

DOES WORK ENVIRONMENT MATTER IN CATERING SERVICES? EFFECT OF WORK ENVIRONMENT ON INPATIENTS SATISFACTION WITH FOOD SERVICES IN KIAMBU COUNTY HOSPITALS

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ABSTRACT

The modern business environment is characterised by cutthroat competition, advancement in technology and more enlightened customers who demand quality merchandises and amenities from the firm. In the wake of this information, consumers are aware of their rights for quality services. Consequently, business managers must adopt high quality customer service practices to propel the business growth agenda and remain competitive. In the last decade, health service delivery in Kenya has been associated with patient negligence, lack of adequate drugs in hospitals, unwarranted deaths, poor sanitation, and inadequate facilities such as beds and misappropriation of funds. Other challenges include inadequate human capital, lack of proper policies on healthcare management, inadequate health infrastructure, and lack of commitment from the County governments to improve services. This study sought to establish the effect of work environment on inpatient satisfaction with food services in Kiambu County hospitals. The study was anchored on the expectancy theory. The research design adopted was descriptive survey

design. The target population for this study was 1074 respondents drawn from the management staff and catering employees of level four and five hospitals in Kiambu County, from which stratified random selection was used to select a sample of 283 respondents. Primary data was collected through a semi structured questionnaire and observations. Both descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were utilised in data analysis. Inferential analysis was conducted through correlation and multiple regression analysis. The study found that work environment had a strong positive correlation with inpatient satisfaction. In addition, work environment had positive significant effect on inpatient satisfaction with food services in Kiambu County hospitals. The study thus recommends that hospitals should improve their work environment by ensuring work-life balance and providing a wider work space to help employees work efficiently.

Key Words: Work environment, Inpatient satisfaction, Catering services

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of enormous competition in the modern business environment, there is need for every business organisation to satisfy their customers to retain them and attract new ones (Díaz & Duque, 2021). Consequently, in any service sector, outstanding service delivery and quality of services plays a very important role in consumer satisfaction (Saunila, 2016). It is however noted that customer satisfaction is a function of several factors such as quality of services, tastes and preferences, perception, staff motivation, communication and perceived convenience (Hill & Brierley, 2017). Ketefian (2015) further postulated that customer satisfaction is very subjective since it is dependent on individual perceptions, needs, wants,

and beliefs. These attributes touch on touch on both customers and willingness of employees to provide quality services, their motivation, commitment.

Accordingly, Osabiya (2015) opined that employee's satisfaction contribute towards overall satisfaction of consumers and performance of the organization. Similarly, Hill and Brierley (2017) alluded that actuated staffs are essential for improvement of quality of services. Non motivated employees would not direct all their efforts to the organization but instead they redirect their efforts to other non-work-related activities like long lunch hours, or surfing the net for non-work connected functions (Saunila, 2016). However, even the most skilful and competent employees may fail to achieve the desired consumer satisfaction if they do not have the right work environment (Shanks, 2012). According to Shahidi, Gignac, Oudyk and Smith (2021), work environment entails all the setting, social features and physical conditions in which the employee works. Work environment is important because it affects employee's performance, their wellbeing, collaboration, efficiency, work relations and their health.

Literature has shown that a positive relationship exists between work environment and client satisfaction. For instance, Williams (2018) established that nurses who carefully listened to their patients and recommended their hospitals to their family members were perceived to have higher perception of their overall work environment which led to patient satisfaction. However, this study focused on nurse's perceptions. Ram (2015) study revealed that work environment influences service climate and customer satisfaction in India. The current focus is on work environment and customer satisfaction in Kenya.

In the health sector, patient contentment has become a key measure by that the standard of health care services is evaluated (Choi & Ra, 2016). Patients experience in the hospital is a key concern for healthcare professionals, managers, and government alike. In this sense, proper medical care, patient safety, and quality of service form a major consideration in the choice of hospital (American Diabetes Association, 2017). Patients in the modern day expect more and better healthcare standards. Among the factors contributing to the total hospital patient satisfaction include the food provision satisfaction but which may often go unobserved (Saunila, 2016). In addition, Berkowitz (2016) identified nursing and physician quality as determinants of patient satisfaction.

