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**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT ON
PRODUCTIVITY AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: A CASE OF
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
SOCIOLOGY (MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY)**

2012

DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved children and their father who have given me the support and motivation i needed to undertake this research.

•

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I give thanks to the almighty God for enabling me to pursue this study. Great appreciation also to the University of Nairobi Management for partially sponsoring me. My deepest appreciation goes to my supervisor, Prof. E. K. Mburugu for his relentless guidance, understanding and patience. May the Almighty God bless you all.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION.....	"
DEDICATION.....	Hi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4
1.3 Research Questions.....	5
1.4 Research Objectives.....	5
1.5 Justification of the Study.....	6
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2The Concept of Work Environment and Productivity.....	7
2.3 Physical Environment and Employee Productivity.....	9
2.3.1 Lighting.....	11
2.3.2 Noise.....	11
2.3.3 Temperature.....	12
2.4 Social Support and Employee Productivity.....	12
2.5 Fringe Benefits and Employee Productivity.....	14
2.6 Summary.....	15
2.7 Theoretical Framework.....	16

2.7.1 Social Exchange Theory	16
2.7.2 Person-Environment Fit Theory	18
2.8 Conceptual Framework Description.....	19
2.9 Summary and Gaps in the Literature Review.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Site Description.....	22
3.4 Target Population.....	23
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures.....	23
3.6 Data Collection Methods.....	23
3.6.1 Survey	24
3.6.2 Key Informant Interview	24
3.6.3 Secondary Data	25
3.7 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments.....	25
3.8 Ethical Considerations.....	25
3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation.....	26
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	27
4.1 Introduction.....	27
4.2 Socio - Demographic Data.....	27
4.2.1 Age Distribution.....	28
4.2.2 Levels of Education	28
4.2.3 Administrative Level	30
4.2.4 Duration in Current Position	30
4.3 Physical Environment Impact on Productivity.....	31
4.3.1 Noise	32
4.3.2 Effect of noise distraction.....	32
4.3.3 Temperature	33

4.3.4 Variation in room temperature in the workplace.....	34
4.3.5 Lighting in the workplace.....	36
4.3.6 Lighting.....	37
4.4 Job related factors influencing Productivity.....	38
4.5 Fringe benefits influence on work environment.....	40
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...	44
5.1 Introduction.....	44
5.2 Summary.....	44
5.2.1 Physical factors affecting productivity.....	44
5.2.2 Job related factors influence on productivity.....	45
5.2.3 Fringe benefits influence on productivity.....	45
5.3 Conclusion.....	45
5.4 Recommendations.....	46
REFERENCES.....	48
APPENDICES.....	59
APPENDIX ONE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.....	59
APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES	60
APPENDIX 3: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	65

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework	21

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Sample of the Population.....	23
Table 4.1 Gender of Respondents.....	28
Table 4.2: Age of Respondents.....	28
Table 4.3: Level of Education among Respondents.....	29
Table 4.4: Administrative Level of Employees.....	30
Table 4.5: Years at Current Position.....	31
Table 4.6: Physical Environment Impact on Productivity.....	32
Table 4.7: Work Environment is Quiet.....	32
Table 4.8: Quiet and Undisturbed Time Alone.....	32
Table 4.9: Workspace has Many Noise Distractions.....	33
Table 4.9: Extent to Which Room Temperature Affects Work Productivity.....	34
Table 4.10: Overall Temperature of Workspace in Cold Season.....	34
Table 4.11: Overall Temperature in the Hot Season.....	35
Table 4.12: Control of Airflow or Temperature in Workspaces.....	36
Table 4.13: Efficient Lighting in Workspace.....	37
Table 4.14: Amount of Natural Light in Office.....	37
Table 4.15: Job Related Factors Impact on Productivity.....	40
Table 4.16: Knowledge of Fringe Benefits in the Organisation.....	40
Table 4.17: Fringe Benefits Offered in the Organisation.....	41
Table 4.18: Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits Offered in Organisation.....	42
Table 4.19: Number of Days absent from Work.....	43
Table 4.20: Frequency of Sick Leave Days.....	42

Table 1: Sample of the Population
Table 2: Gender of Respondents
Table 3: Age of Respondents
Table 4: Level of Education
Table 5: Administrative Level of Respondents
Table 6: Years at Current Position
Table 7: Physical Environment
Table 8: Work Environment
Table 9: Quiet and Undisturbed Work
Table 10: Workspace has Many Features
Table 11: Extent to Which Blame is Placed
Table 12: Overall Temperature of Workspace
Table 13: Control of Airflow in Workspace
Table 14: Efficient Lighting in Workspace
Table 15: Amount of Natural Light in Workspace
Table 16: Job Related Factors
Table 17: Knowledge of Fringe Benefits
Table 18: Fringe Benefits Offered
Table 19: Satisfaction with Fringe Benefits
Table 20: Number of Days absent
Table 21: Frequency of Sick Leave

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SET Social Exchange Theory

UoN University of Nairobi

SPSS Statistical Package for Social Scientists

DSP Direct Service Providers

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of the work environment on the productivity of administrative staff. The factors under investigation in the study were the physical environment, job related factors and the fringe benefits impact on administrative staff productivity. The study was guided by the specific objectives; to identify influence of physical work environment on productivity among administrative employees in the University of Nairobi; to assess the relationship between the office ergonomics and employee productivity among administrative staff in the University of Nairobi and to establish the extent that job - related factors affect employee productivity among administrative staff at the University of Nairobi.

