

# The energy consumption behaviour of individual office workers: Influences of context, control and norms

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## Introduction

In the UK in 2008, 25.3 million people were employed by organisations (ONS 2008). Individual employees' behaviour affects an organisation's energy use, through using equipment and building systems, and through decisions made in employment roles (Stern 2000). Unlike the household context, little research has examined individual energy use in organisational contexts (Lo et al In Press). This research adds to current knowledge of individual energy use behaviour within organisations, specifically among office-based workers. It compares individual energy use behaviour and attitudes in offices to behaviour and attitudes at home.

## Methods and Measures

The study took place in the offices of two large Councils (local government) in the East Midlands region of the UK. It involved building tours, a questionnaire and interviews about attitudes and behaviours at work and at home, and measurements of energy use. The questionnaire utilised the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991) to address behavioural control issues, and Values-Beliefs-Norms Theory (Stern 2000) to address moral and normative concerns. The advantages and shortcomings of using this approach in this context will be discussed.

## Three Key Questions

*Context: What effect does context (setting) have on energy demand? Do people perform the same behaviours at home as at work?*

There has been only limited research into the effect of setting on energy use behaviour. This study uses questionnaire and interview data to compare attitudes and behaviours in offices and at home to identify factors predicting energy consumption behaviour in each location.

*Control: How do actual and perceived control over energy use affect attitudes towards those behaviours, and their performance in office and home settings?*

In offices, many building systems are not under the control of individual occupants, and occupants' perceptions of control may be affected by their organisational role. This study examines the effect of actual and perceived control over energy use in offices on attitudes towards and performance of these behaviours, at work and at home.

*Motivating factors: How do factors such as normative or moral concerns affect energy demand in organisational settings?*

With both control and context having perceived and actual effects on energy use in office settings, the influence of other psychological factors such as social norms and moral concerns is not clear. The study explores these through the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Values-Beliefs-Norms Theory.

## Findings

Findings from the data collection will be presented in response to the three key questions. Contextual, individual control and motivating factors associated with the energy consumption behaviour of office workers will be discussed.

## References

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