However, the sector is slowly clasping the idea of service quality with variety of hospitals borrowing from the principles of welcome management significantly within the non-public sector (Kimathi, 2017). Kazungu and Barasa (2017) noted that food services in Kenya has improved considerably owing to the continued efforts by both National and County Governments. In Kiambu County, Karimi and Nyawira (2019) reported that the continued strikes by health professionals have significantly hampered health care service delivery. It is noted that although level four and five hospitals in Kiambu County serve patients from other counties such as Nairobi and Murang'a, service delivery has not been at its best with patients complaining of negligence on the side of care givers as well as physical deterioration of the

facility (Karimi & Nyawira, 2019). There is thus need to establish if the work environment influences in-patient satisfaction with food services.

Problem statement

Health service delivery in Kenya has been associated with patient negligence, poor sanitation, inadequate facilities, dilapidated physical environment, and misappropriation of funds (Mwanga, 2013; Kimathi, 2017). Public hospitals have often failed to meet patients' expectations due to inadequate capacity by the hospitals to handle the surge in patients seeking health care services leading to crowding (Kyalo & Odhiambo, 2019). Public hospitals have further faced the challenge of inadequate human capital to attend to their patients (Kyalo & Odhiambo, 2019). Dissatisfaction with catering services among patients in public hospitals, and indeed in some private hospitals, is evidenced by the preference by some patients for "homemade meals" brought in by their relatives.

There has also been a concern relating to patient safety and security where patients have been murdered in their hospital beds at Makindu district hospital (*Daily Nation*, 2009), Mwingi hospital (Ombati, 2016), Kenyatta national hospital and Nanyuki hospital (Saya, 2019), and poor attitude from the nursing fraternity (Onyango, 2014). These challenges have a bearing on the ability of the health facilities to offer quality services to their patients leading to enormous dissatisfaction among patients, particularly the in-patients. Consequently, most patients, with financial resources, opt for private hospitals which are perceived to offer better services. Based on the conclusions reached by Ahmad, Wasay, & Jhandir (2012), Awan, Naveed, Ansari, & Liaqat (2014), Tomer (2016), Saunila (2016), and Shahzad (2018) customer satisfaction is a function of many factors such as work environment and staff motivation. This therefore study deduces that some of the challenges facing the health sector emanate from the work environment.

Although literature supports that hospital food services form integral component of the care given to inward-patients, there is very little literature that exist in Kenyan context on the relationship between the variables. Most of the studies conducted on the constructs were conducted in developed countries like the U S and European countries (Qunxiang, Peng, & Lihua, 2012; Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Bertone, Lurton & Mutombo, 2016). Other studies have tried to link staff motivation to other variables such as working environment, quality of work and employees' performance (Linguli, 2013; Yinka, 2017). To fill these gaps, the study sought to establish the effect of work environment on inpatient satisfaction with food services in Kiambu County hospitals.

Literature Review

The expectancy theory was formulated by Vroom (1964) who defined satisfaction as a process through which individuals make choices from available alternative forms of voluntary activities. The individual makes choices based on estimates of how well the

expected results of a given behaviour are going to match up with or eventually lead to the desired results. Consequently, Simone (2015) alluded that satisfaction is a product of the individual's expectancy that a certain effort will lead to the intended performance.

Miner (2015) argued that the theory is based on three concepts: valence, expectancy, and instrumentality. Valence refers to the outcome that an individual expects to obtain after accomplishing a certain goal. On the other hand, expectancy refers to the expectations of a person that they will be able to accomplish a given task and therefore they deserve to get a reward while instrumentality is the faith by a person that the attainment of certain tasks will result in later rewards (Estes & Polnick, 2012). As viewed by Miner (2015) satisfaction level is influenced by valence, expectancy and instrumentality. The expectancy theory is used to predict the outcome based on the prevailing circumstances and expectations. It is therefore relevant in the study understand the significance of work environment on satisfaction of patients.

