

WORK ENVIRONMENT OF HOUSEKEEPING EMPLOYEES ON JOB PERFORMANCE, IN 3-5 STAR HOTELS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of work environment on employees' achievement in the housekeeping department of chosen 3-5 star hotels in Nairobi City County Kenya. This was done to propose the most comfortable and satisfying work environment for hotel employees to put maximum performance that will outshine their competitors.

Statement of the Problem: Work environment is a major hospitality concern globally. It affects the hotel industry because it is distinct from other industries and also has its own culture. In Nairobi, Kenya, star rated hotels are linked to housekeepers' musculoskeletal disorders, allergic reactions to chemicals and work overload. This is due to poor health and safety conditions, lack of adequate equipment and facilities, and harmony at workplace

Methodology: Descriptive survey was used and qualitative and quantitative research approaches were adopted. 3 - 5 star hotels were targeted and targeted respondents were top management and housekeeping staff. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides which were issued to 168 housekeeping employees.

Results of the Study: The study found that while most of the respondents had safe and hygienic workplaces, their jobs were not stressful and they did not work for long hours, some areas needed improvement like drainage blockages, old buildings compromising safety, lack of fire extinguishers in case of fire and inadequate environmental strategies in some hotels.

Policy Recommendation: The study recommended that employee health and safety should be enhanced through initiatives like regular health check-ups, ergonomic adjustments, and proper safety training.

Keywords: *work environment, housekeeping employees, health and safety, star rated hotels, job performance.*

INTRODUCTION

The International Labor Standards on Occupational Safety and Health has categorized hotel employees among the high risk groups. The hotel industry is exposed to unfavorable working environment due to its unique features as opposed to other industries. The housekeeping department is the keystone of a hotel. It takes care of cleanliness of the entire hotel and keeps a stock list and maintenance of all the accommodation and public areas. According to Garg and Alwar (2017), the work environment is important in an organization and it is seen as a motivator for improving performance. However, not many studies have focused on the effects of work environment of housekeeping department on performance in Kenya, specifically, the hotel industry.

Many studies show that hospitality and service employees work in an ever-changing work environment, which poses significant challenges to their performance. The primary drivers of stress for hotel housekeepers are high demands (work overload, time constraints, physical strain), inadequate resources and limited control caused by role conflicts. These findings and the coping mechanisms used by hotel housekeepers were described in depth by Chela-Alvarez, Bulilete, García-Buades, Ferrer-Perez, Llobera-Canaves, (2020). Panchanatham and Jayalakshmi (2016) pointed out that inadequate work conditions reduce the overall efficiency of the organization resulting in lower performance and greater costs. Previous investigators have mostly focused on different factors to improve employees' performance such as safety, working hours and job restructuring (Masadeh, Obeidat and Tarhini, 2016).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research determined whether work environment of housekeeping employees affects their performance in Nairobi's 3 - 5 star hotels. Previous studies suggest that a research gap seems to exist in hotel housekeeping workers' perceptions and expectations of good work environment. Cha and Carrier (2016) stated that staff understanding of where work is done and the atmosphere influences how they relate within the organization; exceptionally productive organizations typically offer unbelievable benefits that motivate employees, attracts them and retains them.

More existing research in Nairobi has targeted all hotels rather than specifically 3 - 5 star rated ones. This gap emphasizes the demand for a directed valuation of unsafe and unhealthy working environments and the resultant health hazards brought about in these bigger hotels. Such discoveries could be used to inform policy makers in the hotel industry so as to protect guests against the risks.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the effect of work environment on job performance of housekeeping employees in 3-5 star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Specific objective was to discover effect of health and safety on the performance of housekeeping employees in 3-5 star hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

RESEARCH HYPOTHEIS

There is no significant relationship between employee health and performance of housekeeping workers in 3-5 star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya.

THEORITICAL REVIEW/ FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the Job Demands Resources Theory (JD-R Theory) which explains how job characteristics influence employees' well-being and performance. It was introduced by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli. The model has over the years developed into Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). This theory assumes that work attributes are divided into two: job demands and job resources. According to them, job demands means material, sociable, or organisational components of work which help one to achieve work objectives and reduce stress like workload, complex tasks, long working hours, heavy lifting, interpersonal conflict, irregular working hours, emotional conditions related to work, conflict in roles and work settings that need accurate thinking (cognitive demand). Job demands can cause weariness and other health concerns; hence it is related with work stress.

