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Original Article

## Effect of Occupational Health and Safety on Performance of National Government Administrative Officers in Nandi County

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### Date Published: ABSTRACT

20 July 2022 The study aimed to examine the effect of occupational health and Safety (OHS) on employee performance. The variables in this study draw from Herzberg's theory, Goal-freedom alertness theory, and the systems theory. Descriptive and exploratory research designs were used to establish the effect of work conditions on the performance of NGAOs in Nandi County, Kenya. The target respondents for the study were County Commissioner, Deputy County Commissioner, Assistant County commissioner and Chiefs in the County. One hundred three respondents were obtained through random sampling and convenience sampling from a population of 139 National Government Administrative Officers (NGAO). The questionnaires were then administered to the respondents and allowed fourteen days before the responses were collected. The respondents were requested to participate and show their willingness to contribute to the items in the questionnaire. The collected data were coded and analysed using the mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistics used regression analysis. Frequency tables, percentages, pie charts and bar graphs were used to present the analysed data. The results of the study showed that the majority of NGAO employees were male, chiefs in designation, aged 36-49 years, married and had been in employment for at least 10 years. The findings of the study showed a strong positive relationship between occupational health and safety and employee performance ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The regression model also shows that OHS was positively associated with employee performance ( $\beta = 0.232$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Ethical considerations were observed and respondents were made to understand that the findings were only to be used for academic purposes only. The findings of the study have an implication for Kenyan public sector policymakers on the need to improve the working conditions of national government administrative officers.

**Keywords:**  
*Employee Performance, Occupational Health and Safety, National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) and Nandi County.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today, organisations around the world are not only concerned about profits but also customer satisfaction. Besides technological advancement, these organisations realise that employees are important resources in creating profits and satisfying customers. The working environment, as well as terms and conditions of employment, have significant impacts on employee performance (Fletchl, 2010). Academics and scholars are increasingly concerned about the impact of work conditions on the performance of individual employees. Working conditions impact workers' performance negatively or positively. The nature and vibrancy of workplaces are significantly impacted by mental health and well-being, work activities, training and skills, and the work-life balance of employees (Inuwa, 2016). It is expected for a positive work environment to engender satisfied, committed and engaged employees.

Most global organisations continue to optimise workplace management and employee performance to create a conducive workplace. According to Oluoch (2015) and Sawe (2013), the productivity of employees, their performance, their safety as well as their health, concentration and commitment, and their satisfaction with the jobs they perform are dependent on the environment within their workplaces. Employees are likely to suffer mentally and physically and subsequently become stressed, anxious, depressed, alcoholic, and hypertensive

when exposed to an unhealthy working environment (Sawe, 2013).

Public sector organisations just like for-profit firms are concerned about performance improvement. However, there is scanty information relating to strategies and techniques for employee performance in the public sector. The bureaucracies of governments have been largely associated with wastage of resources and inefficiencies (Ma, 2017). Yet, there is room for public managers to reverse the inefficiencies of employees into better outcomes for citizen satisfaction (Zhia et al., 2015). It not only has to involve better organisation of work and work activities but also working time and work-life balance. Nonetheless, high-performance work environments are associated with well-skilled and trained employees (Bashir *et al.*, 2020). On the inverse, it implies that workplaces with poor work conditions are more likely to witness a higher rate of absenteeism, staff attrition, and poor work performance.

Employees tend to perform more when guaranteed better health, safety, and well-being (Tesfu, 2019). The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 2004 (OHS Act) establishes a wide framework for promoting and maintenance of safety to avoid work-related injuries and sickness. Employees who are healthy and safe are more productive, which leads to increased investment in safety policies to avoid accidents, which leads to even more productivity advantages (Masadeh *et al.*, 2016). Organisations that invest in high-performance health and safety

procedures might experience actual productivity improvements.

In Kenya, problems of poor employee performance continue to plague the public sector (World Bank Report, 2016). The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government in Kenya is responsible for national security and internal affairs. It is important that the ministry maintain the excellent work conditions of its employees for greater organisational performance. The main factors that influence employee performance in the country are largely physical and behavioural. Physical components relate to the connection that office occupants have with the environment in terms of layout and comfort of the workplace. On the other hand, the behavioural environment has more to do with interaction and distraction (Gachui *et al.*, 2020).