Studying the relationship amongst nurses' work setting and patient satisfaction in New York City, Williams (2018) evaluated nurses' perception about their work environment as well as patient satisfaction with their services. It was established that nurses who carefully listened to their patients and recommended their hospitals to their family members were perceived to have higher perception of their overall work environment which led to patient satisfaction. This study though relevant to the current study was conducted in New York City, meaning that its results cannot be generalised to the current context. According to Özer, Şantaş, Şantaş Şahin (2017), the effect of nurses' perceptions of labour setting and communication satisfaction on their intention to quit, the study utilised data collected from 175 nurses operating in an exceedingly public hospital within the town of Burdur, Turkey. Results discovered that there's associate inverse relationship between work atmosphere and intention to quit such as perceptions of the labour atmosphere become more and more positive, their communication satisfaction would increase, and their intention to quit decreases. Similarly, the results of this study might not be applicable in Kenya since it was based on data collected in a developed country, Turkey.

In a study on work atmosphere, job satisfaction, stress, and burnout among dialysis nurses, Hayes, Douglas and Bonner (2015) conducted a cross-sectional on-line survey of 417 dialysis nurses that surrounded nurse and work characteristics, the state capital apply atmosphere live, index of labour satisfaction, nursing stress scale and so the Maslach burnout inventory. The results showed that the nurses suffered high levels of burnout albeit their work atmosphere was reasonable and had acceptable levels of job satisfaction. However, the focus of the study was on nurses' satisfaction as opposed to patients' satisfaction.

Linguli (2013) the influence of labour atmosphere on employees' quality of labour life and commitment at Devki Steel Mills Limited concluded that work surrounding influences the value of work life of employees and obligation. The findings of the study were based on manufacturing firm while this study was conducted in the well-being sector. Additionally, the

study focused on employees' quality of labour life and assurance while the current study focused on customer (inpatients) satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. In keeping with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a descriptive survey helps the scientist to gather, summarize, present, and interpret information for the aim of clarification. Additionally, the design helps to ascertain the link between the dependent and the freelance variables and to work out any association between the variables.

The study included all hospital management staff, catering employees and all patients who are above 18 years and who are of sound mind and strong enough to respond to research questions. Respondents from Ruiru hospital were excluded since the facility was used for pre-testing of the study instruments. The study also excluded patients in the intensive care unit and high dependence unit, children under the age of eighteen, patients in communicable disease wards such as Covid-19 patients since they may be contagious, patients with serious injuries and immobile patients. Further, old patient over the age of 65 years also be excluded from the populace.

The target population for this research was drawn from the management staff, catering department employees and patients of level four and level five hospitals in Kiambu County. According to the county Government of Kiambu, the county has three level-five hospitals (Thika hospital, Kiambu hospital, and Gatundu hospital) and eleven level-4 hospitals (Lari, Tigoni, Kikuyu, Kabete/ wangige, Nyathuna, Githunguri, Ruiru, Karuri, Igegania, Kihara, and Kigumo hospitals). In these hospitals there are 97 management staff, 194 employees in the catering departments and approximately 2800 patients in the wards. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study targeted 1074 respondents as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Population Dispersal

Strata	Population size		Total	Percentage
	Level Four	Level Five		
Management	84	13	97	9.0%
Catering Employees	126	66	192	18.1%
Patients	653	132	785	72.9%
Total	863	211	1074	100.0%

Source: County Government of Kiambu (2019)

Stratified sampling and convenience sampling was used to choose the sample of the study. Stratified sampling was adopted since the population is heterogeneous and consists of management staff, catering employees, and patients. The population was first stratified into strata for management and employees and then convenience sampling was employed to select samples in each of the strata to confirm that every worker stands equal probability of being elite to avoid sample bias (Maxwell, 2012). Convenience sampling was used because

the actual respondents are those that were available in the hospital during the exact time of data collection.

From the population of 1074, a sample of 283 respondents as shown in Table 2 was selected. The sample size was selected using Kothari (2004) method with a ninety fifth confidence level.

