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**INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL WORKPLACE FACTORS  
ON THE EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS**

**(A CASE OF HUDUMA CENTRE - NYERI COUNTY)**

**Caroline Waithira Kagwi**



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# INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL WORKPLACE FACTORS ON THE EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS (A CASE OF HUDUMA CENTRE - NYERI COUNTY)

<sup>1\*</sup>Caroline Waithira Kagwi

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [apecaro15@gmail.com](mailto:apecaro15@gmail.com)

## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of physical workplace factors on the performance of employees; a case study of Huduma Centre Kenya -Nyeri county.

**Methods:** Descriptive research design was used and sample of 48 employees serving the 21 operational desks and 1 customer care desk was studied from the total population of 48 Huduma Centre-Nyeri County employees. During the study, data was collected from the respondents using questionnaires. Data analysis was done using Microsoft excel computer packages and information was presented through bar charts, tables and pie charts.

**Results:** It was established that physical workplace aspects had a great contribution towards the organizations' performance in Huduma Centre, Nyeri County.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** Companies must comply with the environmental standards in all stages of a business development. The natural environmental factors affect the total costs of a firm in terms of equipment and assurance procedures to meet regulatory requirements.

**Keywords:** *Physical workplace factors, Huduma Centre, performance of employees*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Workplace environment is the sum of the interrelationships that exists within the employees and the environment in which they work (Kohun, 2002). According to Heath (2006), this environment involves the physical location as well as the immediate surroundings, behavioral procedures, policies, rules, culture, resources, working relationships, work location, all of which influence the ways employees perform their work. The quality of the workplace environment impacts on employees' performance and subsequently influences the organization competitiveness.

An effective workplace environment management entails making work environment attractive, comfortable, satisfactory and motivating to employees so as to give employees a sense of pride and purpose in what they do (Humphries, 2005). Employees will and are always contented when they feel their immediate environment; both physical sensations and emotional states are in tandem with their obligations (Farh, 2012) and how well employees connect with their

organization's immediate workplace environment, influences to a great extent their error rate levels, efficiency and innovativeness, collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and, ultimately their retention (Leblebici, 2012)

To survive and grow, the Huduma Centres have to embrace strategies of keeping the quality of the workplace high as a competitive strategy. Since County employees are the key resource and greatest expense of any Huduma Centre, the long-term benefits of a properly designed and user-friendly workplace environment should be factored into any initial cost considerations. To continuously improve workplace conditions, special attention to a performance culture that values every single employee and promotes a sustainable work-life balance should be embraced (World at work, 2007). Huduma Centre therefore have to create a workplace environment where their employees take pleasure in their work, believe their output is appreciated and rewarded appropriately enabling them to reach their potential.

### **1.1.1 Huduma Kenya**

Huduma Kenya is a programme by the Government of Kenya that aims to transform Public Service Delivery by providing citizen's access to various Public Services and information from One Stop Shop citizen service Centres called Huduma Centres and through integrated technology platforms. Huduma Kenya provides Efficient Government Services at the Convenience of the citizen. (Dibondo, 2016)

Huduma Kenya is a 'one stop shop' approach in reforming service delivery in Kenya. Huduma Kenya involves amalgamating related services within one building, possibly on the same floor, effectively making it possible for service seekers to access it conveniently. This means that you will be able to get birth certificates, national identity cards, passports, registration of business names, and applications for marriage certificates, drivers' licences, police abstract and many other services in one place.

Huduma Centre – in Nyeri County is located at Kamakwa Road, it has 23 operational desks each with 2 employees who work on shift basis and a customer care desk with 6 employees who also work on shift basis. It aims to transform Public Service Delivery by providing citizen's access to various Public Services and information from One Stop Shop through integrated technology platforms e-Huduma portal and m-Huduma portal. The employees report back to their back offices since they are seconded to work in the HCs.