The target population of the study consisted of 161 Senior Administrative staff and Administrative Assistant staff in six colleges, Central Administration and Students' Welfare Authority where a sample of 93 respondents was carried out. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data which included the questionnaires and five key informant interviews. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Study findings indicated that there is an impact of the physical environment with regard to the noise factor which was identified to be disruptive and difficult to control particularly among the open plan office design some offices. Job related factors were also indicated to have an impact on the productivity of employees which was ranked poorly by the study participants.

The study respondents acknowledged the management's effort to provide fringe benefits in the course of their work among which medical cover was the most coveted. Respondents indicated that management should consider the harmonization of fringe benefits offered to staff across Departments and Colleges. Based on these findings the study made the following recommendations, the University of Nairobi should continuously assess the physical working conditions of administrative staff and implement measures. University management to increase the number of potted plants in

staff work spaces to counter the effect of high humidity which has been observed to contribute to illness; The university of Nairobi management should consider harmonization of fringe benefits offered to administrative employees across the colleges.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Human Resource Managers nowadays are faced with crucial issues of occupational health and safety than before. This is because the workers just like any other resources require maintenance and care in order to maximize their productivity (Casio, 1996). Most people spend fifty percent of their lives within indoor environments, which greatly influence their mental status, actions, abilities and performance (Sundstrom, 1994). Better outcomes and increased productivity is assumed to be the result of better workplace environment. Better physical environment of office will boost the employees and ultimately improve their productivity. The constitution of Kenya (2010) Article (41) Section 2 (b) states that "every worker has the right to reasonable working conditions." Conducive work environment ensures the well-being of employees which invariably will enable them exert themselves to their roles with all vigour that may translate to higher productivity (Akinyele, 2007).

The concept of productivity is often measured differently, however. Sometimes in a more subjective manner, by asking about the degree to which the work environment influences productivity (Vischer, 1989) sometimes in a more objective manner by asking about the number of hours or percentage of time that is lost (Raw, 1990; Learnan, 1994). Some researchers use the term "job performance". A number of indicators are scored to provide an indication of this. Brill (1984) uses; the quantity of work, quality of work, meeting deadlines, frequency of errors, responsibilities, creativity, interpersonal relations, independence. Creating a work environment in which employees are productive is essential to increased profits for an organization, corporation or small business. Principles of management dictate that, to maximize employee productivity center around two major areas of focus: personal motivation and the infrastructure of the work environment (Chandrasekar, 2011).

According to Beer et al. (1994) model of human resource management, work systems cannot only affect commitment, competence, cost effectiveness and congruence but also have long term consequence for workers' well being; there is some evidence to indicate that work systems designs may have effects on physical health, mental health and longevity of life itself. The mind and body need to be in a state of health and well-being for work and concentration. This is a prime prerequisite for productivity. High productivity brings a sense of achievement for the individual as well as increased profits for the work organization (Al-Anzi, 2009).

Kohun (1992) defines work environment as "an entirety" which comprises the totality of forces, actions and other influential factors that are currently and/or potentially contending with the employee's activities and performance. Brenner (2004) argued that work environment designed to suit employee's satisfaction and free flow of exchange of ideas is a better medium of motivating employees towards higher productivity. Job - related issues are also a factor within the work environment which has a bearing on the job satisfaction which in turn influences productivity of staff. According to the Steadman Report (2007) 29% of University of Nairobi staff identified job-related factors as a key satisfaction driver coming second after Organisation focus at 49% which was the most popular.

Work environment includes some factors, which either contributes positively or negatively to achieving maximum employee productivity (Elywood, 1999). The factors which either contributes positively or negatively to employee productivity are: temperature, humidity and air flow, noise, lighting, employee personal aspects, contaminants and hazards in the working environment, types of sub-environment. How well employees engage with the organization, especially with their immediate environment, influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and, ultimately, how long they stay in the job (Al-Anzi, 2009). Brown et al. (2003) suggests a positive relationship between employees' perception of performance-related pay plans and management-employee

relations. For instance, administrative staff in the University of Nairobi have to undergo performance appraisal from their immediate supervisors for promotion purposes (UoN Strategic Plan 2008-2013).

The quality of work depends upon safe and healthy working conditions in determining employee's job behavior. The organizational climate is an important indicator of employee behavior as a combination of social and psychological factors. It is found that working conditions are attached with employees' job involvement and job satisfaction that ultimately leads to better performance of the employees (Scott et al., 2000).

In discussing the notion of the work environment, it is important to include the concept of office ergonomics. Ergonomics is the scientific study of human work. It considers the physical and mental capabilities and limits of the worker as he or she interacts with tools, equipment, work methods, tasks and the working environment. (Hayworth, 1991) Ergonomics reduces the risk of injury by adapting the work to fit the person instead of forcing the person to adapt to the work. In addition to injury prevention, ergonomics is also concerned with enhancing work performance, by removing the barriers that exist in many work places that prevent employees from performing to the best of their abilities. Another benefit of applying ergonomics to office work is that it helps people work more effectively, efficiently, and productively at their jobs. Office design incorporates both ergonomics and work flow, which examine the way in which work is performed in order to optimize layout (Hameed & Amjad, 2009). Miles (2000) found that the additional investment in ergonomic tables and chairs for workers yielded a 5-month payback in terms of increased productivity.

