-based activities. The program seeks to foster eco-conscious habits while also contributing to the emotional and physical well-being of staff members.

Sustainability initiatives such as recycling, reducing paper use, and promoting green alternatives help reduce the ecological footprint of the library and embed environmentally responsible behaviors into everyday routines. The establishment of a Green Team empowers library staff to take ownership of sustainability goals and promote awareness through events, campaigns, and hands-on projects.

Additionally, outdoor activities such as group walks, container gardening, or tree-planting offer opportunities for staff to engage with nature, reduce stress, and build community. These elements, taken together, support a healthier workplace environment aligned with both personal wellness and institutional ecological values.

Table 3 A Proposed Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Workplace Program

Environmental Wellness	To enhance the overall well-being of library staff by addressing each dimension of wellness through targeted activities and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Initiatives: Implement recycling programs, reduce waste, and promote eco-friendly practices. • Green Team: Form a staff committee to lead environmental initiatives and raise awareness. • Outdoor Activities: Encourage staff to connect with nature through walks, gardening, or outdoor events.
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DISCUSSION

The environmental wellness of librarians highlight the increasing need to embed sustainability and ecological mindfulness within the workplace setting. As environmental concerns become more pressing, institutions are called upon to adopt sustainable operational models that not only reduce their ecological footprint but also enhance employee well-being (Rogers & Weber, 2010). In this context, the Green Librarian Program serves as a proactive initiative that integrates sustainability with wellness, reflecting the idea that green practices can positively influence physical and mental health (Maller et al., 2006).

The program components—sustainability initiatives, Green Team involvement, and outdoor activities—demonstrate a holistic approach to environmental wellness. Research shows that workplace-based environmental programs improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and sense of purpose, particularly when staff are involved in shaping these efforts (Nielsen & Randall, 2013). Forming a Green Team, for instance, fosters collaboration and peer leadership, which are critical to sustaining long-term ecological practices (Shriberg & MacDonald, 2013). Moreover, integrating nature into the work routine through activities like gardening or nature walks has been found to lower stress, enhance cognitive function, and improve mood (Bratman et al., 2012).

The relatively modest average score of 30 in the Environmental Dimension of Wellness suggests that while librarians are generally aware of environmental issues, there is ample room to expand both knowledge and participation. This aligns with previous studies that found professional settings often underutilize opportunities for environmental engagement, particularly when structural or institutional support is lacking (Lo et al., 2012). Through intentional programming, such as the Green Librarian initiative, libraries can position themselves not just as knowledge hubs but also as models of ecological responsibility.

Ultimately, embedding environmental wellness in librarianship promotes a culture of sustainability, benefits staff morale, and aligns with broader institutional missions toward stewardship and care for creation. As educational institutions face both environmental and occupational challenges, library-based programs that merge sustainability with wellness can serve as replicable models for broader workplace transformation.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significance of promoting environmental wellness among librarians as part of a comprehensive workplace wellness initiative. The findings suggest that while librarians demonstrate general awareness and engagement in sustainable practices, there remains substantial potential for improvement through structured programs and institutional support. Integrating sustainability into the library workplace not only aligns with global environmental goals but also contributes to the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the staff. The proposed activities—ranging from recycling programs to the formation of a Green Team and outdoor engagements—offer a viable pathway toward cultivating a more eco-conscious and health-supportive work environment.

RECOMMENDATION

To strengthen environmental wellness among library staff, institutions should formally adopt and support the implementation of the Green Librarian Program. This includes allocating resources for sustainability training, creating opportunities for staff-led green initiatives, and establishing partnerships with local environmental organizations. Management should also integrate environmental wellness into broader organizational policies and encourage participation in nature-based activities to reduce stress and enhance overall morale. Continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms are recommended to monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives and ensure their long-term sustainability and relevance.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study observed strict adherence to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their involvement was entirely voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process. No personal identifiers were collected, and responses were securely stored. As

a continuation of a previously approved wellness program study, this research received clearance from the institution and was conducted with transparency, impartiality, and respect for all participants. All findings were used solely for academic purposes to improve workplace wellness and sustainability practices among librarians.

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