

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of occupational health and safety programmes on performance of manufacturing firms in Western Province, Kenya

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Occupational health and safety continues to be one of the most critical but highly criticized issues within the discipline of human resource management. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of health and safety programmes on performance of manufacturing firms in Western Province, Kenya. The study presents the results on an empirical study conducted. The study utilized a convenient sample by using all manufacturing firms in Western Kenya. Content validity and reliability of the research instruments were done through test retest method using one of the manufacturing firms which was not included in the final analysis. Reliability coefficient yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. The data from all the manufacturing firms was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tools like Pearson correlation, simple regression and one way ANOVA. The study findings showed a moderate positive relationship between occupational health and safety programmes (OHSP) and organizational performance of manufacturing firms. This was an indication that OHSP were not efficient in the studied firms, thus, affecting organizational performance of these firms in terms of sales, profitability, production, order delivery, reputation, target achievement, product quality and production costs. Management of firms must put in place policies and structures for improving occupational health and safety. They should not wait to form ad hoc committees (after an accident has occurred), whose recommendations may not be implemented. Organizations should put in place active health and safety committees which should be given mandate to implement their recommendations. Everyone in the organization should adhere to laid down policies, rules and safety precautions to reduce accidents. The study results provide vital information to managers, researchers and academicians on the relevance of occupational health and safety in business organizations.

Key words: Occupational health and safety programmes (OHSP), employee productivity, organizational performance.

INTRODUCTION

The human resource managers these days are faced with crucial issues of occupational health and safety than before. The reason is that the workers just like any other resources require maintenance and care in order to maximize their productivity (Casio, 1996). It is against this background that health and safety should not be viewed

as a separate function or responsibility, but as a broader initiative that aims at improving productivity, profitability and competitiveness of a firm (Pike, 2000). In America, there is the occupation health and safety Act 1970, which is supplemented by the National Institute for occupational health and safety (Schuler and Huber, 1993). Moreover, there is seriousness of health and safety at workplace illustrated by governments in most countries making it a policy issue particularly in Africa. For example, in African countries health risks and safety programmes in business

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and workplace are not often measured. It is therefore important to ensure employees are always free from any health and safety hazards because employees who work in a good work environment are more productive.

In Kenya, the Work Injury Benefits Act 2007 covers compensation for all employees, for injuries sustained at the workplaces. It is an improvement of the earlier Workman's Compensation Act which only covered selected group of workers; those earning sh. 400,000 per annum. However employers are resisting implementation claiming it will increase labour costs. The Ministry of Labour reports that more than half of the industrial accidents and injuries in Kenya go unreported. It estimates that reported occupational fatalities and injuries for the years 2000 to 2004 were 1528, 1923, 1332, 1599, and 1387. This is viewed against the background that factories and other work places have to be registered by the Department of Occupational Health and Safety, but by the end of 2004 only 11,387 such enterprises were registered excluding the 1.3 million micro and small enterprises (Nyakang'o, 2005).

Most of the reported accidents are those seeking compensation under the Workman's Compensation Act. In the year 2003 data indicated that, 41% of accidents in Kenya were from mining, construction and transport, machine operators and assemblers 28% while other occupations share 31% of workplace accidents. This shows that these occupations are injury prone while matters of safety are treated casually by both the employer and employees. The figure of accidents victims show's an increase, which is a pointer that working environment is still unsafe (Mberia, 2001). Defective and unmaintained machines are also associated with high accident rate in Kenya. Inadequate operation procedures and non-fencing of dangerous machines were identified as potential hazards to employees. These hazards may range from noises and vibrations from machines to radiation (Kenei, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through a survey design. It was conducted in Western Province of Kenya, currently; Kakamega and Bungoma Counties (Appendix 1a and b). It was a census study covering all manufacturing companies in the region. Self reporting questionnaires, consisting of five sections and an observation checklist were used to collect data (see Appendix II and III). A total of 70 respondents were used (Figure 1): 5 managers, 5 human resource managers, 40 heads of departments and 20 safety officers. The researcher used health and safety officers; who issued and picked questionnaires from the respondents. The researcher personally filled the observation checklist. A pilot study was conducted in one of the firms not found in the study area using test retest method to establish their validity. An extensive review of relevant existing literature was used to develop the measures for the study variable. Further, the questionnaire was piloted in one of the firm (which was not included in the final study) whose feedback was used to improve the content and flow of the research questions.