Job resources are things that can potentially excite employees and result to positive benefits like improved employee performance. Examples are good relationships, participation in decision-making, social support, self-reliance and performance feedback. Furthermore, multiple studies, have demonstrated a link between vitality and job performance. Recent research suggests for workers to be visionary so as to regulate their energy for improved personal welfare and performance (Op den Kamp, Tims, Bakker and Demerouti, 2018). Applying this multilevel method, we can illustrate how management and administrators may assist workers minimise job strain, improve their happiness and job performance.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In an organizational context, performance means the scope of a member's contribution towards achieving the organization's objectives. Performance of hotel employees is especially important since they meet the customers directly and must ensure their satisfaction (Shik, 2017). According to Zhang (2016), employee performance is key in ascertaining hotel profitability because employees are one of the hotel's most fundamental assets, as they have direct interaction with the guests. Poor workplace design is associated with a decrease in business performance and a high level of employee stress, influencing their bodily, ideological and social health, hence, work performance (Saha, 2016).

A hazardous work surrounding in a health facility like inappropriate cabinetwork, badly planned workstations, inadequate air circulation, extreme noise, unsuitable lighting, not enough assistance from the supervisors, unfavourable work area, bad communication channels, inadequate protection regulations in cases of fire crises, and inadequate individual safeguarding gear, negatively affects employee productivity (Martin and Akpan, 2017). Previous studies suggest that a research gap seems to exist in hotel housekeeping workers' perceptions and expectations of good work environment. According to Chaudhry, Jariko, Mushtaque, Mahesar and Ghani (2017), when a company provides a comfortable work environment, workers will participate satisfactorily in order to accomplish company targets. Smith, (2017) also suggests that the physical environment of hotels has an influence on individual perception, relations between employees and ultimately productivity.

Hotel housekeeping is composed of skillfully cleaning and neatly tidying rooms, toilets and public areas. Qualitative research approves hotel housekeepers' (HHs) view of the connection between their occupation and their health concerns. According to Kensbock, Jennings, Bailey and Patiar (2016), hotel housekeepers noted that severe somatic requirements of their occupation gave them grief on day-to-day basis. Hsieh, Apostolopoulos and Sönmez (2016), interrogated hotel housekeepers, who connected musculoskeletal diseases (MSD) to repeated actions performed during business, and dry hands caused by cleaning substances. Rosemberg, McConnell, McCullagh, and Seng (2019), identified some familiar recurring diseases among hotel cleaners to include frequent back pains, migraines headaches, inflammation of the joints and high blood pressure. Besides, specific employment tasks demand uses of chemicals and sharpening devices, making employees prone to risks of damage and dangers (Srivastava, 2017).

HHs ordinarily seek health care for complicated problems other than musculoskeletal pain, but doctors often concentrate on the symptoms rather than the causes. Additionally, a given number of them ascribe symptoms of musculoskeletal problems to emotional or mental disturbances in women, and miss to effectively address the somatic condition (Valls Llobet and Mujeres, 2020).

Saha (2016) investigated employee fulfilment and performance then discovered that kitchen arrangement is one of the elements of employee satisfaction. Their survey also discovered that a poorly designed cooking place makes work more difficult and there are daily body pains, which influence performance. As a result, the right kitchen stuff and lay out, provides employees with an excellent and more effective work experience.

According to a research conducted by Paramitadewi (2017), workload affects employee performance. Workers carry extra workloads everywhere and this can lead to serious or even terminal illness. Working with such people day in and day out can be emotionally wearing. Previous research indicates that job overload causes stress when employees encounter either task quantity or difficulty (Kimura, Bande and Fernandez-Ferrín, 2018). Although early research on workers' health mainly concentrated on occurrence of bodily ailments, recent studies dealing with workers' mental well-being, or those connecting bodily and mental concerns are increasing noticeably. As task volume and difficulty increases, amount of work pressure rises respectively. High, monotonous workloads are major contributors to stress and weariness. Proactive health and safety management can assist organizations in avoiding costs associated with workplace accidents, hiring and training new staff to replace injured or departed ones (Segbenya and Yeboah, 2022).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