Table 2: Sample Size

Strata	Population size		Sampling Factor	Sample Size	
	Level Four	Level Five		Level Four	Level Five
Management	84	13	0.26	22	3
Catering Employees	126	66	0.26	33	17
Patients	653	132	0.26	172	35
Sub Total	863	211		227	56
Total	1074			283	

Source: Author (2019)

The research relied on primary information collected through a semi structured form, and an interview schedule. The questionnaire had two sectors. The initial section contained queries on the demographic aspects of the respondents whereas the second section collected information on the research variables. The queries within the second sector were both structured in nature. Closed ended queries were used because they allowed the research to guide the respondents in answering the research questions while at the same time it makes data analysis easier (Taber, 2018). The questions were structured on a 5-point Likert Scale, with one signifying, powerfully disagree and five signifying powerfully agree. The interview guide was used to probe further information from the management and another one for the patients.

The study used primary data which was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Both descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were utilised in data analysis. So as to effectively analyse the first quantitative information, descriptive statistics as well as percentages, frequencies, means, and variance was used. Analysed knowledge was conferred in style of tables and charts.

Inferential analysis was shown through correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to show the relationship between work environment influence in-patient satisfaction. Regression analysis was conducted to show how work environment influences in-patient satisfaction with food services at level four and level five hospitals in Kiambu County. The regression model was as follows;

$$IPS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WE + \epsilon$$

Where: Y =Satisfaction with food services

β_0 = Constant Term;

β_1 = Beta coefficient;

WE= Work Environment;

ϵ = Error term

Results and Discussions

The study targeted 25 management, 50 catering staff and 207 patients. Interviews were used on the management staff and patients while questionnaires were used to obtain data from catering staff. Out of the 50 questionnaires issued to the catering staff, 44 filled in and returned. There was a response rate of 92%, 88% and 95% respectively. This response rate is excellent according to Mugenda (2009) who indicated that a response rate of above 70% is excellent.

Descriptive Statistics Results

In each of the statements below regarding work environment, the catering employees were asked to indicate the degree to that they agree or disagree with them. Where: 5 = strongly agree 4=Agree 3=Uncertain 2=Disagree 1= Strongly disagree. The results were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Work Environment

Elements of Work Environment	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std. Dev
The physical work environment condition provided by the hospital management is favourable.	15	19	7	2	1	4.023	0.850
Our management encourages employees to have good working relations amongst each other	10	22	5	4	3	3.727	0.817
The supervisors in our organisation are is friendly and motivating	8	24	5	5	2	3.705	0.868
We have favourable working hours	14	20	6	3	1	3.977	0.846

From the findings, the catering employees agreed that the physical work environment condition provided by the hospital management is favourable as shown by mean of 3.705, their organizations have favourable working hours as shown by mean of 3.977, the management encourages employees to have good working relations amongst each other as shown by mean of 3.727 and the supervisors in our organisation are is friendly and motivating as shown by a mean of 4.023. The findings concur with those of Williams (2018) who established that nurses who carefully listened to their patients and recommended their hospitals to their family members were perceived to have higher perception of their overall work environment which led to patient satisfaction.

The management staffs were asked to describe the physical working environment. They indicated that their office environment is well lit; there is a wide work area for enable employee to undertake their tasks well, the office is free from noise, it is fully furnished, the hospital adheres to occupational safety and health needs and all the equipment's that the employees need to effectively work have been provided.

Inpatient Satisfaction

The patients were asked to indicate the number of meals they are served in a day. The resulted were as illustrated in Figure 1.