To establish the reliability of the study; Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was computed and yielded an alpha of 0.88. The results of the pilot study revealed that the research instrument was reliable and possess both content and face validity. Data analysis was done at two levels, using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In descriptive statistics measures of central tendency, frequency tables and percentages were used. Inferential statistics involved the use of correlation, simple and multiple regression analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 gives a summary of descriptive results on the factors considered as safety hazards by the firms, presented in terms of the mean, standard deviation (SD) and variance. The respondents responded to the questions based on the five point likert scale (see Appendix II). The variables that were predominantly hazardous were fire and noise; both had a mean (M) of 4.63, a standard deviation of 0.50 and a variance (σ) of 0.25. The second group of variables considered as safety hazards were: temperatures (M = 4.42, SD = 0.51, σ = 0.26), work environment (M = 4.11, SD = 0.74, σ = 0.54) staircases (M = 4.00, SD = 1.05, σ = 1.11). These factors were considered as moderate safety hazards. Other variables had the following means: workload (M = 3.95), floors (M = 3.74), work pace (M = 3.68), and drinking water (M = 3.58). Their standard deviations were 1.17, 1.15, 1.38, and 1.17 respectively. The variables which were considered as having the lowest safety hazards' score in terms of means and standard deviations included, lifts (M = 1.95, SD = 1.13), bombs (M = 1.84, SD = 1.21), dust (M = 2.26, SD = 1.41) and computers (M = 2.26, SD = 1.05). Therefore, the mean of ≥ 4 meant that the respondents were in agreement that the variables indeed negatively affected their work and ultimately, organizational performance most notably the noise and fire. These along with high temperatures in some firms exposed workers to untold sufferings. Therefore, the risks involved while working in such work place environment, firms were incurring huge losses in treating workers affected by the hazards.

A study conducted by Edington and Alysissa (2008) confirmed that, in studying these findings, there is a strong body of existing evidence which shows that health risks of employees were associated with health care costs and pharmaceutical costs. A growing body of literature also confirms that health risks are associated with the productivity measures of time away from work, workers' compensation, absenteeism. Furthermore, studies have shown that changes in risks were associated with changes in health care costs, time-away-from-work.

Though, dust was considered by the respondents to be less significant with a mean of 2.26 and SD of 1.41, it was observed that in some firms workers suffered much because of dust fumes. Dust was too much especially when the weather was dry. A research conducted by

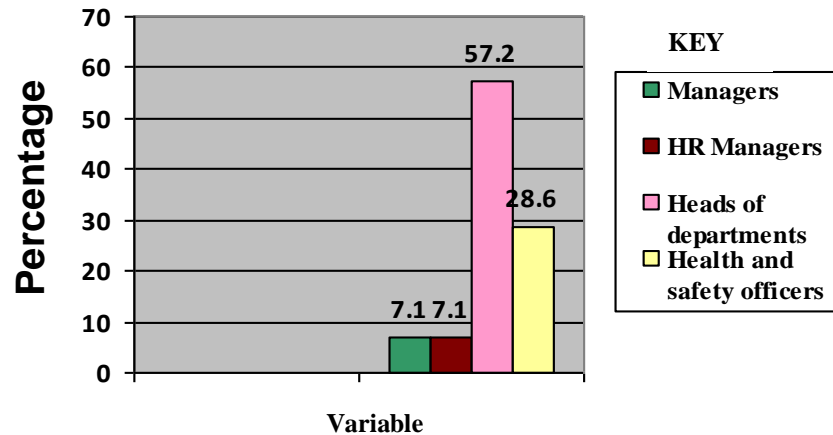


Figure 1. Number of respondents used in the study: managers, HR managers, heads of departments and safety and health officers.