Nyeri HC enables Kenyans to access various services from both national and County Governments under one roof. The HC initiative is a core part of Jubilee Government's efforts to reduce the cost of providing and accessing public services by abolishing the inconvenience caused by visiting multiple places. HC has become one of the most reliable Programmes in Kenya since the Jubilee government took over leadership. (Otieno, 2015)

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Creating a work environment which promotes wellbeing of employees and increase individual performance is viewed as a strategy for enhancing company efficiency and productivity. Avery, Volpone, McKay, King, and Wilson (2011) noted tardiness and absenteeism of full-time employees resulted in productivity losses for the organizations. Creating effective personal environments must account for both physical and psychosocial elements together with the

constraints of cost and technology. It is felt in general that improving the workplace environment increases productivity. There are a number of interacting factors which effect productivity including light, temperature, noise, hygiene, furniture, as well as social issues.

Employee's normally have expectation and will demand a workplace environment that facilitates them to perform their work optimally. When this is sufficiently provided, it can boost organizational competitiveness (Heath, 2006). HCs make significant investments in designing, building and ultimately recruiting knowledgeable and experienced personnel. The immediate work environment in terms of actual physical layout and design of an office is extremely important when it comes to maximizing individual performance. Poorly designed workstations, unsuitable furniture, lack of ventilation, inappropriate lighting and excessive noise adversely affect employee performance (Becker, 2002).

In addition, incongruent psychosocial factors - the non-physical aspects of a workplace, such as working conditions, social support from supervisor and role incongruity also impacts negatively on employees' performance. The organization of work-life is also now a major consideration as they attempt to spur exceptionally high performance (Smith, 2010).

To institutionalize the right practices in work-life balance, the right policies and programs have to be put in place. Inadvertently, an imbalance between workplace environment factors and employee's needs, abilities and expectations, is being manifested in different HC, prompting diverse reactions.

The dimensions of physical, psychosocial work life balance and management system standards are still unclear in respect of how they affect performance in the HCs especially Nyeri County since the employees have report back to their back offices from which they are seconded. The studies that have looked at this phenomenon have limited themselves to customer satisfaction without paying attention to the workplace environment and especially from an employees' perspective (Global workforce study, 2012).

It has been noticed that many enterprises pay a lot of attention to employee productivity enhancement through acquisition of skills while research has shown that about 86% of productivity problems reside in the work environment of organizations (Taiwo, 2010). This indicated that perhaps other physical workplace factors are responsible and needed to be studied to establish how they influenced employee performance.

### **1.3 Specific Objective**

To assess the effect of physical workplace factors on performance of employees

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Herzberg Hygiene / Motivation Theory**

According to this theory, people work first and foremost in their own self-enlightened interest, for they are truly happy and mentally healthy through work accomplishment. He looked at motivators and hygiene factors. Hygiene factors, often referred to as 'dissatisfiers', are elements in the work environment that include Supervision, Interpersonal relations and Working conditions. Motivators, often referred to as 'satisfiers', are aspects of the work environment that provide employees with job satisfaction and include recognition, work, responsibility and

advancement. This theory contributed an insight into the study of employee by explaining how the ‘dissatisfiers’ and ‘satisfiers’ affected workplace environments on individual performance.

## **2.2 Elton Mayo's Hawthorne Effect**

Hawthorne set the individual in a social context, establishing that the performance of employees is influenced by their surroundings and by the people that they are working with as much as by their own innate abilities. The original purpose of the experiments was to study the effects of physical conditions on productivity and performance. In addition, the aptitudes of individuals are imperfect predictors of job performance but the amount produced is strongly influenced by social factors. The studies also showed that the relations that supervisors develop with workers tend to influence the manner in which the workers carry out directives (Mayo, 1987). The theory was relevant to this study since it helped identify the physical environmental conditions in the environments which related with employees’ performance.

## **2.3 Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory**

Its main objective is improving economic efficiency, especially performance, monitor worker performance, and provide instructions and supervision to ensure that they're using the most efficient ways of working. Management can be defined as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims (Chandrasekhar, 2011). In this study management was seen as a prelude to environments which in due process affected the manner in which employees perform.