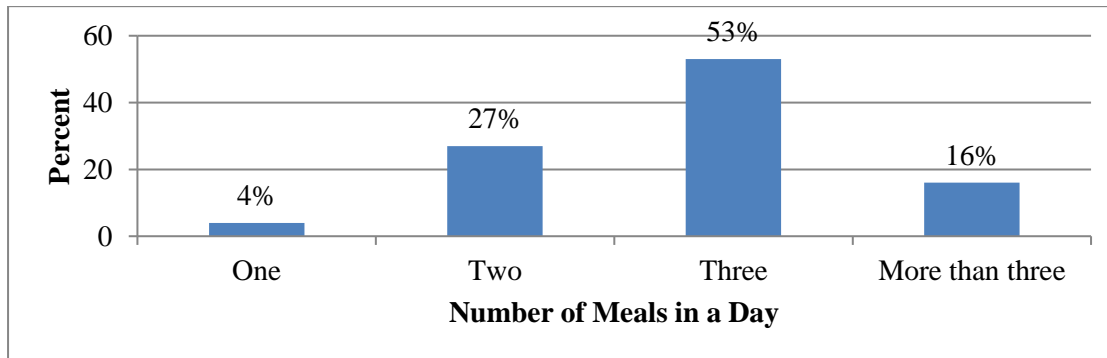


Figure 1: Number of Meals Served in a Day

The results show that 53% of the patients indicated that the hospital serves three meals in a day, 16% indicated more than three meals, 27% two meals and 4% one meal. This implies that most of the level four and five hospitals in Kiambu County serve three meals in a day. The patients were further asked to rate the quantity of food served in the hospitals. The results were as illustrated in Figure 2.

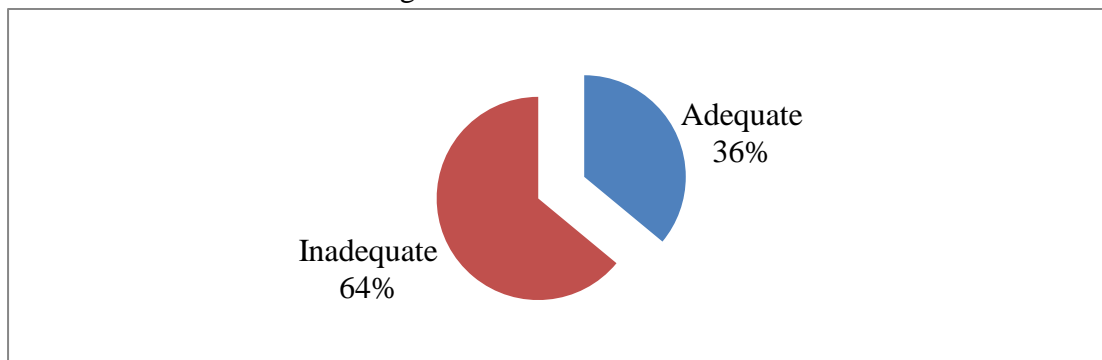


Figure 2: Quantity of Food Served

From the findings, 64% of the patients indicated that the quantity of food served in the hospitals in is inadequate while 36% indicated that the food served is adequate. This implies that in most hospitals the food served is inadequate.

The patients were asked to rate the food served in terms of the various class of foods: Vitamins, proteins carbohydrates. Figure 3, shows the findings.

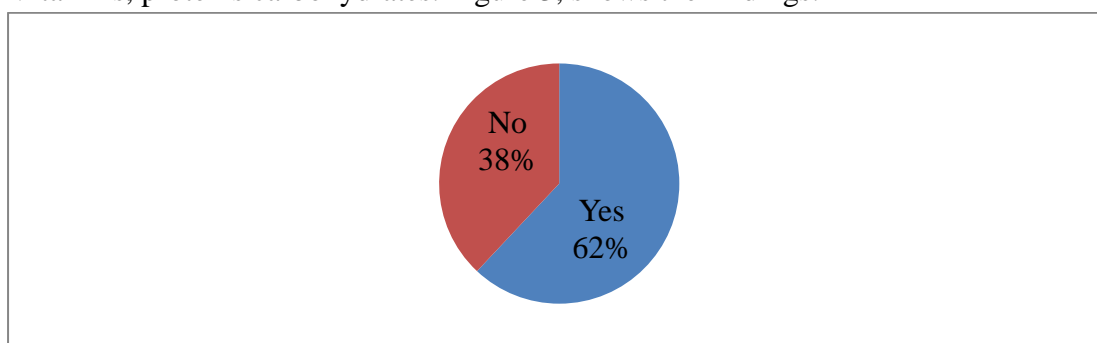


Figure 3: Rating Food Served in Terms of Various Classes of Foods

Results in Figure 3 show that 62% of the respondents indicated the food served contained vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates while 38% indicated no. This implies that most of the hospitals serve food in various classes of foods: Vitamins, proteins carbohydrates.