Table 1. Factors considered as safety hazards by the firms.

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Fire	4.63	0.50	0.25
Floors	3.74	1.15	1.32
Lifts	1.95	1.13	1.28
Staircases	4.00	1.05	1.11
Trailing wires	3.16	1.26	1.59
Bombs	1.84	1.21	1.47
Working hours	3.47	1.22	1.49
Strict deadlines	3.00	1.49	2.22
Computers	2.26	1.05	1.09
Workload	3.95	1.18	1.39
Work pace	3.68	1.38	1.89
Work environment	4.11	0.74	0.54
Toilets	3.32	1.20	1.45
Drinking water	3.58	1.17	1.37
Chemical exposure	3.11	1.45	2.10
Furniture	3.16	1.12	1.25
Overcrowding	3.21	1.23	1.51
Temperatures	4.42	0.51	0.26
Noise	4.63	0.50	0.25
Dust	2.26	1.41	1.98

Sindiswa (2003) revealed that lead powder poses a higher risk to cause fire than the solid because of its greater contact area with air (WHO, 1999) with resultant higher ignition characteristics. Lead dust cloud has similar risk hazards like gas in causing fire.

Based on the five point likert scale (Appendix II), the results from Table 2 indicated that the highest health and safety measures were health and safety committee (M = 4.84, SD = 0.38), work procedures (M = 4.68, SD = 0.48) and fire fighting equipment (M = 4.63, SD = 0.49). Among

the variables with moderate scores included light in the production area (M = 4.05, SD = 0.85), first aid kits (M = 4.05, SD = 0.97), medical check up and being aware of emergency procedures (M = 4.05, SD = 0.62). The lowest ranked among the safety measures include, employees awareness of policies (M = 3.84, SD = 0.69), policies being understood (M = 3.95, SD = 0.62) and cleanliness in washrooms (M = 3.95, SD = 0.85). These variables indicated little effect as measures to safeguard against occupational health and safety hazards. Observation

Table 2. Health and safety measures.

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Health and safety policies	4.53	0.77	0.59
Awareness of policies	3.84	0.69	0.47
Protective clothing	4.42	0.84	0.70
Clean, dry floors	4.32	0.49	0.23
Ventilation	4.32	0.48	0.23
Lighting in production area	4.05	0.85	0.72
Work environment	4.21	0.71	0.51
Fire fighting equipment	4.63	0.49	0.25
First aid kits and medical services	4.05	0.97	0.94
Enough toilets	4.16	0.69	0.47
Cleanliness in washrooms	3.95	0.85	0.72
Aids programmes	4.26	0.45	0.21
Directional signs	4.11	0.66	0.43
Clean drinking water	4.11	0.66	0.43
Health and safety committee	4.84	0.38	0.14
Work procedures	4.68	0.48	0.23
Emergency procedures	4.05	0.62	0.39
Health and safety promotion	4.11	0.32	0.10

checklist revealed that work procedures were not followed by most employees. Most of the employees were working on machines which were not safeguarded therefore endangering their lives. A large number of them had protective clothing like boots; overalls and helmet provided but only a small number were wearing them. Some claimed that there was no need for such items. It seemed as if there were no rules in the firms as far as personal protective equipment was concerned.

To confirm the study findings, a study conducted by Sindiswa (2003) highlighted that occupational safety and health administration (OSHA) requires the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce employee's exposures to hazards as the last resort when engineering and administration controls have failed in reducing the exposures to accurate levels. However, if PPE is to be used, a PPE programme should be initialized and maintained. The programme should include identification and evaluation of hazards in the workplace, selecting an appropriate PPE to be used, maintenance of PPE and its use evaluated. Also, employees should be trained on how the PPE is used.

Although all firms agreed that they had enough ventilation in their workplaces. This did not concur with the observation made by the researcher, it was revealed that some firms did not have enough ventilation and the temperatures in the rooms were high. This made workers to feel uneasy as they worked. This was observed especially around the boilers and area where the juice was being boiled.