According to Hameed and Amjad (2009) the performance of an employee is measured by the output that the individual produces and it is related to productivity. At corporate level, productivity is affected by factors such as employees, technology and objectives of the organization. It is also dependent on the physical environment and its affect on health and employees' performance.

The word 'administration' derives from the Middle English word *administracioun*, which has particular meanings in various contexts, but all retain a sense of service. In the administrative environment, hierarchy means a graded organization of several successive steps or levels that are interlinked, integrating the efforts of various individuals with one another (Collins, 1999). Administrative employees are referred to as non-managerial staff or employees. Their output is usually monitored and managed from the top to the bottom level, in other words in a top-down approach.

1.2 Problem Statement

Recently public universities have received an influx of students through different programs such as the parallel programmes. This has led to an increase in management and administration challenges to be able to effectively and efficiently ensure the smooth operations aimed at facilitating students' and academic staff operations. The ability of administrative staff to undertake these duties and responsibilities have received much discussion and have led to implementation of performance measurements to influence delegation of duties among administrative professionals. However, hardly any research has been undertaken to identify the work environment in which university administrative staff operate and how this influences their performance and inevitably contributes to their productivity. Despite improved pay packages and promotions based on these performance appraisal, workers productivity is affected by their well-being in the workplace given that employees spend a considerable amount of time in their workplace. Employee absenteeism is major constraint to productivity in the workplace. For instance the University of Nairobi Strategic Plan 2008-2013 identifies absenteeism among university staff to be at 12%.

There is therefore a need for organizations and employers to acknowledge the environment in which their employees are working in order to sustain and promote employee well-being which invariably leads to productivity. The study focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of administrative employees that might affect their

performance and well-being. If the needs regarding the working environment of these employees can be identified and met - at least to some extent - the morale and productivity of employees should increase.

1.3 Research Questions

1. To what extent does the physical work environment influence productivity among administrative staff at the University of Nairobi?
2. To what extent do office ergonomics affect administrative staff at the University of Nairobi?
3. To what extent do job-related factors influence administrative staff at the University of Nairobi?
4. What approaches can be adopted to improve the work environment for administrative staff at the University of Nairobi

1.4 Research Objectives

The overall objective of the study was to identify the influence of the work environment on the productivity among administrative employees at the University of Nairobi. The study was guided by the following objectives.

1. To identify influence of physical work environment on productivity among administrative employees in the University of Nairobi
2. To assess the effects of office ergonomics among administrative staff in the University of Nairobi
3. To establish the extent that job - related factors affect employee productivity among administrative staff at the University of Nairobi
4. To recommend ways of improving work environment to increase employee productivity among administrative staff at the university of Nairobi

1.5 Justification of the Study

The present study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the concept of the work environment and employee productivity in the service sector particularly in public universities institutions which continue to register high number of students given their role in national development. Secondly, the study will also assess the effect of work environment and identify efforts towards the improvement of the work environment by employers to introduce and promote employee well being. The study will assist departmental manager and supervisors to identify strategies they can implement to increase employee performance and productivity at the work place by providing a conducive work environment. The study will also inform policy and decision makers on the importance of a conducive work environment on the well being of their employees thus improving on productivity and organizational performance.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focused on the University of Nairobi which comprises six colleges located within Nairobi and Kiambu counties; although there are other centers around the country the study would not be able to undertake the research among all centers due to the resource constraints. The study focused on the organizational conditions that may be important for the psychosocial work environment and for health. The study further limited its scope to the University of Nairobi administrative employees.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviewed empirical and theoretical literature on the concept of the work environment and the perceived impact that it has on employee productivity. The section includes topics on the concept of work environment and employee productivity the physical environment and employee productivity and social support and employee productivity. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study are also introduced.

2.2 Concept of the Work Environment and Productivity

According to Leblebici (2012), many executives are under the mistaken impression that the level of employee performance on the job is proportional to the size of the employee's compensation package. Work environment is the combination of factors (social support, physical working conditions, job characteristics, training and development and communication process) that influence work. Wells (2000) in recent years, says that employees' comfort on the job, determined by workplace conditions and environment has been recognized as an important factor for measuring their productivity. Researchers have demonstrated that the physical environmental quality expectation of employees' facilities affect job perception, attitudes, and job satisfaction (Leather et al., 2003; Lee & Brand, 2005). Evidence is accumulating that the physical environment in which people work affects both job performance and job satisfaction (Clements-Crome, 2000; Shaw & Readon, 2004).

Srivastava (2008) argues that perceived adequacy or inadequacy of work environments both physical and psychosocial, extends noticeable effect on employees' job satisfaction, performance and perception of effectiveness of an organization. Productivity is an important factor in every organization. The term 'work environment' is used in stress

research to incorporate psychosocial dimensions as well as employee-employer relations, motivation and advancement, job demands and social support.

Barber (2001) undertaking a study to ascertain factors that affect employees' productivity found that aspects regarding technology, storage space, quiet space, climate control, personalizing the workspace and its visual appeal were the most important factors. Research indicates that improving the working environment reduces complaints and absenteeism while increasing productivity (Roelofsen, 2002). Wells (2000) notes workplace satisfaction has been associated with job satisfaction. Studies show the link between employee health and aspects of the physical environment at work such as indoor air quality, ergonomic furniture and lighting (Dilani, 2004; Milton, Glencross, & Walters, 2000; Veitch & Newsham, 2000).

