

SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT KERICHO COUNTY REFERRAL HOSPITAL, KENYA

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Publication Date: August 2026

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: This study sought to examine the influence of a safe work environment on employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital, Kenya.

Short Introduction of the Problem Statement: Public hospitals in Kenya continue to grapple with occupational hazards, inconsistent safety training and gaps in the provision of personal protective equipment, raising concerns over the extent to which workplace safety measures support the performance of healthcare workers.

Methodology: The study was anchored on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory and adopted a correlational research design, targeting 208 staff at Kericho County Referral Hospital, from whom 137 respondents were selected using the Yamane formula and stratified random sampling. Primary data were collected using a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, which was pilot-tested using 14 respondents at Longisa County Referral Hospital in Bomet County. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis in SPSS.

Results: The study established a positive and statistically significant relationship between a safe work environment and employee performance ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis further established that a safe work environment had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.245$, $p = 0.022$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusion: A safe work environment, through adherence to safety protocols, provision of adequate protective equipment, and regular safety training, significantly enhances employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital.

Recommendation: Hospital management should enforce strict occupational safety protocols, ensure the regular provision of personal protective equipment, and institute a dedicated occupational safety committee to strengthen workplace safety oversight.

Keywords: *Safe Work Environment, Employee Performance, Occupational Safety, Job Demands-Resources Theory*

INTRODUCTION

A safe work environment refers to the physical, psychological, and organizational conditions within a workplace that protect employees from occupational hazards, injuries, illnesses, and work-related stress while enabling them to perform their duties effectively (Dessler, 2022). It encompasses the provision of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), safe working procedures, hazard identification and risk assessment, infection prevention and control measures, emergency preparedness, ergonomic workstations, and policies that safeguard employees from workplace violence, harassment, and discrimination (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). Unlike traditional occupational safety approaches that focused primarily on compliance with safety regulations, contemporary workplace safety emphasizes a comprehensive approach that integrates physical safety, psychological well-being, and organizational health (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). The establishment of a safe work environment enhances employee performance by minimizing workplace accidents, reducing absenteeism, improving employee morale, increasing job satisfaction, and fostering a culture of safety and accountability that promotes efficiency and quality service delivery (Goh et al., 2022).

Globally, a safe work environment has become a fundamental component of organizational performance, particularly within healthcare institutions where employees are routinely exposed to biological, chemical, physical, ergonomic, and psychosocial hazards. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) advocate the implementation of comprehensive occupational safety and health management systems to protect healthcare workers and improve healthcare outcomes (ILO, 2022; WHO, 2022). Hospitals in developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have invested significantly in infection prevention programmes, workplace violence prevention policies, ergonomic interventions, and employee safety training to reduce occupational risks (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work [EU-OSHA], 2022; WHO, 2022). These interventions have contributed to lower occupational injury rates, reduced absenteeism, enhanced employee engagement, and improved quality of patient care (Cooper & Dewe, 2021).

In Africa, the importance of a safe work environment in enhancing employee performance is increasingly recognized, particularly in public healthcare institutions that operate under significant financial and human resource constraints (Adebayo, 2020). Studies conducted in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Ethiopia indicate that healthcare workers frequently encounter occupational hazards associated with inadequate personal protective equipment, poor infrastructure, heavy workloads, workplace violence, and limited occupational safety training (Chersich et al., 2021). These challenges contribute to workplace injuries, burnout, absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, and lower employee productivity (Moyo & Zungu, 2022).

In East Africa, and particularly in Kenya, healthcare workers operate in demanding environments characterized by increasing patient loads, exposure to infectious diseases, inadequate medical supplies, workforce shortages, and occasional workplace violence (Muturi & Ombui, 2021). These conditions expose employees to numerous occupational risks that negatively affect both employee well-being and organizational performance (Kenya Ministry of Health, 2022). To address these challenges, many public hospitals have strengthened occupational health and safety programmes

through infection prevention and control measures, provision of personal protective equipment, emergency preparedness plans, safety committees, and continuous workplace safety training (Kenya Ministry of Health, 2022). Despite these efforts, many county referral hospitals continue to experience inadequate safety infrastructure, overcrowded facilities, limited financial resources, and inconsistent implementation of occupational safety standards (Muturi & Ombui, 2021).