Results from Table 3 revealed that majority of the

organizational performance variables had a mean of > 4.00, a pointer that; the respondents were in agreement, these variables were operational and the researcher sought to find out the extent of these variables in the firms used in the study. This was based on the five point likert scale (Appendix II). The variables which were outstanding in the sampled firms included: productivity (M = 4.68, SD = 0.78, $\sigma = 0.23$), delivery order (M = 4.68, SD = 0.48, $\sigma = 0.23$), sales (M = 4.53, SD = 0.51, $\sigma = 0.23$) and reputation (M = 4.53, SD = 0.51, $\sigma = 0.26$), except two of them, that is, diversified products (M = 3.84, SD = 1.33, $\sigma = 1.81$) and reduction on the cost of production (M = 3.32, SD = 1.20, $\sigma = 1.45$). This indicated that customers' orders were delivered promptly leading to high productivity. The quality of the products was good and their reputation was comparative. One of the firms had the highest reputation amongst all sugar firms in the region. The tea processing industry had no competitor in the region but had competitors outside the region and across the country. The cost of production was worrying to all the firms though they claimed to have reduced them. This was due the continuous increase in their overhead production.

Table 4a shows regression and correlation results when OHSP was measured against the overall mean of organizational performance of the firms used in the study. The results signified that OHSP variable had a positive moderate correlation with organizational performance (B = 0.57, $p < 0.05$; $r = 0.47^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). It was therefore concluded that practising of occupational health and safety programmes had a slight relationship with

Table 3. Mean standard deviation (SD) and variance of organizational performance.

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Productivity	4.68	0.78	0.228
Sales	4.53	0.513	0.228
Targets	4.42	0.507	0.257
Order delivery	4.68	0.478	0.228
Diversification	3.84	1.334	1.807
Working capital	4.42	0.507	0.257
Production cost	3.32	1.204	1,450
Reputation	4.53	0.513	0.263
Quality products	4.32	0.478	0.228
Profitability	4.42	0.507	0.257
Effectiveness in prod	4.00	0.816	0.667
Clients	4.42	0.507	0.257
Supervision	4.05	0.780	0.608
Satisfaction	4.47	0.513	0.263

Source: Field data 2009.

Table 4a. Regression and correlation results of occupational health and safety programmers (OHSP) against overall mean of organization performance.

Variables	Regression coefficient, B	Standard error B	Pearson coefficient, r
Independent variables: OHSP	0.57, $p < 0.05$	0.26	0.47**, $p < 0.000$

** Means p-value is significant at 0.05

Table 4b. Regression and correlation results of occupational health and safety programmers (OHSP) against overall mean of organization performance.

Variables	Values
Multiple R	0.47
R ²	0.22
Adjusted R ²	0.18
Standard Error (SE)	0.39
df	1
F value	4.87, $p = 0.04$

organization performance.

While Table 4b indicated that OHSP had a significant difference on the overall mean of organizational performance ($F = 4.87, p < 0.05$). Therefore, OHSP had a profound effect on the overall mean of organizational performance. This pointed out that the management of health and safety programmes were able to identify potential hazards, provide preventive measures and remedies (Armstrong, 1997). Unless an organization is able to identify hazards and remedies for them, it becomes difficult to come up with programmes which can address those specific problems. According to Kenei, (1995), hazards machines include defective and

unmaintained machines and equipment used employees, these machines are also associated with high accident rate in Kenya. Inadequate operation procedures and non-fencing of dangerous machines were also potential hazards to employees. These hazards may range from noises and vibrations from machines to radiation.