The patients were required to indicate if the food is served in time according to the meal timetable. Results were as indicated in Figure 4.

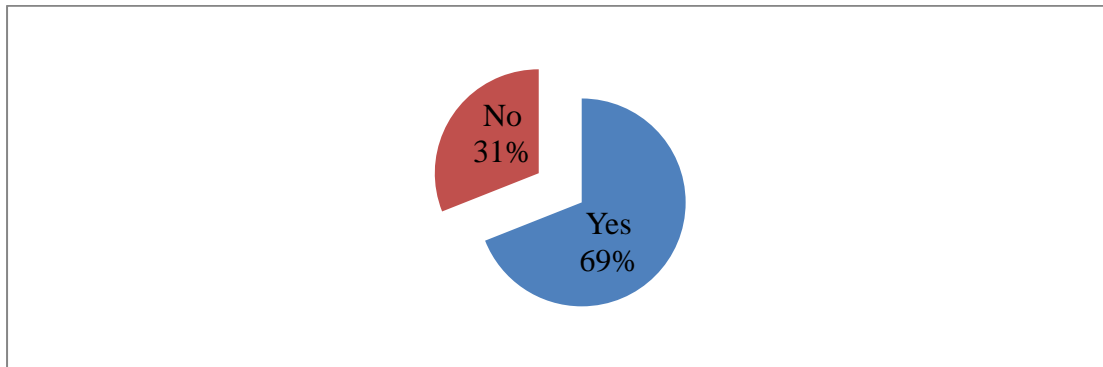


Figure 4: Timely Food Service

The findings show that, 69% of the patients agreed that food is served in time according to the meal timetable in the hospital while 31% indicated no. This implies that most of the hospitals serve food in time is per the timetable.

The patients were asked to indicate whether the food services are served hygienically, as shown in Figure 5.

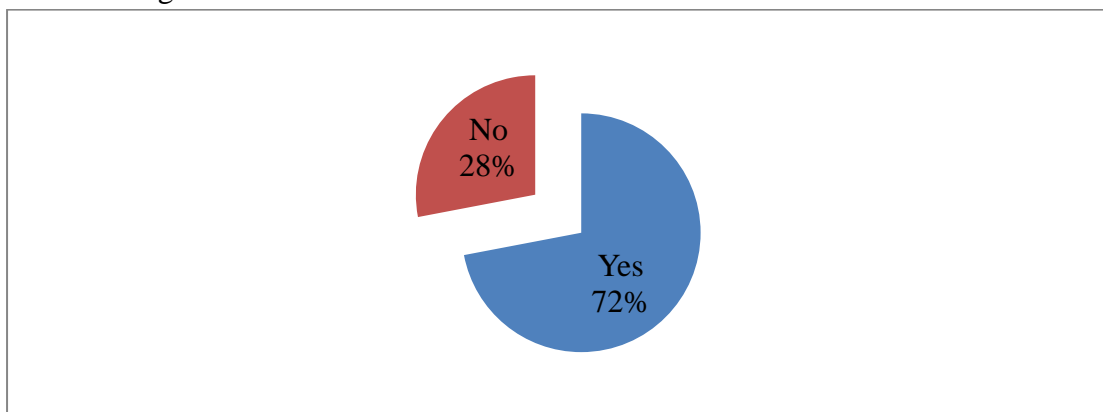


Figure 5: Hygiene in Food Service

The results show that 72% of the patients agreed that food services are served hygienically whereas 28% disagreed. This infers that in most of the hospital's food services are served hygienically.

The patients were asked to rate whether the catering staff are clean. Figure 6 shows the findings.

