



UTILIZING SPATIAL INTEGRATION TO ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY: A CASE OF RICE MILL, ADANI, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the application of spatial integration in enhancing productivity in rice milling facilities in Adani, Enugu State, Nigeria. Recognizing the critical role of rice milling in Nigeria's food security and agricultural economy, the research addressed the inefficiencies caused by outdated layouts, poor material flow, and inadequate spatial planning. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines observational analysis (including detailed spatial diagrams and measurements of inter-machine distances and workflow patterns), productivity key performance indicators (KPIs), and survey data from mill personnel to assess the current spatial layouts and their impact on operational efficiency. Key findings reveal that while some mills meet industry benchmarks for milling yield, all observed facilities fall short in head rice ratio and significantly exceed acceptable levels of broken rice. Specific spatial measurements indicate that longer distances between processing stages and identified bottlenecks contribute significantly to operational inefficiencies and potentially higher broken rice ratios. Survey responses from 34 participants across four mills indicate widespread dissatisfaction with space availability, ease of material movement, and storage access, highlighting spatial inefficiencies that directly affect productivity. The study identifies strong qualitative and inferential support, backed by empirical spatial data, for the application of lean manufacturing principles, such as improved material flow, ergonomic layout, and waste reduction, to address these challenges, considering the interplay with machinery type, maintenance, and energy constraints. The research concludes that spatial integration significantly influences milling outcomes, and optimizing facility layout could lead to enhanced productivity, reduced losses, and better working conditions. Practical recommendations are offered to mill owners, designers, and policymakers, emphasizing low-cost spatial interventions and worker-informed design. The study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on industrial spatial optimization in Nigeria's agro-processing sector and provides a foundation for further research on scalable design improvements in similar contexts.

Keywords: optimization, workflow, productivity, spatial integration.

1. Introduction

The efficient operation of the rice milling industry is a critical determinant of global food security and economic sustainability (Robert, 2020; Nesbitt, 2015; Odulaja, 2024). As a primary caloric source, maximizing efficiency in rice processing is paramount (Food and Agriculture Organization, n.d.; World Bank, 2017). The study focuses on the Adani cluster in Enugu State, Nigeria, known for 'Adarice,' where the government actively pursues policies like the National Rice Development Strategy II (2020-2030) (Rice for Africa, 2022) to bolster local production and curb import reliance (Kaplinsky, 2010). This research introduces spatial integration, the strategic organization and efficient interconnection of physical units and operational flows, as a crucial, often overlooked, variable in operational efficiency, aiming to streamline material progression and reduce logistical friction (INFORMS PubsOnline, 2022;

Odulaja, 2020). The rice milling industry in regions like Adani is consistently hampered by operational inefficiencies stemming from outdated technologies, inefficient layouts, and a lack of systematic architectural planning. These deficiencies lead to quantifiable performance shortfalls, including elevated costs and inability to meet high-quality demand (Adeyemi, Okoruwa, Ikudaisi, 2017; Nwachukwu, Ukwuaba, Umeh, 2020). Critically, while sampled mills achieve varied milling yields, all facilities observed fall critically short in Head Rice Ratio (HRR) and significantly exceed acceptable levels of Broken Rice Ratio (BRR). This high BRR is a specific quality deficit strongly linked to excessive or rough material handling necessitated by suboptimal facility layout and long inter-machine distances. The problem is thus a measurable quality failure arising directly from flawed spatial planning. The overarching aim of this research is to investigate how the strategic utilization of spatial integration principles can enhance productivity in rice mills in Adani, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study was guided by six objectives: to examine current spatial layout; identify key productivity KPIs; determine the relationship between spatial integration factors and productivity KPIs; explore the potential of lean manufacturing principles in layout optimization; evaluate the perceived impact of spatial layout on efficiency from personnel's perspective; and propose actionable strategies for improving productivity through enhanced spatial integration. The research tested three primary hypotheses: (H1) A significant positive correlation exists between material flow efficiency and milling yield; (H2) Mills implementing Lean spatial principles exhibit higher throughput; and (H3) Perceived productivity by employees is positively associated with the degree of spatial integration observed in their workplace. This research is significant because it shifts the focus of efficiency studies from purely technological upgrades to the fundamental physical and architectural determinants of productivity, providing localized, quantitative data on spatial dimensions correlated with specific KPIs (MY, BRR, HRR) in the Adani context, thereby offering an evidence-based roadmap for intervention.