## **2.4 Physical Factors of the Workplace Environment**

The ability of the physical workplace environment to influence behaviors and to create an image. The physical environment includes components of the tangible workplace environment that comprise spatial layout and functionality of the surroundings (Kohun, 2002). Spatial layout refers to the ways in which machinery, equipment, and furnishings are arranged, the size and shape of those items, and the spatial relationships among them. The spatial layout of furniture was found to influence the amount and nature of conversation between individuals (Becker, 2002). Functionality refers to the ability of the same items to facilitate performance and the accomplishment of goals. How performance is achieved will be affected by how well people fit with their physical workspace and physical work environment (Srivastava, 2008).

In a broader perspective, the physical workplace environment; include but not limited to the comfort level, ventilation, heating, natural lighting and artificial lighting. According to Temessek, (2009) the above features assist on the functional and aesthetic side, the décor, and design of the workplace environment that ultimately helps improve the employees experience and necessitate better performance.

Office layout and design impressions suggest that certain dimension serves a symbolic function by connoting meanings and images about organizations and further how their employees are to be engaged (Challenger, 2000). Based on these affordances, it is suggested that employees will tend to identify more with these features which enhance performance. Informal seating arrangements, such as chairs placed at a right angle facilitate social interaction, whereas formal seating arrangements, such as chairs placed back-to-back discourage social interaction (Doman,

2008). This also helped explain how style of furnishings and other physical symbols may come to serve a symbolic function.

#### **2.4.1 Office Layout and Design Factors**

Office layout and design in the Huduma Centre-Nyeri County environments are different from one Huduma Centre Kenya to another. These differences have been expressed differently through time, in terms of the kind of Huduma Centre Kenya, location and spatial layout and the immediate physical work environment (Smith, 2011). In order to compare the influence of different office environments on employees, it is necessary to categorize them. Office environments have traditionally been defined either by spatial organization or by work organization. Only using one method has its limitation as both factors influence the office employees.

The most dominant architectural feature is the spatial organization of an environment. The functional features are based on the actual work taking place in the office. Small-scale attributes such as workstation lighting, size of individual work surfaces, office privacy, and noise account for incremental variance in employees' performance with their work environment above and beyond office design alone (Becker, 2002). This could mean that providing employees' with attributes that counter the overall effect of an open plan office space, such as privacy and an adequate workspace, could serve to increase performance levels in spite of the overarching feelings of dissatisfaction towards the open plan office space as a whole.

#### **2.4.2 Furniture**

Ergonomic facilities that reduce strain and stress from the employees should and must be in use since they tend to work for long hours on the same station and comfort is paramount for optimum performance (Gutnick, 2007). Employees who have appropriate work space and the correct, updated and well-working equipment needed to get the job done will have a much more positive attitude about work than those who are dealing with frustrating and broken equipment and furniture (McGuire, 2009). This study sought to analyze the effects of furniture on the performance of employees'.

#### **2.4.3 Workspace Availability**

Employee should be allocated a central position to work from. A workspace enables the employee to be easily located and reached whenever possible. Having your own dedicated personal space makes you feel like you belong and you are part of the company. Working spaces that are too open can affect our ability to focus and get work done whilst spaces that are too compartmented isolate co-workers (Gutnick, 2007). The opportunity to personalize your working space with a few family pictures or personal items creates a sense of safety and can be a positive anchor.

#### **2.4.4 Lighting and Ventilation Intensity**

Ventilation systems in such buildings have to meet some requirements. The indoor air must be pure, temperature, humidity and air velocity must be at the appropriate level (Doman, 2008). Temperature has an influence on office work. Low temperatures decrease the work performance, as do the high temperatures. The optimal temperature for office workers is 22°C (Seppanen, 2006). Employees' are also satisfied in a range from 20 to 24°C. High indoor temperature has a

great influence on the human's body (Seppanen, 2006). It can cause such illness, as sick building syndrome. High indoor temperature also increases the level of dryness. Low indoor temperature may increase risk of the draught. Also people are very sensitive to moving of the air when it is cold.