The success of the Kenyan public sector is hinged on efficient service delivery, higher performance, and proper planning. It was modelled from ILO's universal standard of classification of service institutions which are innately private-sector centric. Academic and scholars have extensively studied the performance of the private sector organisation with recommendations on improvements of physical work conditions considering spatial arrangements, lighting, technology, and office furniture (Ali *et al.*, 2013; Kagwi, 2018). Human resource managers also have weighed in on employees' health and safety as well as communication feedback (Inuwa, 2016; Kukiqi, 2017). Just like the national police service in Kenya, the public administration sector has issues to address on safety and security as these affect their work environment and productivity (Barasa, 2017). Apart from safety and security, there is also a need to promote greater internal communication to maximise employee performance.

Kenya's public sector desire for efficiency and excellence has resulted in a slew of internal management issues, including low employee job satisfaction, low morale, theft, and absenteeism. According to KIPPRA (2014), the Kenyan public sector has experienced negative growth from independence with mismanagement, embezzlement of public resources and funds, low wages caused by increasing job losses, and diminishing quality

products and output. There is a need to understand the working conditions of Kenyan public sector employees by investigating their physical conditions, health and safety, and communication platforms.

Nandi County is located in the Rift Valley region of Kenya. Kenyan counties were created under the New Kenyan Constitution (2010) and it required the establishment of sub-national governments to ensure greater governance and delivery of services closer to the citizens. Administratively, the counties are led by the county commissioners and power follows a protocol down to the assistant chiefs. The working environment of national government administrative officers in the County is influenced much by the physical conditions and the relationships with citizens. The public officers are tasked with delivering government services to the citizens effectively. This study aimed to establish how the working conditions affect the performance of public administrators under the National Government Administrative Officers in Nandi County.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Employee work environment in Kenya has been extensively studied. Particularly, scholars and academics in management and business fields have explored widely the influence of work environment on employee performance in the private sector (Ali *et al.*, 2013; Mokaya *et al.*, 2013; Sawe, 2013; Taghipour *et al.*, 2015). However, little information is available on the effect of working conditions on the performance of employees in the department of Interior and Public Administration in Kenya (Aluvisia, 2016; Barasa, 2017; Mboi, 2014). The department is largely involved in service delivery to citizens and the pressure to deliver has increased in the present times than before. For efficiency and effective service delivery, there is a need to investigate and fill scholarly gaps on the effect of physical work conditions, OHS, and internal communication in the Kenyan public administration sector.

Moreover, as national government administrative officers continue to determinedly implement government policies and initiatives, it is important that their physical and behavioural environment be

well understood. Their workplaces have policies, rules, culture, resources, working relationships, and physical conditions which affect their performance. Modern human resource management has shifted attention towards improving the working environment as most workers can suffer from chronic stress. There is sufficient empirical data linking job satisfaction and organisational commitment to working conditions (Boyle, 2006). This study investigated the effect of working conditions on how NGAOs perform their assignments and duties in Nandi County

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study purposed to examine how occupational health and safety affect the performance of National Government Administrative Officers in Nandi County

### **Justification and Significance**

This study forms the foundation for the study of work conditions of national government administrative officers in Kenya; hence it is unique. The variables; physical conditions, OHS, and internal organisational communication were chosen because they represent key facets of the work conditions of employees, especially in the manufacturing sector. Existing information on the work conditions of Kenyan public servants needs to be expanded and validated by examining data from counties. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to select a county to collect data from and generalise findings. Nandi County forms the basis of this study to represent the other 47 counties of Kenya.

The study of employee conditions among national government administrative officers in Nandi County was critical in generalising the study to the wider public sector human resource programs. It informed the design, implementation, and evaluation of employee-friendly programs and work environments to ensure that they always remain satisfied. Human resource managers (HRM) in the public sector obtained valuable information from this study on the leadership and management of employees. The study guided the capacity of policymakers to improve the work environment of national government administrative officers. Moreover, the study contributed to a body of

knowledge on working conditions and employee performance as well as established the research gaps.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was conducted in Nandi County among the provincial administrators from the county commissioners to the chiefs and assistant chiefs.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Goal-Freedom Alertness Theory**

The proponent of this theory was Kerr (1954), who suggested that workers will perform better in an environment where supervisors and managers eliminate accidents, hazards, and illnesses.