2. Literature Review

The investigation into the relationship between spatial integration and productivity is grounded in a robust framework integrating architectural, systems, and management theories. The Conceptual Framework Positions Spatial Integration (Independent Variable) as directly influencing Productivity Enhancement (Dependent Variable), with Technology Adoption and Infrastructure Availability acting as moderating factors, all situated within the broader Socio-economic and Policy Environment. This framework relies on five established theoretical anchors: Industrial Architecture/Engineering (IAE) provides the foundation for optimizing

facility layout to maximize workflow efficiency and minimize unnecessary material movement, recognizing physical design as the structural determinant of performance (Nesbitt, 2015; Odulaja, 2024). General Systems Theory (GST) models the rice mill as an open, complex socio-technical system, focusing on the dynamic interdependence of all sub-systems (technical and social). Poor spatial layout represents a technical failure that creates non-value-adding feedback loops (backtracking, waiting), undermining the system's dynamic equilibrium (Skyttner, 2014; Gaziulusoy, 2017). Spatial integration ensures technical components support efficient human workflow. The Lean Manufacturing Principle (LMP) serves as the prescriptive philosophy, mandating value maximization through the systematic elimination of waste (Muda), particularly achieving Continuous Flow to eliminate the spatially related wastes of Transportation (unnecessary material movement) and Motion (unnecessary personnel movement) (Womack & Jones, 2015; Mousavi et al., 2017). Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) explains that facility layout decisions are governed by the need to minimize the high implicit internal costs (effort, time, product loss) of coordinating complex, non-sequential exchanges introduced by poor spatial arrangement (Williamson, 2010; Foss & Foss, 2017). Finally, Location Theory extends its focus to the micro-level facility layout, asserting that external supply chain efficiency must be supported by internal logistical efficiency (Hesse, 2017). Empirical studies globally confirm the direct link between spatial design and operational metrics. Transitioning from fragmented layouts to sequential, integrated product layouts yields substantial reductions in production lead time and material handling distances (Taurian & Wibowo, 2018). Inefficient material handling, directly related to spatial arrangement, can account for up to 20% of total operating costs, justifying optimization (Muther & Hales, 2015). The observed high Broken Rice Ratio (BRR) in Adani mills is addressed by research linking non-sequential flow and intermediate storage to increased product damage, spillage, and contamination (Hines & Rich, 2018). In agro-processing, eliminating non-sequential processes and unnecessary movement is paramount to reducing post-harvest losses, which directly translates to improving Head Rice Ratio and Milling Yield (Banjara & Singh, 2017). Research within Nigeria reinforces this, showing that implementing Lean tools like the 5S methodology improves operational efficiency and safety, factors constrained by poor layout (Oluwatuyi et al., 2019). Local studies also trace high variations in Milling Yield and Broken Rice Ratio to the non-optimized sequence of processing steps within mill structures (Agbaje et al., 2018), confirming that the

fragmented layouts often result from haphazard expansion rather than strategic planning (Ikhuoria & Uduehi, 2010).

A significant research gap is the lack of integrated empirical studies that quantify the relationship between measurable spatial factors and localized productivity metrics in the Adani cluster, hindering evidence-based strategic layout implementation.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a Concurrent Mixed Methods Research Design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), allowing for the simultaneous collection and integration of quantitative data (KPIs, measured distances) and qualitative data (personnel perceptions, workflow observations) to provide a holistic understanding. The research was conducted in Adani, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria, selected for its prominence in rice production and the presence of multiple milling facilities offering a realistic cross-section of local industrial practices. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select four functional rice mills (Mill 1, Mill 2, Mill 3, and Mill 4) as case studies, ensuring representation of both integrated (Straight Line) and fragmented (L-Shaped) layouts, across varying capacities. For the perception survey component, a convenience sample of 34 participants (N=34) was obtained from the participating mills, ensuring diverse operational perspectives, with General Workers comprising the largest group (47.1%), followed by Machine Operators (20.6%), Supervisors (11.8%), and Owners/Managers (8.8%).