Appropriate lighting systems should provide Huduma Centre-Nyeri County with as much natural lighting as possible. Windows should be incorporated to supplement the electrical lighting. It gives a sense of energy and affects the mood of the employees. Hawthorne effect is the best example of benefit of lighting in productivity. Accomplishment of daily tasks in workplaces with less or dim light is difficult for employees. Working in dim light leads to eye strain and thus causing headaches and irritability. Due to this discomfort, productivity is very much affected causing overall decrease in employee's performance (Gutnick, 2007).

#### **2.4.5 Noise**

Noise is an unpleasant sound or sound phenomenon, which in certain intensity causes an uncomfortable feeling in man and affects his mental and physical condition further reducing performance (Sundstrom, 2009). Noise can also be a physical agent from the environment; from natural or anthropogenic origin and may be present only in the workplace or outside the workplace environment. Workplace users in one workplace may not perceive a level of sound to be an annoyance, whereas the same volume of sound in another workplace would be considered to be noise (Sundstrom, 2009). However, it has been identified that noise in the workplace, predominantly from others talking, is cited as being distracting by over 75% of workplace users (Sundstrom, 1994).

According to Deming (2000), physical workplace environment can cause stress which hinders employees from performing at the desired level. Noise is a pervasive problems in working environments and besides the obvious risk of hearing damage and masking of warning signals and speech, the effects on concentration, performance, behavior and general well-being are serious consequences of annoying noise in the working environment. Added to that, are other effects such as headache, stress, fatigue, etc. Material that reduce or counter noise and vibration into working halls should be incorporated to reduce distractions from the employees (Deming, 2000). This study therefore sought to investigate the effects of noise on the performance of employees.

#### **2.5 Empirical Literature Review**

Various researchers have studied environment as a factor in the performance of employees in organizations. A study carried out by Waweru (2010), on the effect of internal and external environment on employee's retention highlighted that there many variables that affect the performance of employees at work place. The study also found out that the recognition of both environments contributed to an enhanced employee performance and recommended that inclusion of both systems be integrated for optimal performance.

A study carried out by Leblebici (2012) on the effects of organizational climate and performance concluded that there is a consistent association between the two and that companies that performed above average showed higher values on climate dimensions than those performing below average. He did however caution that it would be premature to conclude that this

connection is causal. He acknowledged that organizational climate differs from organizational culture and state that organizational climate refers to the perceptions that organizational employee's share of the fundamental elements of the organization.

Research by Eagly, (2005) on a comparative analysis of work life balance in service industry confirms that employees often find a conflict in balancing their job and other life responsibilities, such as family (work-family conflict) and outside activities. Recent studies by Deming (2000), found that 32% of employees report work-family balance as their leading job concern. They cite the inter-role conflict as the major impediment to sustained performance.

Temessek (2009) in his study on analyzed the extent to which the individuals perceive the workplace environment as fulfilling their intrinsic, extrinsic and social needs and their reason of staying with the organization. He analyzed the impact of perception of environments on employee commitment and turnover in the organization and concluded that if the employees are provided with enabling environmental support, they will be highly satisfied and show the high level of commitment towards their organization and hence low turnover rate.

Research conducted by O'Neil (2007) indicated that workplace design has a direct link to employee behavior and is important in achieving strategic business objectives. The research survey findings suggested that improvement in physical design of office building may result in 5% to 10% increases in productivity.