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively and efficiently accomplish assigned duties and responsibilities in accordance with organizational goals, standards, and expectations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). It encompasses employees' ability to utilize their knowledge, skills, competencies, and available organizational resources to achieve desired work outcomes while maintaining quality, productivity, and professionalism (Dessler, 2022). In healthcare settings, employee performance extends beyond task completion to include the provision of safe, timely, patient-centered, and high-quality healthcare services. It is commonly assessed using both behavioral and outcome-based measures such as productivity, job satisfaction, employee commitment, quality of service delivery, patient satisfaction, attendance, and adherence to professional standards (Aguinis, 2023).

Effective employee performance demonstrates an organization's ability to optimize its human resources by creating conditions that enable employees to perform their responsibilities efficiently, consistently, and safely while contributing to organizational success. High employee performance is reflected through increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, stronger employee commitment, improved quality of healthcare service delivery, enhanced patient satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and greater organizational effectiveness (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Dessler, 2022). According to Aguinis (2023), organizations that invest in supportive work environments, employee development, occupational safety, and effective performance management systems are more likely to achieve superior employee performance and sustainable organizational outcomes. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2023) argue that employees who operate in environments characterized by adequate resources, supportive leadership, effective communication, and safe working conditions exhibit higher motivation, stronger engagement, greater innovation, and improved service quality. Within public healthcare institutions such as Kericho County Referral Hospital, employee performance is therefore essential for ensuring efficient healthcare delivery, improving patient outcomes, enhancing operational efficiency, and achieving the hospital's strategic objectives.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kenya's public healthcare sector, particularly county referral hospitals, remains a critical pillar in delivering essential medical services to the majority of the population. Kericho County Referral Hospital, as a key referral facility, plays a vital role in managing complex cases and high patient volumes across the county. Despite this strategic importance, many public hospitals continue to grapple with challenges of employee performance, largely driven by unsafe work environments characterized by inadequate personal protective equipment, exposure to occupational hazards, workplace injuries, poor infection prevention measures, and insufficient workplace safety training. According to the World Health Organization (2022), healthcare workers account for approximately 14% of all reported occupational diseases globally, despite representing less than 3% of the world's population. In Kenya, occupational safety remains a major concern within public hospitals due to workforce shortages and increasing patient demand. The Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union (KMPDU) reported that 65% of healthcare professionals working in public hospitals experience burnout, while many continue to express

dissatisfaction with workplace safety, excessive workloads, and inadequate working conditions (KMPDU, 2023). Additionally, Kenya has approximately 1.9 skilled health workers per 1,000 population, which remains below the level recommended for achieving Universal Health Coverage, thereby increasing workload pressures and occupational risks among healthcare workers (Ministry of Health, 2023). These conditions have been associated with reduced productivity, absenteeism, declining job satisfaction, low staff commitment, and compromised quality of healthcare service delivery. Therefore, the study sought to assess the influence of a safe work environment on employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, proposed by Demerouti and Bakker, which explains how workplace characteristics affect employee well-being and performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). The theory divides workplace variables into job demands, elements of the job that call for sustained effort and, if left unchecked, can result in burnout, and job resources, the organisational, physical, and social elements that support workers in meeting their objectives, lowering demands, and sustaining performance.

According to the JD-R Theory, job demands give rise to strain and burnout unless they are offset by adequate resources, such as a secure workplace and supportive safety measures (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). A safe work environment functions as a key job resource: hospital safety protocols, access to personal protective equipment, and regular safety training reduce the physical and psychological demands placed on healthcare workers by lowering exposure to occupational hazards, thereby preserving employees' capacity to perform their duties effectively (Bakker & De-Vries, 2021).

Job Demands-Resources Theory is relevant to the present study, as it provides the theoretical foundation for safe work environment as the study's independent variable. Through its emphasis on the balance between demands and resources, the theory frames workplace safety measures as resources that buffer healthcare workers against the strain inherent in high-pressure hospital settings, thereby sustaining concentration, reducing absenteeism, and improving overall employee performance.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Creating a safe workplace requires reducing risks and safeguarding employees' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Wakio and Misango (2019) further found that long working hours negatively affected staff retention, while good job design and teamwork improved it. Wakio and Misango (2019) examined how the work environment influenced staff retention in Level Four and Five hospitals in Machakos County, considering 742 employees, from which 86 were selected using stratified and purposive sampling. Using regression and descriptive analysis, the study found that long working hours negatively affected retention, while effective job design and teamwork influenced it positively. Although the study concentrated on staff retention rather than performance, it underscores the broader significance of a supportive and secure work environment in shaping healthcare workforce outcomes, leaving a contextual gap that the present study sought to address by examining how a safe working environment, specifically, affects employee performance.