According to Oluoch (2015), the significant loss resulting from occupational-related illnesses in industries leads to deaths and accidents. The safety of workers largely depends on managers and supervisors' commitment to eliminating dangers, diseases, and accidents. This theory will be relevant in this study as it relates to occupational health and safety in the public administration sector. This study drew from the theory given that the dangers posed by physical conditions and worker pre-occupation will matter directly to activities undertaken by NGAO. This study utilised Goal-Freedom Alertness Theory to showcase how occupational safety and health can significantly influence employee performance.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Aluvisia (2016) examined the factors that influenced employee performance in the Kenya National Highways Authority, Kenya. The author utilised a descriptive survey design. The study population was 530, and the author obtained a stratified random sample of 159 employees who responded to questionnaires. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. The results of the study showed that the factors that influenced the performance of employees were rewards and incentives, training, and transparency in recruitment. The author left a gap in the use of descriptive survey design and the choice of variables to represent employee work conditions.



Barasa (2017) studied how the work environment affected the performance of security officers in the National Police Service in Kenya. From a population of 1500 police officers, the author obtained a stratified sample of 150 officers. The study used a mixed research design: descriptive and exploratory methods. Employee performance was taken as the dependent variable and the organisational, human, and work environment were considered independent variables. The results showed that human and organisational environments affected the performance of regular police officers. It also obtained that the technical (work) environment strongly impacted their safety and security concerns and hence, their performance.

Mboi (2014) explored the factors that influenced the performance of public servants in Machakos County, Kenya. The author undertook descriptive survey research and targeted a population of 1000 public servants working in the County. Using a stratified random sample of 100 respondents, the author administered them with questionnaires and later analysed the data on SPSS. The study found that motivation, morale, resources, and management significantly influenced the performance of public servants in Machakos. The author left a research gap in the use of descriptive survey design and in the context of public administration employees.

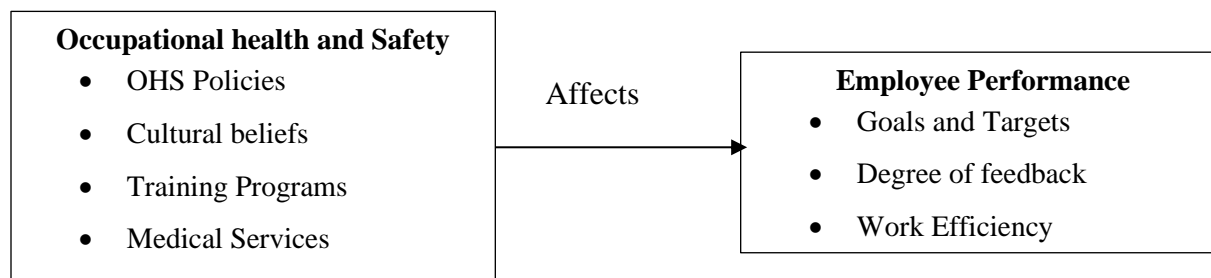
In the study by Oluoch (2015) on how OHS programmes affected the performance of Kenya

Power staff, a survey of 312 staff was done using descriptive design and regression analysis. Likert Scale was used to collect the primary data in a questionnaire. Frequency tables, percentages, charts, and graphs were used in the data presentation. The results of the study showed that occupational health and safety positively influenced employee performance.

The study by Bashir *et al.* (2019) in Lahore and Karachi committed to understanding how motivation affected the level of satisfaction among employees of the telecommunication industry. The modelling used in this study was able to link work conditions and the performance of job assignments. The study revealed that employees' productivity was influenced by their working conditions. Furthermore, for any person who is motivated to work, they benefit well in turn enhancing performance.

In studying how the productivity of employees at Mumias Sugar Company is affected by OHS practices, Sawe (2013) sampled 185 employees using stratified and purposive sampling and utilised mixed method approaches; observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Descriptive and multiple regression were used to analyse the collected data. The results of the study showed that occupational health and safety had a positive association with employee performance.