Block and Stokes (1989) also found that the layout of an office influences productivity, with the extent of influence depending on the kind of work being undertaken. People carrying out difficult tasks are happier and also perform better in private offices than in non-private offices. Conversely, employees performing simple tasks perform better in non-private settings. Working in an open-plan office can, however, lead to distraction and disruption, which have a negative effect on performance (Hedge, 1982). A study by de Frias and Schaie (2001) found significant differences in perceived work environment based on age, gender, and occupation type. Employees aged 50-56 had the highest perceived autonomy, control, and innovation in the workplace. Men, in all occupation types except blue collar, tended to have a higher perception of the work environment. Patterson et al., (2003) found that the more satisfied workers are with their jobs the better the company is likely to perform in terms of subsequent profitability and particularly productivity. Sekar (2011) argues that the relationship between work, the workplace and the tools of work, workplace becomes an integral part of work itself.

2.3 The Physical Environment and Employee Productivity

Contemporary literature on stress in the work environment typically focuses on psychosocial factors that affect job performance, strain and employee health. Some theoretical models of stress at work have included the physical environment as a factor (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). McCoy and Evans (2005) say that physical elements and workspace design have an important role in determining social relationships and networks that develop at work. In addition, the researcher increasingly found many links between employee health and aspects of the physical environment at work such as indoor air quality, ergonomic furniture and lighting (Dilani, 2004; Milton, Glencross, & Walters, 2000; Veitch & Newsham, 2000).

In their overview of stress related to the physical work environment, McCoy and Evans (2005) go beyond ergonomics to characterize as stressful those situations where elements of the physical environment interfere with the attainment of work objectives. Studies have found that aspects such as openness, noise, lighting and temperature can affect productivity. Lan et al., (2010); Niemela et al., (2002) have revealed that temperature has an effect as long as the task concerned lasts at least 60 minutes (Lorsch & Ossama (1994) in Lan et al., (2009). Lan et al. (2010) investigated the impact of three different indoor temperatures (17°C, 21°C and 28°C) on productivity. They found that employees felt slightly uncomfortable in both the coolest and warmest of these climates and were less motivated and that they experienced their workload as more onerous, with a consequent decline in productivity.

Leblebici (2012) acknowledges that higher salaries and compensation benefits may seem the most likely way to attract employees. However, quality of the physical workplace environment may also have a strong influence on a company's ability to recruit and retain talented people. Ryan and Deci (2000) also note that although compensation package is one of the extrinsic motivation tools, it has a limited short term effect on employees' performance. A widely accepted[^] assumption is that better workplace environment

motivates employees and produces better results. Some factors in workplace environment may be considered keys affecting employee's engagement and productivity. It is found that working conditions are attached with employees' job involvement and job satisfaction that ultimately leads to better performance of the employees (Scott et al., 2000). Studies indicate that, the physical layout of the workspace, along with efficient management processes, is playing a major role in boosting employees' productivity and improving organizational performance (Uzee, 1999; Leaman and Bordass, 1993; Williams et al. 1985).

An organization's physical environment and its design and layout can affect employee behavior in the workplace. Brill (1992) estimates that improvements in the physical design of the workplace may result in a 5-10 percent increase in employee productivity. Statt (1994) argues that the modern work physical environment is characterized by technology; computers and machines as well as general furniture and furnishings. To achieve high levels of employee productivity, organizations must ensure that the physical environment is conducive to organizational needs facilitating interaction and privacy, formality and informality, functionality and cross-disciplinarily. Consequently, the physical environment is a tool that can be leveraged both to improve business results (Mohr, 1996) and employee well-being (Huang, Robertson & Chang, 2004).

Rowan and Wright (1995) highlight the importance of ergonomics in a workplace, as injuries and illnesses interface the employee and machine system. So, they opine the need for ergonomics in a workplace. They proposed that physical environmental factors like temperature, noise, flow of air, humidity, and furniture affects the employees' productivity. The office environment in which employees work and undertake most of their activities can impact on their productivity. The quality and quantity of work generated by employees are influenced by the office environment (Keeling & Kallaus, 1996), while Quible (2000) points out those poor environmental conditions can increase inefficiency as well as reduce their job satisfaction, which in turn will impact on the financial well-being of the organisation. Huges (2007) survey of two thousand employees

in various organizations and industries at multiple levels found that a better workplace affects attitude of employees and enhance their productivity. There are several elements of the physical work environment that may affect the productivity of the staff in the organisation. The next section of the study literature review covers these sub - themes.

2.3.1 Lighting

Employees use lighting for visual tasks. Indoor lighting is relied upon because of lack of external or natural light inside office spaces (Mills et al. 2007). Therefore bad lighting can be defined as incorrect lighting for a particular task and 'good lighting' is said to increase productivity, reduce stress and may also assist in making indoor environments more pleasant and Mills et al. (2007). Cushman. (n.d.) stated that problems caused by bad lighting include headaches, eyestrain, general bodily discomfort, rates of human error may increase and bad light which and also reduce alertness. Taking these complaints into consideration, the researcher may conclude that bad lighting may have an impact on the economics of the business (Cushman, n.d.).