Khoso, Kazi, Ahmedani, and Khoso (2016) investigated the effect of workplace conditions on employee performance in private hospitals in Hyderabad, Pakistan, focusing on physical

workspace, task-related tools, and supervisory support, with data drawn from twenty structured questionnaires and secondary sources through simple random sampling. Correlation analysis showed that all three factors were positively associated with employee performance, and the authors recommended that hospital management enhance physical workspaces to improve productivity. However, the study's focus on private hospitals in a different national context, and its emphasis on physical workspace and supervisory support rather than formal safety protocols, leaves room for further exploration of workplace safety specifically within public healthcare settings such as Kericho County Referral Hospital.

Bogonko, Simiyu, and Omondi (2024) examined the relationship between green occupational health and safety practices and the performance of devolved healthcare services in Kenya, establishing that such practices had a positive and significant influence on performance outcomes. The study's focus on devolved healthcare services broadly, rather than on healthcare worker safety specifically, particularly exposure to infectious diseases and other occupational hazards, represents a gap that the present study sought to address. Collectively, these studies confirm that workplace safety is consistently associated with improved employee outcomes across healthcare settings in Pakistan, Kenya, and the wider region. However, they were largely confined to staff retention, physical workspace conditions in private facilities, or broader occupational health and safety practices, leaving a contextual and conceptual gap regarding how a safe work environment, specifically adherence to safety protocols, provision of protective equipment, and safety training, influences employee performance within a public county referral hospital in Kenya. This study sought to address this gap by examining the influence of a safe work environment on employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the study illustrates the relationship between safe work environment, the independent variable, and employee performance, the dependent variable.

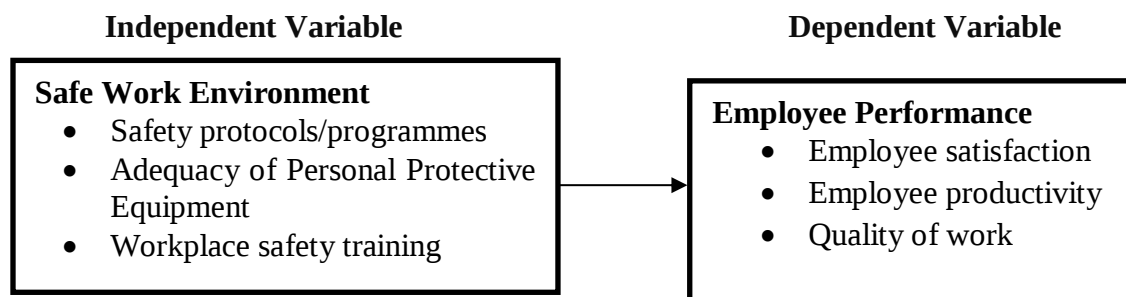


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design, appropriate for examining the relationship between safe work environment and employee performance without manipulating the variables. The study was conducted at Kericho County Referral Hospital, Kenya, a key referral facility characterised by a diverse workforce, high patient volumes, and varying occupational demands. The target population comprised 208 respondents, including 85 nurses, 32 doctors, 24 administrators, 13 medical technicians, and 54 subordinate staff. The Yamane formula, with a standard error of 5%, was applied to arrive at a sample size of 137 respondents, drawn

proportionately across the five employee categories through stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness.

A structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale was used to collect primary data on safe work environment and employee performance. A pilot test involving 14 questionnaires, approximately 10% of the intended sample, was conducted at Longisa County Referral Hospital in Bomet County, a facility with operational characteristics similar to those of the main study site. Content and face validity were established through review by the research supervisors and healthcare specialists, who assessed the relevance and clarity of the items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.7 applied to determine acceptable internal consistency (Izah, Sylva, & Hait, 2023); the safe work environment construct recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.854, employee performance recorded 0.798, and the overall instrument recorded 0.863, all exceeding the acceptable threshold. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26.0, combining descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, with inferential statistics comprising Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis.

FININGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 137 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, out of which 111 were correctly filled and returned, resulting in a response rate of 81%. According to Babbie (2012), a response rate of 65% or higher is considered sufficient for analysis; the 81% response rate obtained was, therefore, adequate for data analysis. Table 1 presents the response rate for the study.

Table 1: Response Rate

	Sample Size	Completely Filled	Non-Response
Frequency	137	111	26
Percentage	100%	81%	19%

Demographic Characteristics

The study collected demographic information on years of service and job position to contextualise the findings and assess the representativeness of the sample. Table 2 presents the findings.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Years of Service	Less than 1 Year	20	18%
	2-3 Years	28	25%
	3-5 Years	26	23%
	5-10 Years	11	10%
	More than 10 Years	26	23%
Job Position	Nurse	30	27%
	Doctor	25	23%
	Administrator	8	7%
	Medical Technician	16	14%
	Support Staff	32	29%

Results as presented in Table 2 depict that 25% of the respondents had worked for 2–3 years, 23% for 3–5 years, 23% for over 10 years, 18% for less than one year, and 10% for 5–10 years. This range suggests a mix of new and experienced employees, which is beneficial for understanding both current motivational practices and their evolution over time. The presence of long-serving

staff provides institutional memory, while newer employees offer insights into contemporary workplace experiences.

In terms of job position, the largest group of respondents were support staff (29%), followed by nurses (27%), doctors (23%), medical technicians (14%), and administrators (7%). This composition indicates that the study captured a wide spectrum of professional categories within the hospital, ensuring comprehensive representation across clinical, technical, and administrative functions. Such diversity enhances the credibility of the results, as perceptions and experiences of a safe work environment may differ depending on job category and role complexity.

Overall, the demographic profile of respondents demonstrates a balanced and representative sample of employees at Kericho County Referral Hospital. The mix of professional cadres and tenure strengthens the validity of the findings by ensuring that the assessment of the safe work environment and its influence on employee performance reflects the varied realities and experiences of the hospital's workforce. This diversity also enhances the study's generalizability to similar public health institutions within Kenya.

Descriptive Statistics

Safe Work Environment

The study sought to assess the level of agreement of respondents on statements relating to a safe work environment at Kericho County Referral Hospital. Table 3 presents the findings.

Table 3: Safe Work Environment

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
The hospital has safety protocols that each employee must adhere to.	49	39	10	2	0	4.351	0.767
The hospital follows safety protocols in containment of diseases.	48	39	6	4	3	4.345	0.692
The hospital has adequate personal protective equipment to improve the safety of healthcare workers.	44	38	7	7	4	4.273	0.689
The hospital ensures that healthcare professionals' welfare is taken care of to guarantee their safety.	62	32	3	3	0	4.424	0.670
The hospital ensures that workplace safety training is conducted regularly.	40	42	9	3	6	4.372	1.037
The hospital has a comprehensive incident reporting system to reduce risk of recurrence in the work station.	53	44	3	0	0	4.145	0.807
Overall Mean and SD						4.318	0.777

The findings indicate that 49% of respondents strongly agreed that their hospital has safety protocols that each employee must adhere to, 39% agreed, 10% were neutral, and 2% disagreed, with none strongly disagreeing. The mean was 4.351, and the standard deviation was 0.767. This suggests that most employees acknowledge the existence of well-defined safety protocols within the hospital, which are crucial in minimizing workplace risks. Adherence to such protocols

enhances employee confidence and promotes efficient performance in high-risk healthcare environments.

The findings further indicate that 48% of respondents strongly agreed that the hospital follows safety protocols in the containment of diseases, 39% agreed, 6% were neutral, 4% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed, with a mean of 4.345 and a standard deviation of 0.692. This implies that the hospital's disease control measures are perceived as effective and well implemented, ensuring both patient and staff safety. Effective containment procedures foster trust, reduce occupational exposure, and promote operational efficiency in healthcare delivery.

Additionally, 44% of respondents strongly agreed that the hospital has adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to improve worker safety, 38% agreed, 7% were neutral, 7% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.273, and the standard deviation was 0.689. This suggests that while most employees view PPE availability as sufficient, a small portion experiences occasional shortage. Adequate PPE provision is vital for safeguarding healthcare workers, particularly during infectious disease outbreaks, and contributes significantly to employee morale, confidence, and performance. The findings also show that 62% of respondents strongly agreed that the hospital ensures healthcare professionals' welfare is taken care of to guarantee their safety, 32% agreed, 3% were neutral, and 3% disagreed, with none strongly disagreeing. The mean was 4.424, and the standard deviation was 0.670. This demonstrates a strong consensus that the hospital prioritizes employee welfare and safety. A focus on employee welfare creates a secure and supportive work environment, which enhances motivation, commitment, and productivity among healthcare workers.