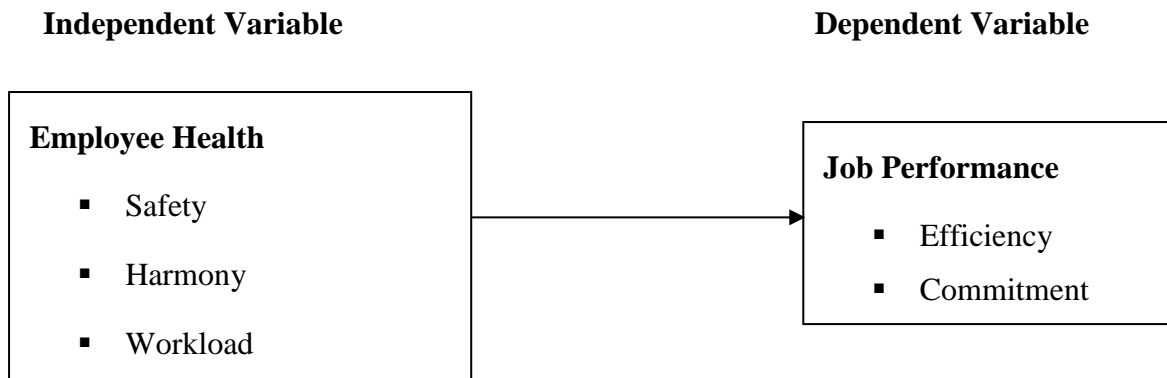


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Yamane formula was used for the sample size. Target population was 45, 3-5 star hotels housekeeping employees (180). Each of the 45 hotels had 4 participants, one supervisor and 3 operative staff. The confidence level was set at 95% leaving a 5% margin of error. The sample size was 124 respondents as illustrated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size, N = population size, and e = margin of error.

$$= \frac{180}{1 + 180(0.005)^2} = 124.136$$

The researcher took proportionate sample of each category of hotels, from which stratum was selected randomly. In each of the 45 hotels, respondents were the middle management (45 supervisors) and 3 operative staff. Meaning there were 4 respondents in each hotel, totaling to 180 respondents.

Data was assembled correctly, coded, and analyzed by use of regression analysis, descriptive statistics and comparison of means. Results were validated by use of descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation and variance. To understand the relationship between determinants of work environment and performance of housekeeping employees, correlation coefficient was calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective sought to determine impact of health and safety on the performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, County, Kenya. The study also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between employee health and performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya.

A sample of 45 classified hotels in Nairobi County was selected to participate in the study. Respondents sample size was 42 supervisors in the housekeeping departments, and 126 housekeeping staff. Out of the 45 selected hotels, 42 took part in the study. Out of the 168 housekeeping staff, 157 took part in the study. Housekeepers in the top management in a hotel mainly include the Director of housekeeping, the Executive housekeeper, the Assistant Housekeeper and the Laundry Manager as will be seen in the appendix. The questionnaires were administered to the rooms, laundry and public area operative staff, while the floor, linen and public area supervisors were interviewed.

Results from the correlation output pointed out significant and positive relationship between employee health and safety, and performance, ($r(118) = .692, P = .001$). This finding implies that the more health and safety of employees improves, the higher the performance also improves. Physical as well as mental health of employees is a significant aspect that determines their overall performance.

The study found that there was a significant and positive relationship between employee health and safety, and performance, ($r(118) = .692, P = .001$). The descriptive analysis revealed that the respondents did not generally consider their jobs as stressful. Neither did they feel that the working hours were long. The interviews with the key informants revealed that some hotels had adequate environmental strategies while others did not. Some of the measures in place were related to fire safety and noise control. The study also established that employee health and safety had a significant influence on job performance at 5% confidence level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

One hundred and twenty-six (126) questionnaires and forty-two (42) interview guides were administered to the respondents working in the 3–5-star hotels. Table 1 indicates the response rate for each category of respondents.

Table 1: Response Rate

| Instrument | Target | Response | Percentage |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Questionnaires | 126 | 120 | 95.2 |
| Interview Guide | 42 | 37 | 88.1 |
| Total | 168 | 157 | 93.5 |

Source: Research Data, 2023

The response rate for the questionnaires that were dully filled was 120 representing 95.2% while that of the interview guides was 37 representing 88.1%. The average response rate was 93.5%. According to Booker, Austin and Balasubramanian (2021), whereas there is no universally accepted response, a response rate of over 80% is considered as excellent.