2.3 2 Noise

Cohen and Weinstein 1982 in Navai and Veitch (2003) defined noise as a physiological concept involving unwanted sound perceived by the listener as being unpleasant, bothersome, distracting or physiologically harmful. Irregular sound such as speech is said to be the most bothersome. The hum of a computer is less stressful because it is a constant sound. Glass et al. (1971) in Navai & Veitch, (2003) suggest that sound that is controlled by the individual is also seen as less stressful. Therefore conversations from co-workers and music are seen as more stressful because they are uncontrollable sounds. Noise stemmed from communication is not the only cause of noise on office environments. External noise including traffic and other external noises such as office equipment may also cause discomfort in office environments.

2.3.3 Temperature

There have been contradicting statements about the optimum comfort temperature for humans. Bennett (1977) in Abdou's (2007) paper states that the optimum temperature for a comfortable environment is twenty five degrees Celsius. Seppanen; Fisk William & Lei, (2006) says that the optimum temperature for productivity is about twenty two degrees Celsius. Both sources agree that incorrect temperature decreases productivity and both suggest that temperature is an important factor to consider when analyzing work environments. A Dutch study showed that absenteeism could be reduced by thirty four percent when employees were able to control their own temperature in their environments. (Abdou 2007)

2.4 Social Support and Employee Productivity

There are several factors that influence job satisfaction include pay, promotion, recognition, working conditions, supervision and leadership, skills and abilities, organizational policies and procedures. The level of job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, the quality of supervision, social relationships with the work group and degree to which individuals succeed or fail in their work (Armstrong, 2006). Social support has been defined by Theorell et al (2003) as good relations between employees and between employees and managers. Support is also perceived as having two separate components, one being emotional and the other instrumental. Emotional support concerns the employee's personal feelings, while instrumental support refers to practical help and relief among employees. Job -related factors refer to the support that an employee receives from their supervisor and also from their colleagues in the workplace.

Hall (2007) studying the relationship between supervisor support and Registered Nurses outcome in nursing care units found a positive correlation between perceived supervisor support and nurse occupation-related outcomes. According to Karasek & Theorell (1990) psycho-social stressors in the., work environment, such as quantitative overload,

qualitative under-load, lack of control and lack of social support, and the interaction of such conditions, may have harmful effects on an individual's health and well-being.

The term 'work environment' is used in stress research to incorporate psychosocial dimensions such as employee-employer relations, motivation and advancement, job demands and social support. The social support means the help that an individual receives from his/her co-workers, supervisor and colleagues to perform his/her work effectively. The literature reveals social support as the structure of relationships. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1994) maintain it can be divided into two categories such as the work related social support and the personal social support. The present study deals with work social support that may come from the work place within organizations including the supervisor and the co-workers.

Research indicates that people having social support at work are more productive than people who do not have social support at work (Castilla, 2005). The co-workers provide a sense of identity, support and friendship to other individuals (Bowler and Brass, 2006). Lambert (2005) was able to show in his findings that it is the number of management functions in the work environment which appear to have been the key factor inhibiting higher productivity. Imtiaz and Ahmad (2010) study on the impact Of Stress On Employee Productivity, Performance and turnover found many workers express that their job is prominent source of stress in their life but reduced workload, improve management and supervision, better pay, benefits, and vacation times can reduce the stress among employees.

Accordingly Lambert (2005) identifies the management functions to provision of adequate fringe benefits, supervision, work method and organization. Nwachukwu (1987) also identified supervision, subordinates, the environment and outcome as the major variables that influence productivity. In his study on the influence of the work environment on employee productivity in Nigeria Taiwo (2010) found that only a small fraction of employees' indicated strict supervision as an approach that would increase

their productivity levels. Abualrub (2004) in a study of the nurse working environment found that, perceived social support from co-workers enhance job performance and decrease job stress. Similarly, it is suggested that supportive management practices are crucial to achieve high performance (Drach-Zahavy, 2004).

Another related aspect of social support is communication defined as the transmission of meaning from one person to another or many people, verbally or non-verbally. Chen et al. (2006) found that there are positive relationships between organization communication, organizational commitment and job performance. Effective interpersonal communication skills are essential for social interaction, building and maintenance of relationships. Poor communication skills can cause irrevocable damage to relationships; affecting productivity, satisfaction, performance, morale, trust, respect, self confidence and even physical health (Matin et al., 2010).

Backhouse and Drew (1992) discovered that 80 per cent of meetings between colleagues occur spontaneously - when, for example, they encounter each other by chance in a corridor or the staff canteen. Although communication is not the same as productivity, organisations often assume that the former promotes the latter. Collaborative learning can have a more positive effect than individual learning on deep learning of complex cognitive tasks (Kirschner et al., 2009) and according to Strubler and York (2007) collaboration can lead to an enhancement of productivity.

2.5 Fringe Benefits and Employee Productivity

A study conducted by Ellickson and Logsdon (2002) reflected that job satisfaction of public sector employees was significantly influenced by perceptions of employee satisfaction in terms of pay, promotional opportunities, relationships with supervisors, employees' performance management systems and fringe benefits. Taiwo (2010) notes that both management and workers of enterprises are less considerate of work environment as having a great influence on productivity of workers as resulting from

workers' negative attitude to work while the workers' view of low productivity may stem from poor pay system, absence of fringe benefits, inappropriate leadership style, wrong job location and unfavorable organizational change.

Taiwo (2010) study on the influence of work environment on workers' productivity found factors in the internal work environment particularly; the job related pressures also have their negative effect on labour productivity. Coupled with these are the human factors, namely, the worker's relationship with management and, or co-workers, the level of fringe benefits particularly the non-cash benefits, as well as factors associated with the workers' place of residents.