According to Dessler (1997), the physical working environments have a lot of hazards which threaten the safety and health of employees, and include slippery and dirt floors which contribute to slips and falls. Mberia (2001) also noted that, machines and work environment have been identified as the main causes of occupational safety hazards. As much as employees have a

responsibility to ensure they are safe, the employer has the biggest contribution to make. The figures of accidents victims are on the increase, which indicate that work environments are still unsafe and therefore the management should ensure conducive and safe working conditions to its employees.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the study confirmed the relationship between occupational health and safety programmes and organizational performance yielding moderate regression coefficient and beta values ($F = 4.88$, $p < 0.05$, $B = 0.57$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.47^{**}$, $p < 0.05$) indicating a moderately positive correlation between the variables. These results were obtained when overall occupational health and safety programmes mean was regressed and correlated against the overall organizational performance mean. This was an indication that OHSP were not efficient in the studied firms, thus, affecting organizational performance of these firms in terms of sales, profitability, production, order delivery, reputation, target achievement, product quality and production costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusions the study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations: Management of firms must put in place policies and structures for improving occupational health and safety. They should not wait to form ad hoc committees (whose recommendations may not be implemented) after an accident has occurred. Organizations should put in place active health and safety committees which should be given mandate to implement their recommendations. Everyone in the organization should adhere to laid down policies, rules and safety precautions to reduce accidents. Managers should understand that compromising on health and safety standards puts an organization and her employees at a risk. Workers grievances should be listened to avoid chances of carelessness on their part which may be costly.

Health and safety measures should be in place and employees should be trained on how to use the emergence facilities in case of a problem. There should be a continuous review of occupational health and safety policies, to ensure that firms have up to date safety measures in place. Methodology for hazard identification and risk assessment should be proactive, provide for risk classification, consistent with capabilities of risk control, highlight training needs and monitoring of required actions.

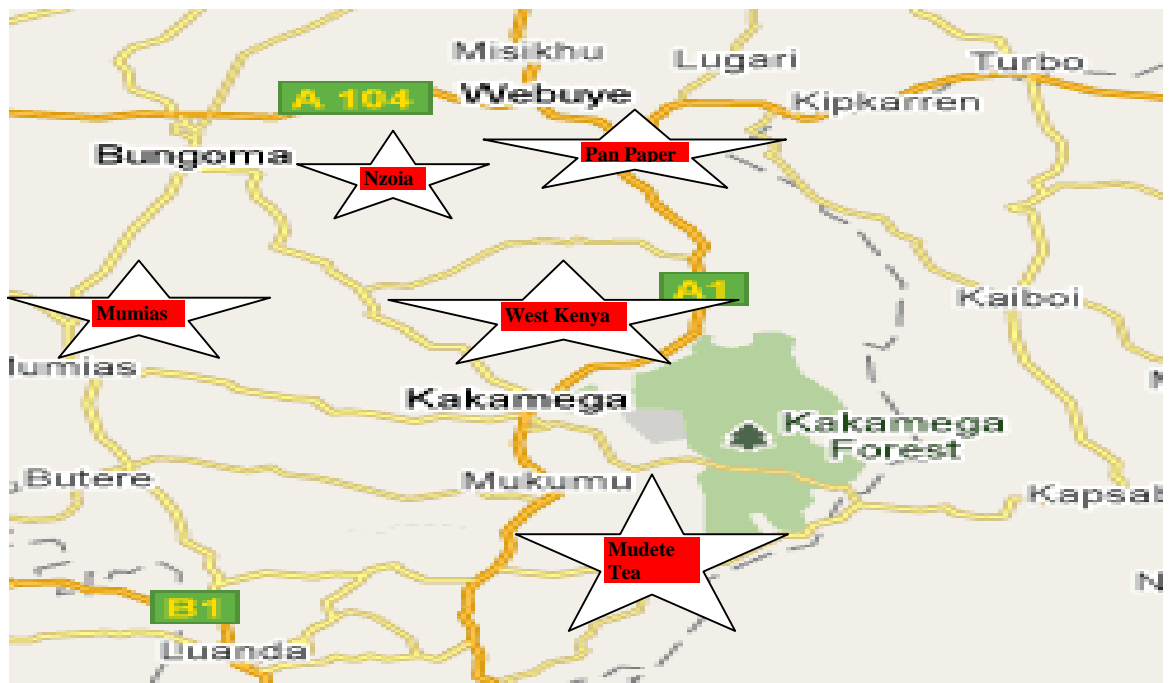
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APPENDIX



Appendix 1a. Map of Kenya showing western province.