The impact of health and safety on performance of housekeeping workers

The first objective sought to determine the impact of health and safety on performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya.

Descriptive Analysis for Health and Safety

The study participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to employee health and safety. A descriptive analysis was then conducted to summarize the responses, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for employee health and safety

| Employee health & safety | SD | D | U | A | SA | Mean | Std Dev |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------|---------|
| I have a safe and hygienic workplace | 2; 1.7% | 8; 6.7% | 52; 43.3% | 28; 23.3% | 30; 25% | 3.63 | 0.99 |
| My job causes unreasonable amount of stress | 28; 23.3% | 56; 46.7% | 27; 22.5% | 5; 4.2% | 4; 3.3% | 2.18 | 0.95 |
| My work goes for long hours than recommended | 19; 15.8% | 65; 54.2% | 30; 25% | 5; 4.2% | 1; 0.8% | 2.2 | 0.78 |

According to the findings, many of the respondents, 58(48.3%), agreed that their workplaces were safe and hygienic, 52(43.3%) were undecided, and 10(8.4%) had a contrary opinion (mean = 3.63, std. dev=0.99). On whether the kind of jobs the employees were doing resulted in an unreasonable amount of stress, many of the respondents, 84(70%) disagreed, 27(22.5%) were undecided, and 9(7.5%) agreed that their jobs caused them an unreasonable amount of stress (mean = 2.18, std. dev = 0.95). The respondents were also asked whether their work went on for longer hours than recommended; many of the respondents, 84(70%) disagreed, 30(25%) were undecided, and 6(5%) agreed (mean = 2.20, std. dev = 0.78).

Based on the responses, the findings show that their jobs were not stressful, and they did not work for long hours.

The study sought to further collaborate the quantitative data on employee health and safety from the questionnaires through interviewing the hotel management. The study sought to get the opinion of the respondents whether there were adequate environmental strategies at the hotels under study. On this question, there were mixed answers with majority of those interviewed, 67.6% affirming that there were adequate environmental strategies. One of the Supervisors stated:

‘Our commitment to guest safety is paramount. To ensure a secure environment, we have taken several proactive measures. Fire safety is a top priority; strategically placed fire extinguishers are easily accessible throughout the premises. In the event of any health emergencies, we maintain a state of readiness with dedicated ambulances on standby. Furthermore, our guests' well-being is attended to by always having doctors available on call. This comprehensive approach to safety underscores our dedication to providing a secure and supportive environment for both guests and staff.’

Concurring with the issue of whether the hotels had adequate environmental strategies that could influence the performance of the employees, another Supervisor stated:

'We are deeply committed to fostering an environment that positively influences the performance and well-being of both our guests and our dedicated staff members. Furthermore, recognizing the impact of a safe and calm atmosphere on work effectiveness, our noise control measures not only contribute to a peaceful stay for our guests but also provide an environment where our staff can perform at their best. This integrated approach underscores our dedication to elevating both guest satisfaction and staff performance within our hotel.'

On the contrary some of the supervisors expressed their reservations about the presence of adequate environmental strategies at their respective places of work station. One of them said:

'I have reservations on the adequacy of environmental strategies at this hotel. A case in point is the old buildings which urgently require renovation due to their aging condition. Old buildings can potentially compromise safety measures. These can lead to various challenges that impact performance and overall well-being of the employees as well as the guests.'

Another one pointed out that the existing environmental strategies at his place of work were not adequate, stating:

'The existing challenges, such as drainage blockages leading to an unfavorable work environment, and therefore underscore the importance of revisiting and enhancing our environmental strategies. These blockages can lead to waste accumulation hence posing a health challenge to the employees and the guests. The adverse impact of such conditions on the overall work environment and employee morale cannot be overlooked.'

Correlation Analysis between employee health and safety on performance

A correlation analysis was run to examine the relationship between health and safety, and performance of housekeeping employees. According to Kothari and Garg (2018), a correlation coefficient of 1 signifies a complete positive relationship, while -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship. Table 3 presents the correlation output.