2.6 Summary

Job performance is the result of three factors: skill, effort and the nature of work conditions. The skills include knowledge, abilities and competencies the employee brings to the job; effort is the degree of motivation the employee puts forth toward getting the job done and the nature of work conditions is the degree of accommodation of these conditions in facilitating the employee's productivity (Kazmi et al., 2008). Conducive work environment including friendly human resource policies may enhance employee productivity, organizational commitment and overall performance (Chiang & Birtch, 2010).

The literature reviewed suggests the work environment can be described in terms of physical and behavioral components. These components can further be divided in the form of different independent variables. Office environment can be described in terms of physical and behavioral components. These components can further be divided in the form of different independent variables. Stallworth and Kleiner (1996) argue that increasingly an organization's physical layout is designed around employee needs in order to maximize productivity and satisfaction.

There are also several definitions of productivity in the reviewed literature. For instance Rolloos (1997) defined the productivity as that which people can produce with the least effort. Productivity is also defined by Sutermeister (1976) as output per employee hour, quality considered. Productivity is a ratio to measure how well an organization (or individual, industry, country) converts input resources (labour, materials, machines etc.) into goods and services. Another proxy to measure productivity involves considering performance increase as when there is less absenteeism, fewer employee leaving early and less breaks; whereas increase in performance can be measured by the number of units produced per employee per hour.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The following section draws on theoretical models that have been used in the study of the work environment and its impact to employees' productivity. The research adopted the social exchange theory while making a case for the person - fit environment theory which has also been used to explain and discuss the work environment in organizations.

2.7.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior. Its venerable roots can be traced back to the 1920s (Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1925), bridging such disciplines as anthropology (Firth, 1967; Sahlins, 1972), social psychology (Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958; Thibault & Kelley, 1959), and sociology (Blau, 1964). Social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations (Emerson, 1976). These interactions are usually seen as interdependent and contingent on the actions of another person.

One of the basic tenets of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments. To do so, parties must abide by certain "rules" of exchange. Rules of exchange form a "normative definition of the situation that forms among or is adopted by the participants in an exchange relation" (Emerson, 1976). The study borrows

from contemporary management research; the aspect of SET that has garnered by far the most research attention has been the notion of workplace relationships (Shore, Tetrick, & Barksdale, 1999; Shore et al., 2004). Social exchange relationships evolve when employers "take care of employees," which thereby creating beneficial consequences. This implies that the social exchange relationship is a mediator or intervening variable; advantageous and fair transactions between strong relationships and these relationships produce effective work behavior and positive employee attitudes.

The general presumption is that workers can form distinguish-able social exchange relationships, however operationalized, with their immediate supervisor (Liden et al., 1997), coworkers (Deckop, Cirka, & Andersson, 2003; Flynn, 2003), employing organizations (Moorman, Blakely & Niehoff, 1998) these relationships have an impact on employee behaviour. Individuals (employees) return the benefits they receive; they are likely to match goodwill and helpfulness toward the party with whom they have a social exchange relationship (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor, 2000). Literature reviewed exhibits different models used in reference to the social exchange theory but for the scope of the study the researcher adopts the perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange model and the supervisory support model. The social exchange therefore is relevant for the study as it provide a basis for the work environment influence to employee job performance, productivity while reducing instance of absenteeism. The models described below provide a theoretical guidance and understanding of the study phenomenon.

Perceived organizational support has long been conceptualized in SET terms (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 1990; Eisenberger et al., 2002). The benefits of perceived organizational support often are understood in reciprocal terms—an employee who sees the employer as supportive is likely to return the gesture. When perceived organizational support is high, workers are (under some conditions) more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999; Moorman et al., 1998), higher job performance (Eisenberger et al., 2001) and

reduced absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Adding supervisory support which posits that support leads to commitment raises interest in a supervisory focus as a manifestation of the exchange process. Although evidence is sparse, this dynamic does seem likely. Supervisory support and perceived organizational support are consistently related.

2.7.2 Person-Environment Fit Theory

One of the prominent models used in the psychosocial research to explain illnesses related to working conditions is the Person-Environment Fit (PE fit) model that was developed at the beginning of the 1970's. The Person - Environment fit theory was developed among others by French and colleagues (French & R. Kahn, 1962; French et al., 1974) through later developments and refinements by Caplan (1983, 1987), Harrison (1978, 1985), and Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Cooper, 1990).

This model concerns the interaction between the individual and his/her environment where it is assumed strain arises when there is a gap between personal motives (e.g., involvement, economic benefit and self-development) and work feedback, or between job demands (e.g., work load and complexity) and the individual's ability to deal with these requirements.

The core premise of Person -Environment fit theory is that stress arises not from the person or environment separately, but rather by their fit or congruence with one another. According to Yang, Che & Spector, 2008) strain increases when there is a misfit in the interaction between people and their work environment. The individual's perceived well-being is maximized when the actual job characteristics are aligned with his/her preferences. The Person - Fit model emphasizes the need for a good fit between a person's abilities, skills and degree of control—or decision latitude—and the work environment's demands, complexity, expectations and challenges. An imbalance in either direction (too many skills, not enough demands, or too many demands and insufficient control) generates stress Czikszenmihalyi (1990).