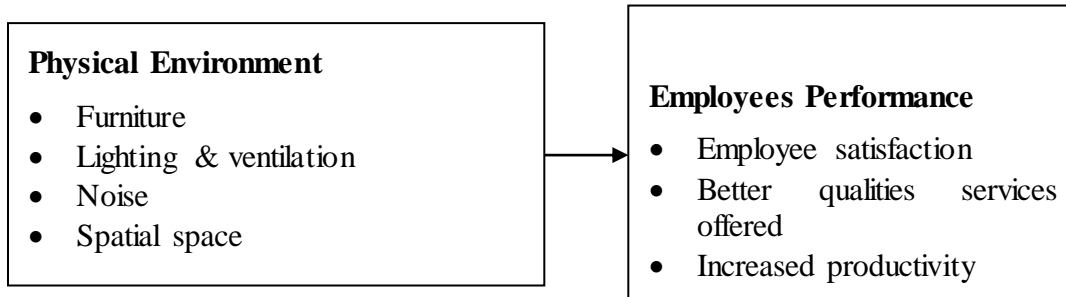
Shabir (2013) in his study provided an innovative attempt at investigating an obvious yet neglected link between the manager's attitude and employees' performance. The firms with congenial manager's attitude have more positive impact on employees' performance. The results also suggest that there is a positive relationship between the Organization's culture and employees' performance.

Sharman (2000) in his study claimed that the definitive rationale of environments was to improve job performance and output of an employee. The significance and carrying out the job analysis has the latent to devise this input to job performance both directly and inter-actively with other core human resource practices. The study further indicated that performance will improve with environment thus a correlation exists.

Hammed (2009), in his study highlighted that increased personal control and comfort needs of employees triggered the concern to provide them with a workplace environment, which not only fulfils the employees' needs but also helps to enhance their productivity.



## 2.6 Conceptual Framework



**Independent variables**

**Dependent variable**

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design in investigating the effects of physical environment on employee performance in Huduma Centre-Nyeri County. The research targeted the employees from Huduma Centre-Nyeri County. A sample of 48 employees serving the 21 operational desks and 1 customer care desk was studied from the total population of 48 Huduma Centre-Nyeri County employees. The researcher conducted a census. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the Huduma Centre-Nyeri County employees. The researcher used a drop and pick later method in the administration of the questionnaire. To establish construct validity of the instrument the researcher sought expert opinion from the university supervisors. The researcher measured the reliability of the questionnaire to determine its consistency in testing what they are intended to measure (Nachmias and Nachimias, 1996). The test re-test technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. This involved administering the same test twice to the same group of respondents who had been identified for this purpose. This study used descriptive statistical techniques, which included percentages, ranking, scales and averages to analyze the data. Data collected from the study was organized, classified, edited, coded and analyzed by use of percentages and frequencies and then presented in tables, graphs and pie charts.

## 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

### 4.1: Response Rate

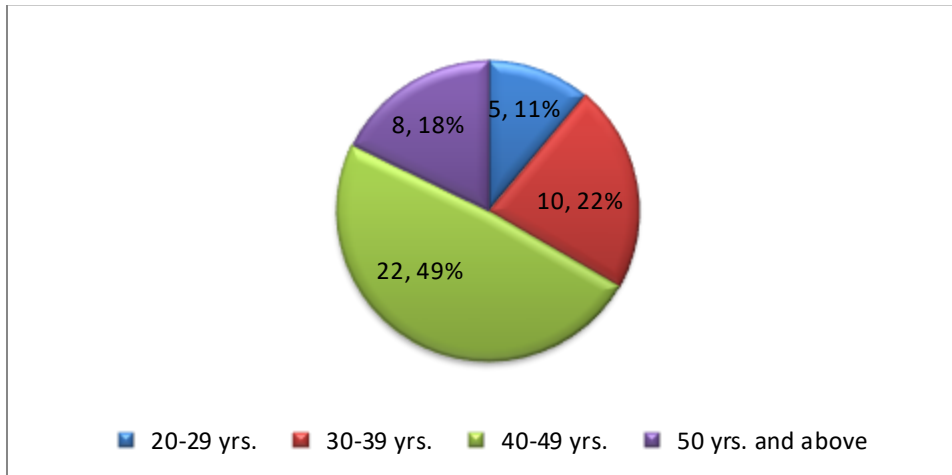
The target population of this study was all employees of Huduma Centre -Nyeri County. A total of 48 respondents were considered for the study though the research response rate of participants was 45 respondents which the researcher found significant for the study.