Table 3: Health and safety, and Performance Pearson Correlation

| | | Health and safety |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Performance | Pearson Correlation | .692** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 120 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation output, the results indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between employee health and safety, and performance, ($r(118) = .692, P = .001$). This finding implies that as the health and safety of the employees improves, so does their performance. The physical as well as the mental health of employees is an important aspect that determines their overall performance.

Findings of correlation and regression analysis confirm Kaynak, Toklu, Elci, and Toklu (2016), argument, that work place health and safety policies are major factors of determining and improving job performance. Lu, X., Yu, and Shan (2022), also established that there was a positive relationship between employee mental health and job performance.

Another study by Rosenberg, McConnell, McCullagh and Seng (2019), found that a number of common chronic conditions are experienced by hotel cleaners, including chronic back pain, headache, arthritis and hypertension. Moreover, proactive health and safety management can assist organizations in avoiding the costs associated with workplace accidents and hiring and training new employees to replace injured or departed staff (Segbenya and Yeboah, 2022). By prioritizing health and safety, the hospitality industry can minimize these costs and optimize the performance of their existing employees.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between employee health and performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya.

To test the hypothesis, a linear regression analysis was run. The regression output is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Model Summary for Employee health and safety

| | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | |
|---|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| | | | | | R change | F change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F change |
| 1 | .692 | 0.478 | 0.474 | 0.3145 | 0.478 | 108.18 | 1 | 118 | .000 |

a Predictors: (Constant), Employee Health and safety

The findings presented in Table 4 explain the degree to which the predictor variable contributes to the overall model variability. The coefficient of determination, denoted by R Square and equal to 0.478, signifies that employee health contributed to employee job performance by approximately 47.8%. The remaining 52.2% can be attributed to other unaccounted factors in this model. Adjusted R Square provides an insight that, if the entire population were included in this study instead of a sample, the variance in the response would be 52.6% (1 - 0.474). Therefore, the study inferred that employee health exerts a significant moderate and positive influence on the employee job performance.

Table 5: Coefficients of Employee health and safety

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients B | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients Beta | t | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------|------|
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.083 | 0.13 | | 16.019 | .000 |
| | Employee Health | 0.407 | 0.039 | 0.692 | 10.401 | .000 |

a Dependent Variable: Performance

The coefficients output presented in Table 4.9 gives a beta value of 0.692, indicating that an increase by one unit in employee health results in a 69.2% improvement in performance. The model thus effectively predicts the impact of employee health on performance, with statistical significance at $P = .001$. The F ratio, $F(1, 118) = 108.18$; $P = .001$ was also significant. This implies a statistically significant impact of employee health on the performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was retained. This suggests a significant relationship between employee health and the performance of housekeeping workers in 3–5-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya.

With $r = 0.692$, $r^2 = 0.478$, $F(1, 118) = 108.18$ at $P = 0.001 < 0.05$, it was concluded that employee health and safety had a positive significant influence on employee job performance.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

| Hypothesis | Result | Reason |
|---|----------|------------|
| There is no significant relationship between employee health and safety and performance | Rejected | $P < 0.05$ |

CONCLUSIONS

The study focused on examining the effect of work environment on job performance. This was achieved through examining the effect of employee health and safety on job performance. The first objective was to determine the impact of health and safety on performance of housekeeping employees. From the analysis results, the study established the presence of a relative positive linear correlation between employee health and safety and job performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that based on the finding somewhat that a moderate positive linear correlation exists between housekeeping staff health and safety and their performance, it is

advisable for the hotels to prioritize and invest in comprehensive health and safety measures. Enhancing the well-being of housekeeping employees through initiatives such as regular health check-ups, ergonomic adjustments, and proper safety training can potentially improve employee job performance. By actively supporting the overall well-being of housekeeping employees, organizations can potentially experience improved performance outcomes and foster a more productive workforce. Since most of these hotels have working conditions that are not pleasing,

The Ministry of Tourism should arrange for regular trainings for maintaining operational standards in star rated hotels. Strong unions should be formed by hotel managers and other government organizations such as the Hoteliers Association of Kenya and Kenya Trade Union, to assist reduce health risks in the housekeeping division and to give housekeepers a voice.

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