According to Person-Environment fit theory, subjective P-E misfit leads to two sets of outcomes. One set of outcomes comprises psychological, physical, and behavioral strains, defined as deviations from normal functioning (Caplan et al., 1980; Harrison, 1978). This implies that an individual well being is compromised when there is a mismatch between the person and the environment and will inversely have an impact on their productivity. For instance, sick off days may reduce the output of employee and thus have an effect on the performance of their duties. Conversely, sustained good Person - Environment fit can produce positive health outcomes (Edwards & Cooper, 1988; Harrison, 1978; 1985).

A second set of outcomes involves efforts to resolve Person - Environment misfit is the coping mechanism. Coping entails efforts to improve objective P-E fit, either by changing the objective person (i.e., adaptation) or the objective environment (i.e., environmental mastery) (French et al., 1974). For example, a person experiencing excess work demands may seek training to enhance his or her abilities or attempt to negotiate a decreased work load with his or her supervisor (Harrison, 1978). This implies the importance of the social support that is available within the work environment for the employee. Communication becomes an integral part of the working environment as it provides the opportunity for workers to interact with their supervisors and co-workers. The Person - Environment Fit theory presents a unique opportunity for the present study to investigate the different variables of the work environment and how this influence employee productivity. The theory is the most applicable as it discusses the interaction between the person and the environment and the strategies that employees deal with a positive or negative working environment.

2.8 Conceptual Framework Description

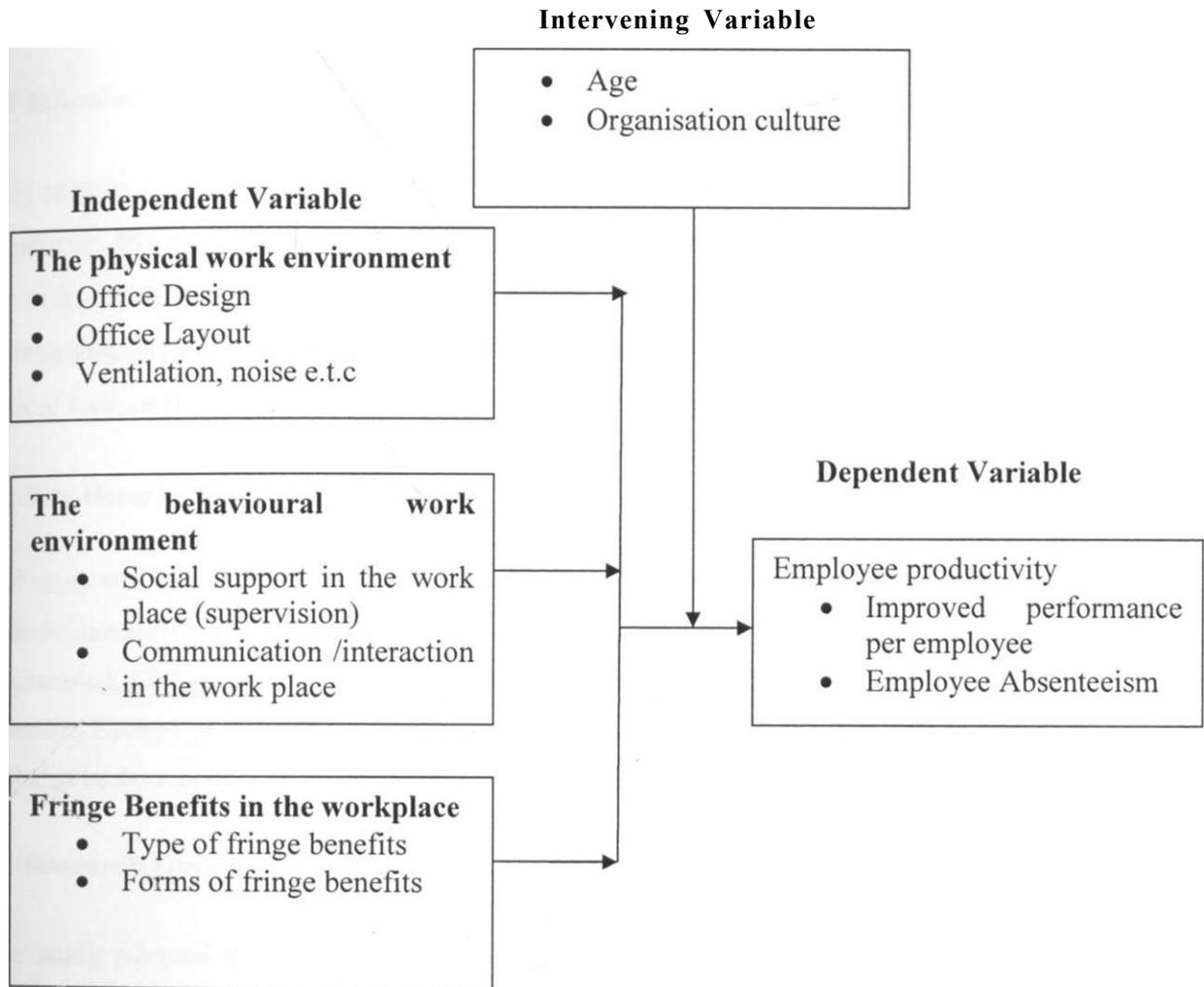
Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of the study where the independent variables comprise of the physical work environment, behavioural work environment components and the office ergonomics component and their influence on the dependent

variable which is employee productivity. The intervening variables of the study are age and gender of the employees along with the organizational culture of the organ under study which is the University of Nairobi. The conceptual framework is developed from the reviewed literature in this section.