### Conceptual Framework



### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive and exploratory designs targeting 139 National Government Administrators in Nandi County. The County is one of the former districts under the populous and

expansive Rift Valley Province. The County is cosmopolitan, covering 2,884.4 square kilometres, have different climatic conditions, with most of it being wet and cold most of the year (the highlands) while the lower lands being dry and hot. It has 6 sub-counties (districts) and is headquartered at Kapsabet

Town. Using Yamane’s (1967) formula of sample determination, a sample of 103 respondents was identified using stratified and convenience sampling. Secondary and primary data were utilised in the study. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire, while secondary data was sourced from journals and articles, government publications, online sources, and libraries. Data was collected after the authority from the University was received and a subsequent research permit from NACOSTI. The questionnaires were distributed by research assistants and were collected after 14 days. The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis. Regression model was used to find out the relationship between the variables.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where  $\beta_0$  and  $\beta_1$  are the regression coefficients; Y – Employee performance;  $X_1$  –Occupational Health and Safety;  $\varepsilon$  - Error Term

The analysed data is presented using frequency tables, percentages, bar charts and pie charts.

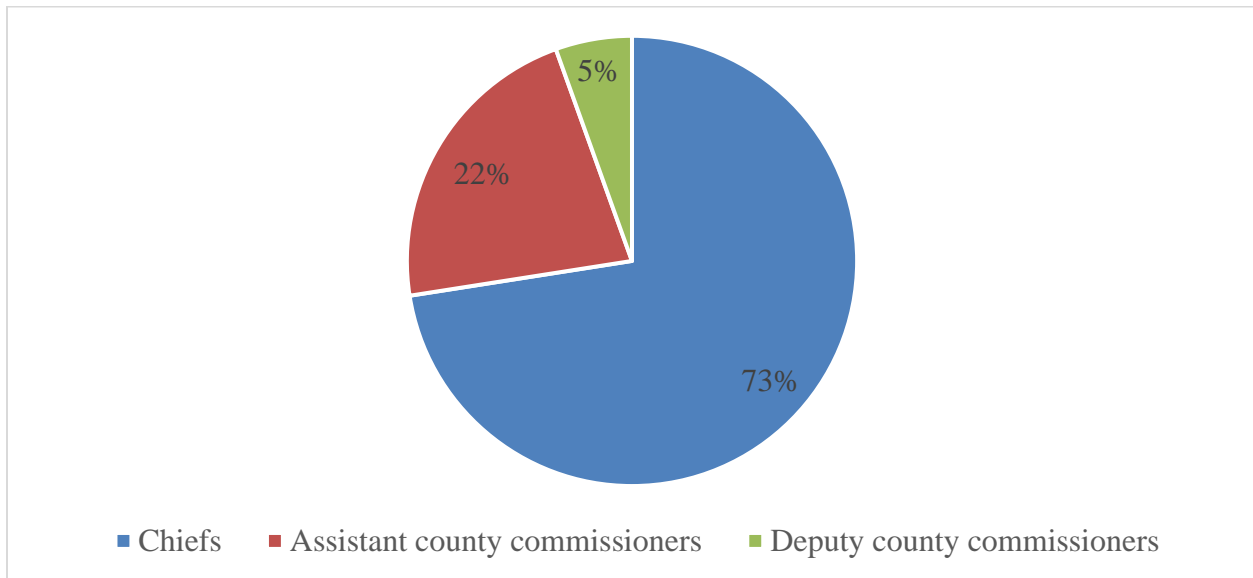
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographics of the Respondents

A total of 91 questionnaires were successfully filled and returned, representing a response rate of 88.3%, which was acceptable, according to Kothari (2004), who argued that a response rate of at least 65% is deemed sufficient and suffice for data analysis.

The majority of the responding administrators (65, 71.4%) were male, while females accounted for the remaining 28.6% (26).

**Figure 1: Current designation in the National Government Administrative Officers (NGAO)**



In terms of the rank and position of the responding administrators, the majority were the Chiefs (72.5%), Assistant County Commissioners (21.3%) and Deputy County Commissioners were 5.5% (see *Figure 1*).

Forty-four (48.4%) of the respondents indicated that they had worked for more than 10 years as an administrator, while another 28.6% had worked as administrators for between 6 and 10 years. The remaining 21 administrators indicated that they had been administrators for less than 5 years.

**Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-25 years	4	4.40%
	26-35 years	29	31.90%
	36-49 years	41	45.10%
	50-60 years	17	18.70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Gender	Single	7	7.70%
	Married	80	87.90%
	Widowed	2	2.20%
	Divorced	2	2.20%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

As shown in *Table 1* above, the majority of the respondents were aged 36-49 years 41(45.1%) and was followed by the participants aged 26-35 years 29(31.9%). A minority of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years 4(4.4%). This indicated that the majority of NGAO employees are aged between 36 and 49 years.