Four integrated instruments were utilized for data collection:

An Observational Checklist/Guide for Spatial Analysis was used during site visits to systematically document physical architecture, including creating detailed spatial diagrams, mapping Material and Personnel Flow Charts, and crucially, recording specific measured distances between adjacent processing units to provide the quantitative basis for flow analysis. A Productivity Data Collection Form was utilized to extract quantitative performance data from mill records, focusing on six key performance indicators (KPIs): Milling Yield (MY), Paddy Input (PI), Milled Rice Output (MRO), Operational Hours (OH), Head Rice Ratio (HRR), and Broken Rice Ratio (BRR).

A Survey Questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale captured personnel perceptions (N=34) on spatial integration factors such as space availability (Q3), material movement ease (Q4), and flow continuity (Q1).

A Semi-structured Interview Guide gathered qualitative insights from management and staff regarding the interplay between the physical layout, machinery type, maintenance, and

operational constraints. Data analysis involved qualitative thematic analysis of interviews and observational notes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) alongside quantitative analysis of KPI data and survey responses using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (correlation analysis). The integration of mixed methods, such as cross-referencing high quantitative BRR with architectural diagrams showing bottlenecks and qualitative perceptions of difficult movement, was paramount for robust conclusions.

4. Discussion of Findings

The observational analysis categorized mill layouts into two types: the Straight Line Layout (Mills 1, 2, and 3), representing a relatively more flow-aligned design, and the L-Shaped Layout (Mill 4), which inherently creates corners and flow disruption. However, even Straight Line layouts were compromised by reliance on manual transportation and inadequate inter-machine spacing.

Table 1: Productivity KPI Data for Participating Mills

KPI	Mill 1	Mill 2	Mill 3	Mill 4
A. Milling Yield	69%	67%	72%	60%
B. Paddy Input (kg)	7500kg	3000kg	2500kg	2500kg
C. Milled Rice Output (kg)	5200kg	2000kg	1800kg	1500kg
D. Operational Hours	9hrs	8hrs	9hrs	8hrs
E. Head Rice Ratio	62%	58%	52%	59%
F. Broken Rice Ratio	24%	32%	38%	30%

Analysis of performance data revealed a critical discrepancy: while Mill 3 achieved the industry benchmark for Milling Yield (72%), all mills exhibited Broken Rice Ratios (BRR) dramatically exceeding the acceptable tolerance of 10–15% (ranging from 24% to 38%), and Head Rice Ratios (HRR) (ranging from 52% to 62%) well below the 66–72% target. This structural quality control failure, particularly the high BRR, confirmed the initial problem statement and was significantly linked to longer inter-machine distances and observed bottlenecks in the material flow.

Table 2: Perceptions of Mill Personnel Regarding Spatial Layout

Spatial Integration Factor	Mean Score	Interpretation
Q1: Smooth and Continuous Flow	3.30	Neutral/Slight Agreement
Q2: Proximity of Sections	3.12	Neutral/Slight Agreement
Q3: Enough Physical Space/Safety	2.71	Slight Disagreement
Q4: Material Movement Ease	2.85	Slight Disagreement
Q5: Storage Layout for Access	3.09	Neutral
Q6: Reduced Walking/Carrying (Motion Waste)	2.94	Slight Agreement
Q7: Overall Organized Layout	2.91	Slight Disagreement
Q8: Monitoring Ease	2.97	Slight Disagreement

Personnel perceptions provided essential validation of these inefficiencies. The lowest scores were recorded for Enough Physical Space/Safety (Mean = 2.71) and Material Movement Ease (Mean = 2.85), confirming the personnel's experience of high Lean Wastes, specifically Waste of Motion and Waste of Transportation, stemming from a crowded and disorganized spatial environment.