**Table 1 Response Rate**

Response rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responded.	45	93.7%
Did Not respond.	3	6.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.2 Age

The study covered respondents from 20-29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years and above 50 years. The data analysis results are presented in pie chart below.

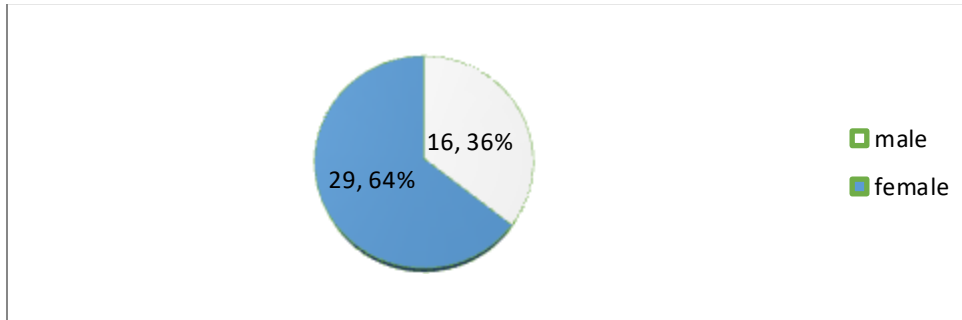


**Figure 1: Source (Researcher 2017)**

From the above chart, the study found that the biggest populations of all the respondents were aged between 40-49 years and represented 49% of the population, followed by those between ages 30-39 years and represented 22% of the population while 50 years and above were 8 represented 18% of the total population, above between 20-29 years were 5 represented 11% of the entire population.

#### 4.3 Gender

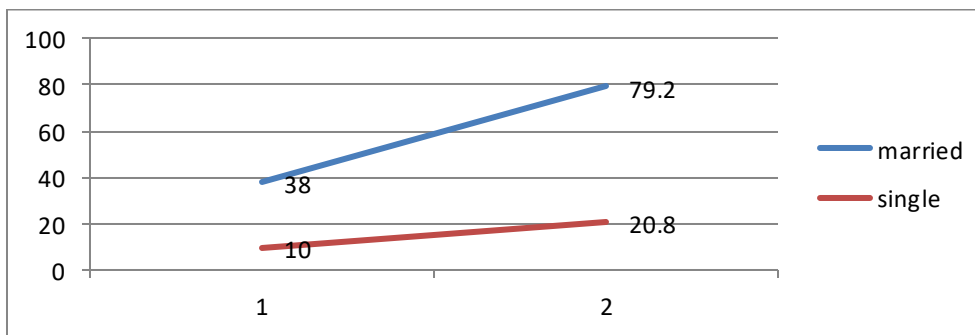
This study sought to establish the gender of the respondents. The information gathered was necessary to establish the nature and characteristics of the gender involved in the study. The data analysis results are presented in the table below.



**Figure 2: Source (Researcher 2017)**

From the above table, it is evident that a population of 45 respondents was considered, out of which 56.8 % were female and 43.2 % of the populations were males. Therefore from the above findings female were found to represent the highest population of the study.