Moreover, 40% of respondents strongly agreed that their hospital conducts regular workplace safety training, 42% agreed, 9% were neutral, 3% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.372, and the standard deviation was 1.037. This indicates that periodic training sessions are conducted to strengthen employee preparedness for safety risks. Regular training fosters awareness, enhances compliance with safety standards, and equips employees with the skills to manage emergencies effectively, thereby reducing accidents and promoting a culture of prevention.

Finally, 53% of respondents strongly agreed that their hospital has a comprehensive incident reporting system to reduce recurring workplace risks, 44% agreed, and 3% were neutral, with none disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The mean was 4.145, and the standard deviation was 0.807. This suggests that the hospital has established effective incident reporting mechanisms that promote accountability, transparency, and learning from safety-related events. A robust reporting culture enables management to identify hazards and develop proactive strategies to prevent future occurrences. The overall mean of 4.318 and a standard deviation of 0.777 imply that respondents generally agreed that a safe work environment positively influences employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a strong level of agreement among employees that safety measures are effective and consistently enforced.

These findings imply that the establishment of a safe and secure work environment is vital in promoting both the physical and psychological well-being of employees. Safety protocols, disease containment procedures, adequate PPE, and regular training foster a sense of protection, enhance concentration, and reduce absenteeism. These results are consistent with Achieng and Mwangi (2020), who found that a safe and supportive work environment improves employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Similarly, Omondi and Kihoro (2021) reported

that hospitals that prioritize occupational health and safety experience higher productivity and reduced staff turnover. Therefore, ensuring a safe work environment not only protects healthcare workers from harm but also enhances efficiency, trust, and overall service delivery within healthcare institutions.

Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on Employee Performance of the Kericho County Referral Hospital. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Employee Performance

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
We are satisfied with the motivation provided by the hospital.	0	5	2	29	64	2.403	0.978
We are satisfied with the facilities and resources that we have in the hospital.	0	5	8	33	54	2.307	0.938
The hospital has enabled us to improve in efficiency and service delivery.	9	6	4	43	38	2.145	0.907
There is an improvement in productivity among the employees.	11	5	7	34	43	2.387	0.969
We are committed to the work given to us by the hospital.	0	11	6	35	48	2.005	0.977
We have improved in quality of medical service provision in the hospital.	0	4	7	39	50	2.177	0.954
We have enhanced the patient uptake and treatment resulting to better medical service provision in the hospital.	37	44	16	3	0	4.145	0.807
Overall Mean and SD						2.510	0.933

The findings indicate that none of the respondents strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the motivation provided by the hospital, 5% agreed, 2% were neutral, 29% disagreed, and 64% strongly disagreed, with a mean of 2.403 and a standard deviation of 0.978. This suggests that most employees are dissatisfied with the motivational strategies adopted by the hospital. Lack of adequate motivation may lead to low morale and reduced commitment, which can negatively affect employee performance and overall service delivery.

Regarding satisfaction with the facilities and resources available in the hospital, none of the respondents strongly agreed, 5% agreed, 8% were neutral, 33% disagreed, and 54% strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.307, with a standard deviation of 0.938. This implies that a majority of employees feel that the hospital's facilities and resources are inadequate to support efficient service delivery. Limited resources can hinder employees' ability to perform their duties effectively and may contribute to job dissatisfaction.

Concerning the hospital's contribution to improved efficiency and service delivery, 9% strongly agreed, 6% agreed, 4% were neutral, 43% disagreed, and 38% strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.145, and the standard deviation was 0.907. This shows that most employees do not perceive the hospital as having significantly enhanced efficiency and service delivery. This could be attributed to insufficient tools, staff shortages, or limited institutional support mechanisms.

In relation to improvement in productivity among employees, 11% strongly agreed, 5% agreed, 7% were neutral, 34% disagreed, and 43% strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.387, with a standard deviation of 0.969. This suggests that employees perceive low productivity levels, possibly due to inadequate motivation and limited resources. Enhancing productivity requires a supportive environment that encourages innovation, teamwork, and recognition of performance.