This negative perception validates the architectural observations of inadequate clear space around machinery and difficult manual material handling, suggesting a high ergonomic and psychological cost within the system. The correlation analysis provided strong quantitative backing for the importance of spatial arrangement. Hypothesis H1 was supported: A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$) was established between the ranked efficiency of the material flow layout and the overall Milling Yield (MY), indicating that efficient spatial configuration significantly improves material conversion efficiency. Hypothesis H2 was also supported: A simulated t-test showed a statistically significant difference in Mean Milling Yield between the Integrated (Straight Line) layouts (69.3%) and the Fragmented (L-Shaped) layout (60%), validating that design aligned with Lean flow principles provides a fundamental structural advantage in operational performance and quality. Hypothesis H3 was strongly

supported: A statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p=0.000$) was found between employees' perceived satisfaction with spatial integration and their perceived productivity, confirming that poor spatial arrangement is a human factor constraint impacting efficiency and morale. Overall, the findings demonstrate that spatial inefficiencies, quantified through measurements and visualized through flow diagrams, are inextricably linked to structural quality deficits (high BRR) caused by non-ergonomic manual handling necessitated by fragmented layouts.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study successfully concludes that spatial integration is a critical, measurable factor significantly influencing the productivity and quality outcomes of rice mills in Adani, Enugu State, Nigeria. The operational failure, particularly the consistent inability to achieve industry benchmarks for Head Rice Ratio and Broken Rice Ratio, is a direct, quantifiable consequence of fragmented, non-Lean spatial layouts and inadequate inter-machine spacing, confirmed by the strong positive correlation between flow efficiency and Milling Yield ($r = 0.82$). Optimizing the physical arrangement, guided by Lean principles and informed by the operational realities and worker perceptions of crowding and difficult movement, presents the most critical and cost-effective opportunity for enhancing profitability and competitiveness in this vital agricultural sector. The research carries significant implications for professional practice and policy. Theoretically, the study extends the applicability of Industrial Architecture/Engineering and Lean Manufacturing principles to the specific demands of small-to-medium scale agro-processing in developing economies, validating that flow-based spatial design is a primary source of productivity advantage (Architectural Design of Production Facilities, Validation of Lean Principles in Local Contexts). Practically, the findings offer an evidence-based justification for mill owners to prioritize low-cost spatial and operational changes over immediate, massive technological investment, by identifying specific physical constraints (e.g., cramped workspaces, Mean=2.71) causing measurable quality deficits (Guidance for Mill Development). Furthermore, the results necessitate that policymakers incorporate spatial efficiency as a key criterion for project approval and financing (Basis for Policy and Funding), and include process flow and layout optimization training in vocational programs for managers (Training and Capacity Building). Based on these conclusions, the following actionable strategies are recommended for stakeholders.

a) Recommendations for Rice Mill Owners/Managers:

Implement Lean-Inspired Workflow Optimization: Redesign internal pathways to eliminate backtracking and minimize unnecessary material handling and transfer points to directly reduce Transportation Waste.

Prioritize Low-Cost Spatial Adjustments: Focus on immediate, high-impact interventions such as clearly marking pathways, reorienting mobile equipment, and reorganizing storage areas to free up necessary operational space and address low perception scores related to crowding and safety.

Adopt Worker-Informed Design Review: Actively involve mill workers in any layout planning process to validate proposed improvements and ensure the resulting layout supports efficient and safe operation (H3 validation).

Establish a Rigorous Maintenance Schedule: Institute a strict maintenance schedule to ensure machinery operates at optimal settings, minimizing breakdowns that exacerbate spatial bottlenecks and throughput issues.

b) Recommendations for Architectural Design:

Adopt a Process-Flow-Driven Layout: Designs must strictly adhere to either linear or optimized U-shaped layouts to ensure unidirectional material movement, minimizing cross-traffic and maximizing flow efficiency.

Design for Optimal Inter-Machine Distances and Working Ergonomics: Design specifications must explicitly define the minimum required distances between processing machines (parboiler, huller, polisher, destoner) to facilitate comfortable worker movement, safe material transfer, and easy access for maintenance, directly addressing the ergonomic deficiencies (Agwu et al., 2024).

Integrate Dedicated Storage and Staging Areas: Future designs must incorporate sufficient, dedicated storage space for raw materials, in-process materials, and finished goods, strategically located adjacent to the relevant processing stage to minimize unnecessary hauling (Transportation Waste).

Prioritize Vertical Integration (Where Feasible): Designers should explore multi-level configurations to utilize gravity for material transfer between processing stages, which reduces the reliance on energy-consuming conveyance systems and simplifies the overall workflow, while supporting local energy constraints.

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