#### 4.4 Marital Status

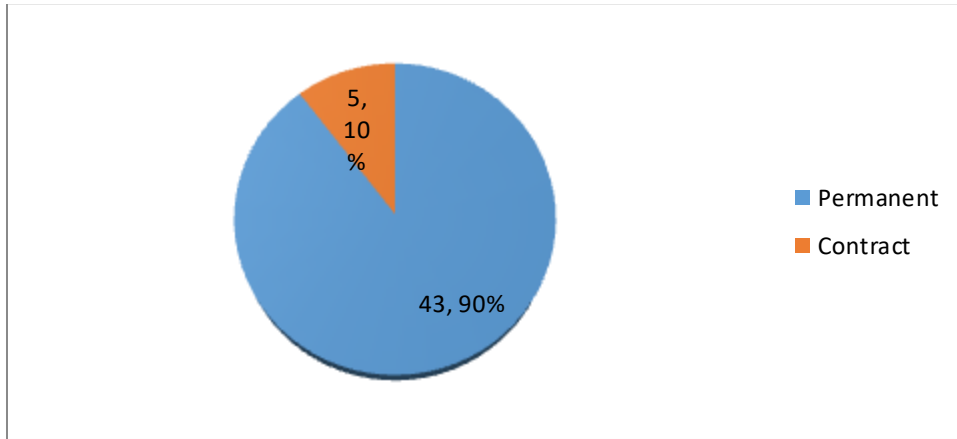


**Figure 3: Source (Researcher 2017)**

From the above figure, of 45 respondents were considered, out of which 10 (20.8%) were Single, 38(79.2%) were Married none among the respondents was Divorced, Widowed or Widow. Therefore from the above findings married employees were found to represent the highest population of the study.

#### 4.5 Tenure of your job

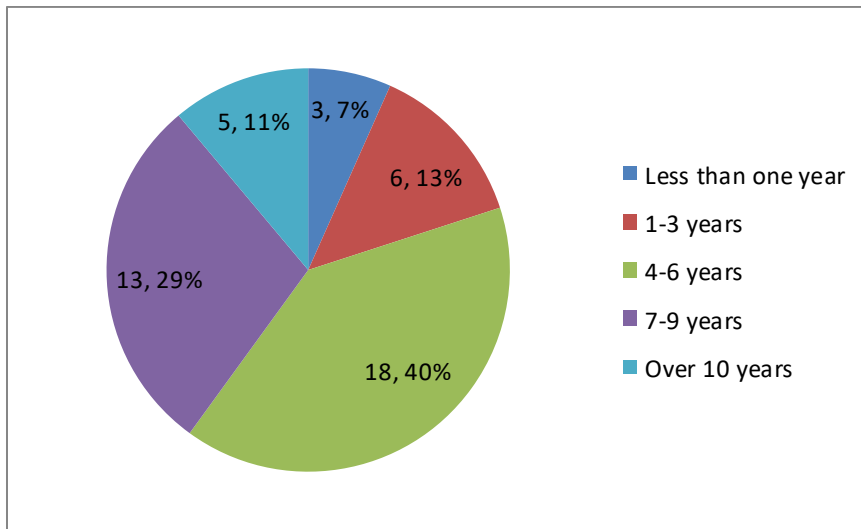
This sought to establish the tenure of employment of the respondents. The information gathered was necessary to establish the nature and characteristics of the employees involved in the study. The data analysis results are presented in the table below. 5(10%) were on Contract basis, 43(90%) were on Permanent basis and none was working on Part-time



**Figure 4: Source (Researcher 2017)**

#### 4.6 Years in the organization

Figure 5 illustrates that majority 18(40%) of the respondents had a working experience for between 4-6 years. In addition, another 13 (29%) had worked for 7-9 years, those who had worked for 1- 3 years were 6(13% ), those who had worked for over 10 years were 5(11%) and the least was 3(7%) having worked less than 1 year. This indicated that they had the knowledge and experience of their respective departments at Huduma Centre -Nyeri County and therefore offered credible information towards the study.