The data in *Table 1* shows that the majority of the respondents are married (80, 87.9%), with a few of them single 7(7.7%), widowed 2(2.2%) and divorced 2(2.2%). The results indicate that most of the NGAO employees at the county level were

married. The demographic data shows that the majority of the employees are NGAO were male, working as chiefs, married, and aged between 36 and 49 years with more than 10-year experience in the service

**Effect of OHS on Employee Performance**

Pearson correlation and linear regression were used to determine the effect of OHS on employee performance. The results are shown in *Table 2* below.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation of the Effect of OHS on Employee Performance**

	Occupational Health and Safety	Employee performance
Occupational Health and Safety	1	
Employee performance	.612**, <i>p</i> = .000	1

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

The table shows a strong positive relationship between occupational health and safety and employee performance ( $r = 0.612, p = .000$ ). The relationship shows that with improvement in occupational health and safety of employees, their performance also improves. The results further show that the 61.2% change in the performance of

employees would be caused by the 100% change in occupational health and safety in the working environment for the administrator. It also indicates that the OHS is a strong and positive determinant for the performance of the National Government Administration Officers (NGAO).

**Table 3: Linear regression**

Parameter	Value
R-square value	0.677
F-change	60.69, $p = .000$
(Constant)	$\beta = 0.306, p = .013$
Occupational Health and Safety	$\beta = 0.232, p = .022$

*a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance*

*b. Predictors: (Constant), Occupational Health and Safety*

The regression model results indicate that the F-change value of ( $F = 60.69, p < 0.000$ ) is statistically significant and shows that the model is a good fit for the data and that the whole model is significant. The R-squared value of 0.677 indicates that 67.7% of the variation in employee performance can be explained by changes in OHS as compared to a null model with no predictors. The model shows that OHS is positively associated with employee performance ( $\beta = 0.232, p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 3). The null hypothesis is rejected that OHS is associated with the positive performance of National Government Administrative Officers in Nandi County. However, 23.2% of the changes in employee performance can be explained by the changes in the OHS, there is a need to conduct a further study on the other variables not explained in the model (76.8%).

Since the model is statistically significant, it satisfies the following expression:

$$Y \text{ (Employee performance)} = 0.306 + 0.232 \text{ (Occupational Health and Safety)}$$

On Occupation Health and Safety (OHS), the results showed a strong positive relationship between occupational health and safety and employee performance ( $r = 0.612, p = .000$ ). The relationship shows that with improvement in occupational health and safety of employees, their performance also improves. The regression model also shows that OHS is positively associated with employee performance ( $\beta = 0.232, p < 0.05$ ). The results were consistent with the findings of Mwangi and Waiganjo (2017) and Umugwaneza *et al.* (2019), who showed that workplace safety and health practices had a significant impact on employee performance. The results indicate that OHS is an issue of monumental concern to organisational managers as it significantly affects productivity. Weak OHS practices are attributed to workplace

accidents, injuries, and deaths which attract heavy compensation and ruin the reputation of the organisation. While accidents can be unpredictable and unintentional, they can be prevented by creating safe working conditions and procedures that emphasise employee health and safety.

The results were inconsistent with the findings of Ekowati and Amin (2019), who did not find any significant relationship between OHS and employee performance. The deviation in results may have been attributed to the small sample of 50 respondents which may have increased the sampling errors leading to such unexpected results. Even so, the results were consistent with the findings of Syombua (2014), who established that OHS had a significant influence on employee performance. The results indicate that OHS is a major issue in the contemporary work environment where employees are increasingly becoming aware of their health and safety. It is expected of the organisation with tools, equipment, and physical assets to pose a threat to health and safety given the level of hazards. Meanwhile, the prevalence of environmental hazards and risks in the workplace has a significant impact on employees in terms of work-related stress and injuries. Accidents and injuries arise from both unsafe work behaviours and work conditions. Physical conditions such as dust, fumes, and noise may pose a great danger to NGAO employees, which in turn affect their performance. It also adds to their level of stress given the unsafe working conditions.