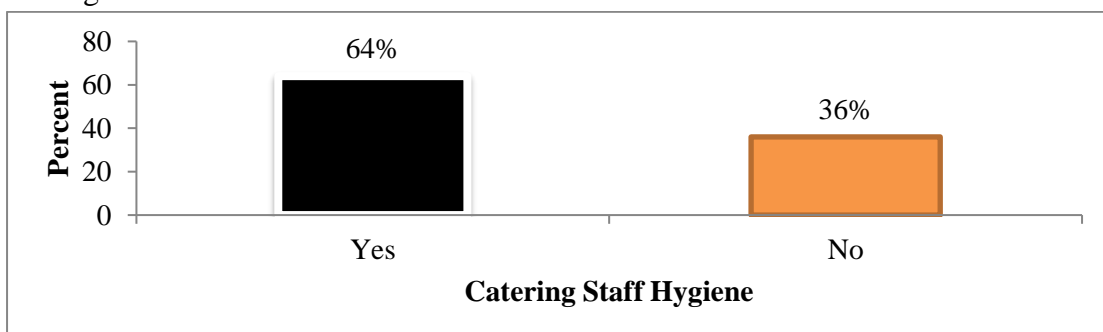


Figure 6: Catering Staff Hygiene

The results show that 64% of the patients indicated that the catering staff are clean while 36% indicated disagreed. This implies that in most of the hospitals the catering staff are clean. The patients were required to indicate their attitude of the catering staff in the hospital. How they approach the patients. The results were as illustrated in Figure 7.

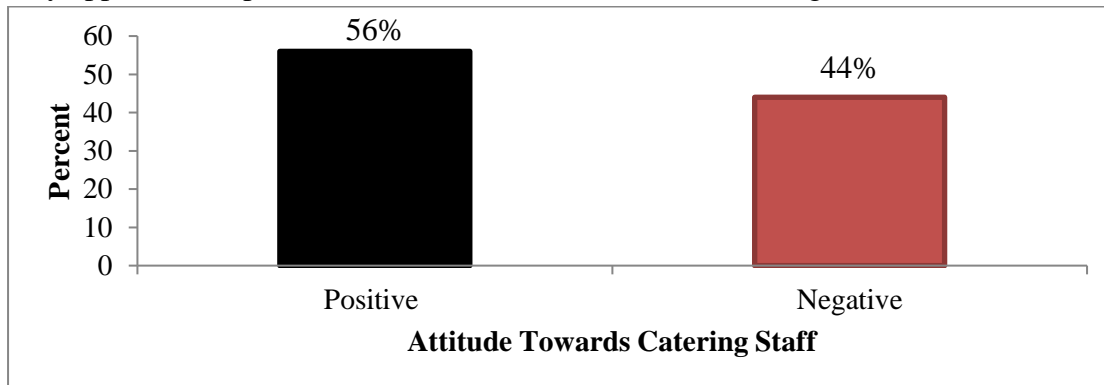


Figure 7: Patient Attitude Towards Catering Staff

From the findings, 56% of the patients had a positive attitude towards the catering staff while 44% had a negative attitude towards the catering staff. This implies that majority of the patients had a positive attitude towards the catering staff.

The patients were asked to indicate whether they complain about the food services provided by the hospital. The results were as illustrated in Figure 8.