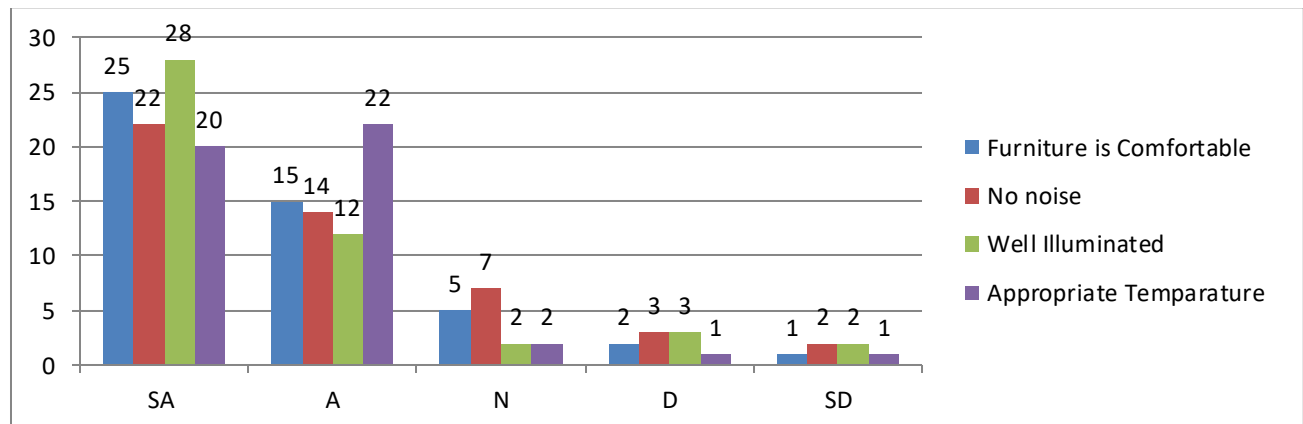


**Figure 5: Source (Researcher 2017)**

#### 4.7 Physical Workplace Environment

The researcher investigated whether physical workplace environment in the organization had an effect on the employees' performance. And from the findings below, it was found that on the furniture's comfort 25(52%) respondents strongly agreed, 15(31%) had an agreed opinion, 5(11%) respondent were Neutral, 2(4%) respondents Disagreed and 1 (2%) strongly disagreed. On the environment not being Noisy 22(46%) respondents strongly agreed, 14(29%) had an

agreed opinion, 7(15%) respondent were Neutral, 3(6%) respondents Disagreed and 2 (4%) strongly disagreed. In respect to office being Well illuminated 28(60%) respondents strongly agreed, 12(26%) had an agreed opinion, 2(4%) respondent were Neutral, 3(6%) respondents Disagreed and 2(4%) strongly disagreed. On the investigation on appropriate office temperatures 20(44%) respondents strongly agreed, 22 (48%) had an agreed opinion, 2(4%) respondent were Neutral, 1(2%) respondents Disagreed and 1 (2%) strongly disagreed.



**Figure 6: Source (Researcher 2017)**

## 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

This study specifically sought to investigate the effect of physical workplace factors on performance of employees, a case of Huduma Centre in Nyeri County. It was established that physical workplace aspects had a contribution towards the organizations' performance in Huduma Centre, Nyeri County.

Managing the strengths of the internal operations and recognizing potential opportunities and threats outside of the operations are keys to business success. The strength of your employees is another crucial internal business factor. Motivated, hard-working and talented workers generally produce better results than unmotivated, less-talented employees. Your business processes and relationships within and between departments and employees also significantly impact business effectiveness and efficiency. In a high-performing workplace, employees not only have talent, but they work well together and collaborate on ideas and resolutions.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Employees that feel as though the company has made a commitment to employee success tend to perform better, according to Personnel Systems Associates. Commitment means offering a competitive rate of pay and benefits package, offering assistance in paying for employee's higher education costs, developing a regular training schedule that keeps employees updated on company changes and gives pertinent information for employees to do their jobs and upgrading equipment to make sure that employees have the most efficient technology available to do their work. Commitment shown by the company is returned in the form of commitment from employees.

An effective employee evaluation is an interactive process where the manager gives his input on the employee's performance, and the employee gets the chance to point out what she has learned throughout the year. Managers create a plan along with the employee for the coming year on how the employee can develop and improve their performance. Comprehensive employee evaluations are important to the ongoing performance of employees.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

Companies must comply with the environmental standards in all stages of a business development. The natural environmental factors affect the total costs of a firm in terms of equipment and assurance procedures to meet regulatory requirements.

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