The results affirm the need to improve and maintain health and safety in the workplace. Employees maximise the productivity of the workplace if they find that the human resource department is concerned about their plight. Health and safety programmes are managerial responsibilities which, if not checked, affect the productivity and



performance of employees. It has the potential to increase organisational outputs in the public sector and company profits in the private sector. OHS interventions in the public sector show that implementing health and safety practices drives higher the performance of state agencies. Trade unions have been agitating for a better employee workplace, but if the changes to health and safety are ingrained in the organisational mission and vision, then the entity automatically realises stronger bottom-line results. The workers will not only increase their productivity, but they will be satisfied in their work roles as well.

The results of the study also increase the understanding and management of workplace illness and injury due to proper documentation of hazards. As mentioned earlier, employees have the ability to work productively if they are supplied with a conducive work environment, proper tools, and equipment as well as a functioning communication system. High rates of workplace injuries are associated with social and economic costs, including litigation and compensation. Compensation costs can be very high, which reduces the economic outputs of the organisation. With a low level of stress and fatigue, employees are capable of improving their performance. It is possible to be undertaken without adding more roles or tasks to employees or even forcing them to work longer hours. In the public sector, especially in the Kenyan National Government Administration Office, OHS outcomes are of significant importance. The public service will not only think of increasing the workforce but also ensure the supply of good working conditions. It involves extensive research on educational programmes, clinical care of employees and use of preventive measures, and drills on health and safety.

The results recognise that employee performance is higher when the occupational health and safety of employees are improved. The OHS practices arouse physical and emotional concerns among employees who seek to have desirable workplaces. The study results are consistent with those of Sawe (2013) and Oluoch (2015), who showed that higher organisational outputs are achieved when employees are assured of physically and emotionally safe work environments. Human performance in an organisational setting is a subject

of health and safety practices. Good OHS practices promote employee psychological well-being and reduce the instance of absenteeism. When employees perceive the organisational climate as suitable, they are capable of raising their performance. Therefore, reducing health and safety risks has the potential to create better relationships and higher employee performance. This shows that human resource managers at NGAO should delve into the safety culture and the safety climate to lower compensation costs and further improve organisational performance

## CONCLUSION

The results indicate that OHS is an issue of monumental concern to organisational managers as it significantly affects productivity. Weak OHS practices are attributed to workplace accidents, injuries, and deaths which attract heavy compensation and ruin the reputation of the organisation. While accidents can be unpredictable and unintentional, they can be prevented by creating safe working conditions and procedures that emphasise employee health and safety. OHS has a significant influence on employee performance and is a major issue in the contemporary work environment where employees are increasingly becoming aware of their health and safety. It is expected of the organisation with tools, equipment, and physical assets to pose a threat to health and safety given the level of hazards. The prevalence of environmental hazards and risks in the workplace has a significant impact on employees in terms of work-related stress and injuries. Accidents and injuries arise from both unsafe work behaviours and work conditions. Physical conditions such as dust, fumes, and noise may pose a great danger to NGAO employees, which in turn affect their performance.

OHS interventions in the public sector show that implementing health and safety practices drives higher the performance of state agencies. Trade unions have been agitating for a better employee workplace, but if the changes to health and safety are ingrained in the organisational mission and vision, then the entity automatically realises stronger bottom-line results. It also adds to their level of stress given the unsafe working conditions. Health and safety programs are managerial responsibilities which, if not checked, affect the

productivity and performance of employees. It has the potential to increase organisational outputs in the public sector and company profits in the private sector. The results affirm the need to improve and maintain health and safety in the workplace. Employees maximise the productivity of the workplace if they find that the human resource department is concerned about their plight. The workers will not only increase their productivity, but they will be satisfied in their work roles as well.

### Recommendations

The study recommends that the NGAO head office increase the level of resources and funding of offices of its employees at the county level to increase their performance. The county NGAO staff should ensure proper lighting, electronic gadgets, tools, and equipment are available to make their work easier. The provision of these goods and services will enhance their morale, satisfaction, and concentration. Since the work schedule reflects daily routines, the workplace environment will potentially raise the bar of an employee's mental and physical capabilities.

NGAO officers at the county level, especially the human resource department, should take stock and reassess the prevalence of environmental hazards and risks in the workplace. They should recognise the impact they have on an employee in terms of work-related stress and injuries. NGAO head office may need to determine the trends in accidents and injuries arising from both unsafe work behaviours and work conditions in all the counties in Kenya. It is also important to create safe storage for hazardous chemicals, tools and equipment that may pose health risks to NGAO employees and other staff.

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