The findings also reveal that none of the respondents strongly agreed that they are committed to the work given to them by the hospital, 11% agreed, 6% were neutral, 35% disagreed, and 48% strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.005, with a standard deviation of 0.977. This indicates that employee commitment levels are low, which may affect service quality and consistency. A lack of commitment is often linked to poor work conditions, limited growth opportunities, and ineffective leadership.

Regarding improvement in the quality of medical service provision, none of the respondents strongly agreed, 4% agreed, 7% were neutral, 39% disagreed, and 50% strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.177, and the standard deviation was 0.954. This suggests that employees perceive little to no improvement in service quality within the hospital. Ensuring quality service delivery requires adequate staffing, proper training, and improved resource allocation. Finally, 37% of respondents strongly agreed that they have enhanced patient uptake and treatment resulting in better medical service provision, 44% agreed, 16% were neutral, and 3% disagreed, with none strongly disagreeing. The mean was 4.145, and the standard deviation was 0.807. This indicates that employees acknowledge positive improvements in patient care and treatment outcomes, possibly due to teamwork and better patient engagement.

The overall mean of 2.510 and a standard deviation of 0.933 imply that, generally, employees expressed low satisfaction and performance levels, although there are isolated areas of improvement, such as patient treatment outcomes. The moderate variation in responses suggests shared perceptions of institutional challenges across departments. These findings align with Mutua and Karanja (2019), who found that lack of adequate motivation, poor work conditions, and limited resources hinder employee performance in public hospitals. Similarly, Otieno and Wekesa (2020) noted that improvements in employee motivation and resource allocation directly enhance commitment, efficiency, and service quality. Therefore, strengthening motivational strategies, upgrading facilities, and promoting supportive leadership could significantly improve employee performance and overall healthcare outcomes.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation is a technique for investigating the relationship between two variables. The study adopted Pearson correlation analysis, which measures the strength of association between the two variables.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

		Safe Work Environment
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.541**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	111

From the findings in Table 7, the study established a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation between safe work environment and employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital ($r = 0.541$; $p = 0.000$). This implies that adherence to safety protocols, availability of protective equipment and regular safety training are moderately associated with improved employee performance. The findings are consistent with the findings of Wakio and Misango (2019) and Khoso, Kazi, Ahmedani, and Khoso (2016) who established that safety and supportive working conditions are positively associated with healthcare worker outcomes.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.564	.145		.389	.796
Safe Work Environment	.245	.104	.179	2.356	.022

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The interpretation of the findings follows the regression model:

$$Y = 0.564 + 0.245X$$

Where;

Y = Employee Performance

X = Safe Work Environment.

According to the intercept ($\beta_0 = 0.564$), when safe work environment is held constant, the baseline value of employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital is 0.564. A unit increase in safe work environment would lead to a 0.245 improvement in employee performance ($\beta = 0.179$, $t = 2.356$, $p = 0.022$). This means that adherence to hospital safety protocols, provision of adequate protective equipment, and regular safety training significantly enhance employee confidence and performance, consistent with the Job Demands-Resources Theory (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023), which posits that workplace resources such as safety measures buffer employees against job demands and reduce burnout. Given the significance value of 0.022, which is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis that safe work environment has no statistically significant influence on employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital was rejected, confirming that safe work environment has a statistically significant positive influence on employee performance.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that enforcing workplace safety protocols helps prevent occupational hazards and promotes a secure environment for healthcare workers. The provision of adequate personal protective equipment and regular safety training enhances employee confidence and reduces work-related injuries, while maintaining safety standards and prioritising staff welfare improves employee focus, morale, and productivity. The study, therefore, concluded that a safe work environment has a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance at Kericho County Referral Hospital.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that Kericho County Referral Hospital implement strict occupational safety protocols in compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act. In addition, the study recommended that the hospital should ensure that all staff receive regular safety training, have consistent access to adequate personal protective equipment, and work in an environment that prioritises safety and hygiene. In addition, a dedicated occupational safety committee should be established to monitor compliance, report potential hazards, and oversee corrective measures, thereby reducing accidents, absenteeism, and stress, and ultimately improving service delivery and performance outcomes.

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