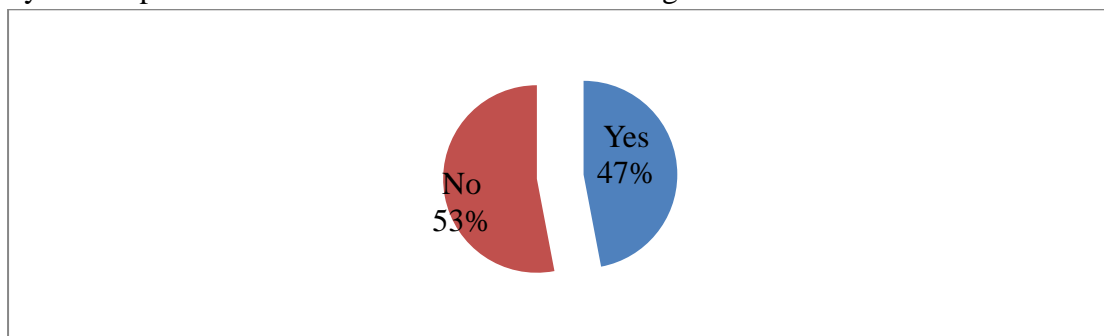


Figure 8: Complain About Food Service

From the findings in Figure 8, 53% of the patients indicated that they do not complain about the food services provided by the hospital while 47% indicated that they complain about food services. This implies that a small proportion do not complain about the food services provided by the hospital.

The patients were asked to indicate what can be done to improve the value of food services delivered by the hospital. The patients indicated that the hospitals should improve on their food delivery system, menu, workers and the service level provided. This can be achieved through excellent food, improved nutrition care and exceptional service. Further, the hospitals should recruit cooking-trained staff. Also, to prevent monotony in the menu, chefs ought to try new flavours and develop novel slant to traditional comfort foods like whole grains, organics and ethnic flavours.

Correlation Analysis Results

The study conducted Pearson moment correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results were as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlational Analysis

		Inpatient satisfaction	Work environment
Inpatient satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	44	
Work environment	Pearson Correlation	.789**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	44	44

The findings show that, work environment had a strong positive correlation with inpatient satisfaction as shown by ($r = 0.789$, $p = 0.002$). This infers that the variable was strongly correlated to inpatient satisfaction with food services in level four and level five hospitals in Kiambu County.

Regression Analysis Results

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

The study used model summary in analysing the variation of the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variables. The results were as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.669 ^a	.489	.484	.25192

The results show that the adjusted R² was 0.484. This implies that there was 48.4% variation in inpatient satisfaction with food services due to changes in work environment. The remaining proportion 51.6% infers that there are other factors influencing inpatient satisfaction with food services that were not part of this study.

Analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the data used was significant. The selected significance level was (0.05).

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	18.054	1	18.054	82.817	.001 ^b
1 Residual	9.165	42	0.218		
Total	27219	43			

The findings show that the significance level was 0.001 which is below 0.05 implying that the data used was significant. The f calculated was greater than the f critical from the f-distribution table ($82.817 > 3.604$). This implies that work environment significantly influences inpatient satisfaction with food services.

The coefficients results were fitted in the regression models as shown below;

$$Y = 0.409 + 0.362X_1$$

From the equation, holding work environment, at a constant, inpatient satisfaction would be 0.409.

Table 7: Beta Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.409	0.084		4.869	0.001
Work environment	0.362	0.095	0.289	3.811	0.002

From the findings, work environment had a statistically significant relationship with inpatient satisfaction with quality food services ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$). The relationship between work environment and inpatient satisfaction was positive as demonstrated by ($B = 0.362$). This means that an increase in a good work environment result to an increase in inpatient satisfaction with quality food services in level four and level five hospitals in Kiambu County.

Conclusion

The study revealed that work environment had a strong positive correlation with inpatient satisfaction. Also, work environment had a statistically significant relationship with inpatient satisfaction with quality food services. The relationship between work environment and inpatient satisfaction with quality food services was positive. The study thus concludes that a unit improvement in the working environment would result to a unit increase in inpatient satisfaction with quality food services in level four and level five hospitals in Kiambu County.

Recommendation

The relationship between work environment and inpatient satisfaction was positive. The study recommends that the hospitals should improve their work environment by ensuring work-life balance and providing a wider work space. This helps employees to work efficiently

Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

The study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing an empirical model that can be used by both private and public hospitals in Kiambu county and beyond to develop a framework for ensuring that an optimum work environment is provided to catering staff to ensure that patients are satisfied with food services in their hospitals.

The study also contributes to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence of the relationship that exists between work environment on inpatient satisfaction with food services in a hospital set up based on hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study further contributes to the body of knowledge by contextualising the applicability of the expectancy theory in the health sector which was previously missing in literature. The theory opines that patient would be satisfied when they get good services from the hospitals.

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