Appendix 1b. Map of western province showing factories.

APPENDIX II. QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A. Background information

- (i) Name of the firm.....
- (ii) Nature of the business.....
- (iii) For how long has your firm operated?
- (iv) How many employees does your firm have?.....
- (v) For how long have you worked in this firm?.....
- (vi) Your gender Male () Female () Choose one
- (vii) How old are you? 18 to 25 years (), 26 to 35 years (), 36 to 45 years (), (46 years and above () Choose one.

From the following factors which contribute to the employees' health and safety, Please indicate the rate of extent to which your firm considers them as a hazard. The factors are rated using a scale of 1 to 5. Five (5) for Very Great Extent; 4 for Great Extent; 3 for Some Extent; 2 Not At All; 1 for Not Sure (Circle any one).

Fire	5	4	3	2	1
Floors	5	4	3	2	1
Lifts	5	4	3	2	1
Staircases	5	4	3	2	1
Trailing wires	5	4	3	2	1
Robberies	5	4	3	2	1
Bombs	5	4	3	2	1
Working hours	5	4	3	2	1
Strict deadlines	5	4	3	2	1
Computers	5	4	3	2	1
Workload	5	4	3	2	1
Work pace	5	4	3	2	1
Work environment	5	4	3	2	1
Toilets	5	4	3	2	1
Drinking water	5	4	3	2	1
Chemical exposure	5	4	3	2	1
Furniture	5	4	3	2	1
Overcrowding	5	5	3	2	1
Temperatures	5	4	3	2	1
Noise	5	4	3	2	1

Any other hazards, (please specify)

Section B. Occupational health and safety measures.

Rate the following statements indicating the extent they apply to your firm by ticking in the appropriate box: strongly agree (5), agree (4), disagree (3), strongly disagree (2) and not sure (1)

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
i	The company has adequate health and safety policies					
ii	Employees understand the company's health and safety policies					
iii	Employees are aware of the existing laws on health and safety					
iv	Protective clothing are provided to all employees					
v	The floors are kept clean and dry to reduce chances of falls and slips					
vi	There is adequate ventilation in the office					
vii	There is adequate lighting in the production area					
viii	Working environment is considered safe by our employees					
ix	The firm has a safety manual					
x	Employees are aware of safety measures in case of fire					
xi	In case of emergency there are clearly marked fire exits					
xii	There is adequate fire- fighting equipment in place					
xiii	Employees have been trained fire fighting skills					
xiv	There are adequate first aid kits and medical services					
xv	There are enough toilet facilities separate for males and females					
xvi	Employees are satisfied with the standard of cleanliness in the washrooms					
xvii	The waste disposal equipments are adequate					
xviii	There is adequate level of awareness on industrial waste management					
xix	There is a continuous review of accident prevention measures					
xx	Our firm conducts medical check- up for employees regularly					
xxi	The firm has an AIDS awareness programmes					
xxii	There are directional signs to guide movement of people					
xxiii	There is enough clean drinking water for all employees					
Xix	Health hazards are very many					

Section C. Employee productivity.

-
- i There is sufficient commitment by employees in their duties
 - ii Employees attitude to work is very positive
 - iii Employees follow organizational rules
 - iv Employees are able and willing to meet their targets
 - v Some employees remove safety guards to speed up production
 - vi Burnout rate of employees is high due to stress
 - vii Some employees show signs of aggressiveness
 - viii Employee absenteeism is high
 - ix Employees always ask for sick off days
-

Section D. Contextual factors.

-
- i Working environment is good for employees
 - ii The firm has enough resources both human and financial
 - iii The firm does not experience adverse organizational politics
 - iv Local politics adversely affect our business
 - v Organization leaders do not discuss with workers
 - vi Competitors are taking most of our business
 - vii The firm does not experience high employee turnover
 - viii Measures are put in place to reduce pollution
-

Section E. Organization performance.

-
- i High production has been achieved
 - ii There is increase on our sales
 - iii The company has been able to realize its set targets
 - iv We deliver customer orders promptly
 - v We have diversified our products
 - vi Our firm has enough working capital
 - vii Cost of producing our products has decreased
 - viii Our firm has a good reputation
 - ix Product Quality
 - x More Profitability
 - xi Effectiveness of operations
 - xii No of clients is high
 - xiii Easy Supervision
 - xiv Level of satisfaction high
-

Suggest any other recommendations that can improve the Occupational Health and Safety management in the company.

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Appendix III. Observation checklist on occupational health and safety.

S/N	Area of observation	5	4	3	2	1	General remarks
A	Reception area						
1.	Check for general cleanliness						
2.	Check if lighting is adequate						
3.	Check if there is adequate ventilation						
4.	Check that entrance is kept free from obstruction						
5.	Check for the presence/display of firms safety policy						
6.	Check the decoration and indoor plants						
7.	Check for adequacy of space						
8.	Check for directional signs						
9.	Computer screen						
	Score						
B	Offices-enclosed and in the open						
10.	Check if lighting is adequate						
11.	Check if there is adequate ventilation						
12.	Check if all exit doors are marked and kept free from obstruction						
13.	Check if the sitting arrangement allows for easy access to doors in the event of emergency						
14.	Check availability of lockable cabinets						
15.	Check existence of emergency facilities, e.g. hose/fire extinguisher and that they are not obstructed						
16.	Check for general cleanliness						
	Score						
C	Floor surfaces and walls						
17.	Check for dirt and stains on the wall surfaces						
18.	Check for any slippery material on the floor surfaces						
	Score						
D	Stairways						
19.	Check if safety hand rails exist as appropriate, and are adequately secured						
20.	Check if stairways and immediate surrounding are kept clear of obstruction						
21.	Check if lighting is adequate						
	Score						

Appendix III. Contd.

E Equipment (pc's, computers, electrical cables, telephones)

- 22. Check electrical cables are well insulated and protected
 - 23. Check that electrical cables and extensions running across floors do not impede movement
 - 24. Check whether the area around the machines/equipment is free of obstruction
- Score

F Tea rooms

- 25. Check for general cleanliness
 - 26. Check for plumbing disorders, blocked drains
 - 27. Check conditions of electrical plates and burns and connecting cables and switches
 - 28. Check that bins are in place
 - 29. Check for adequate ventilation
- Score

G Wash rooms

- 30. Check for general cleanliness
 - 31. Check that waste paper bins are in place
 - 32. Check in ladies wash rooms whether sanitary bins are in place
 - 33. Check that hand driers are in working condition
 - 34. Check if plumbing disorders, blockage drains
 - 35. Check if there are water leaks
 - 36. Check if there is adequate lighting
- Score

H Stores

- 37. Check for general cleanliness
 - 38. Check if there is adequate lighting
 - 39. Check if there is adequate ventilation
 - 40. Check if material is safely stacked
 - 41. Check if hazardous/flammable material is segregated from non-hazardous and clearly labeled
 - 42. Check if there is adequate emergency equipment
 - 43. Check if appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) is in use
 - 44. Check if all exits are free of any obstruction
 - 45. Check if floor markings are visible and the material is kept within the markings
 - 46. Check if FIFO is in operation
- Score
-

Appendix III. Contd.

-
- | | |
|----------|------------------------------|
| I | Production areas |
| 47. | Enough Fire exits available |
| 48. | Clean drinking water |
| 49. | Slippery floor |
| 50. | Chemical emissions |
| 51. | Availability of Smoking zone |
| 52. | Wearing boots & helmets |
| 53. | Disposal of waste |
| 54. | Guarding of machines |
| 55. | Ventilations |
| 56. | Lighting |
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