2.9 Summary and Gaps in the Literature Review

The researcher undertook an extensive literature review of published non-published journals and articles related to the concept of the work environment; this material was related to the concept of employee productivity. The researcher identified the different factors of the work environment that have an effect on employee productivity such as the physical environment, peer and supervisor support in the workplace and fringe benefits influence on job performance vis - a - vis employee productivity. The literature exhibits extensive research on work environment for instance in the banking sector (Leblebici, 2012), academic staff research productivity (Usang et al., 2007), work environment of IT consultants (Wallgren, 2011) and petroleum and gas industry (Taiwo, 2010). The researcher also found that there has been no research on the work environment on administrative employees in the university work environment.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author (2012)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study encompasses the different approaches which the researcher used to address the methodological issues. The chapter is presented in the different topics of the research design, target population, sampling procedures and sample, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, validity and reliability of the study instruments, ethical considerations and data analysis techniques used for the study.

3.2 Site Description

The study will be conducted in administrative offices found in six colleges of the University of Nairobi namely:- the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Architecture and Engineering, College of Biological and Physical Sciences, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, College of Education and external Studies and College of Health Sciences. The study will also be done in the Central Administration offices and also the Students' Welfare Authority.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted the Descriptive Study design; this allowed the researcher to identify the state of the study problem and to represent it in a temporary determined moment, but they do not establish causal inferences. Descriptive studies generally use the survey as methodology, in which the most important thing is the correct elaboration of questions, as much in quantity as in quality. Samples of the population are selected to find the incidence, distribution and relative interrelations among social and psychological variables. Descriptive research allows the researcher to generate new knowledge of the subject by describing characteristics of persons, situation and the frequency with which certain phenomena occur (Burns & Grove, 1993).

3.4 Target Population

The target population of the study was the administrative level employees of the University of Nairobi. The study targeted employees within the senior - administrative assistants and administrative assistant cadre of administrative employees who are 161 in total. The justification for sampling these employees is that they are involved in the day - to - day administrative operations within the university. The unit of analysis for the study was the composite environment in which administrative employees work and this is the university of Nairobi and the units of observation are the administrative employees from whom the researcher will acquire data as described in Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The researcher undertook a survey of administrative employees in the senior - administrative assistant and administrative assistants' level. The sample for the study was therefore 161 respondents. The study will adopt the cluster sampling techniques which involves grouping of respondents to particular groups, these will comprise of the senior - administrative assistants and administrative assistants as indicated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample of the Population

Respondent Category	Male	Female	Total
Senior - Administrative Assistants	49	33	82
Administrative Assistant	57	22	79
Total	106	55	161

Source: University of Nairobi

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study used both primary and secondary source of data. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define primary data as that which involves the researcher designing tools for administration to respondents and secondary data as that which is already available in

published or non - published existing material. In order to gather primary data for the study the researcher will seek to use survey and observation methods.

3.6.1 Survey

A survey questionnaire is a popular means of collecting different types of data in a research problem (Jones, 1985). It is widely used in research to obtain information about certain conditions and practices, and to inquire into opinions and attitudes of individuals or groups (Koul, 1986). The researcher designed the questionnaire with guidance from the university supervisor and in a manner which acquired information from respondents to answer the research objectives and research questions. The questionnaire included the respondent background section in order to determine the demographics of the sample and relevant sections to address the research objectives. The researcher used self - administration process of distribution as this assisted in providing clarity and completeness of the instrument from the respondents.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interview

The study used key informant interviews for data collection. In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or want to explore new issues in depth. The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. The researcher used this information to complement data gathered from the survey instrument. The researcher involved the Senior Administrative Registrar of the University of Nairobi in an interview to provide information on his experience with employees on issues regarding the work environment; employee reward incentives, absenteeism and performance trends. The researcher developed a key informant guide to facilitate the process of the interview.

3.6.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to data that was collected prior to the present study and for other purposes such as reports or studies on the phenomenon under study. The researcher used published and unpublished material on the work environment on productivity from newspaper articles, magazines or journals. Organizational records were also used; for instance records on annual leave and sick off days complemented primary data collected.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to be measuring (Polit & Hungler, 1989). The validity of the research instrument was established by constant interaction with the university supervisor and academic peers to ascertain whether identified constructs for the questionnaire elicit the required information from respondents. Polit and Hungler (1989) define reliability of an instrument as the clarity, stability and consistency and accuracy of a measuring tool. There are different methods of establishing the reliability of an instrument. Internal consistency reliability refers to the extent to which all the subparts of an instrument will measure the attributes, the researcher will use the Chronbach's Alpha test to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire instrument. This involved undertaking a pilot study; Burns and Grove (2003) define a pilot study as a smaller version of the proposed study which is conducted in order to refine the methodology adopted in a study. The pilot study is used to help to identify possible problems in the proposed study and allows the researcher to revise the methods and instruments before the actual study (De Vos et al. 2005).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Social investigations require informed consent. Before initiating the study the investigator and the subject created an agreement that clarifies the obligations and responsibilities for each of them. The nature of the investigation was carefully explained.

The subjects were asked to express their acceptance of participating and the researcher guaranteed the confidentiality and the welfare of the participants. The researcher also guaranteed the respondents that their anonymity would be safeguarded and that the information they provide will only be used for academic purposes.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

According to De Vos et al., (2005) data analysis refers to the systematic organization and synthesis of research data, and the testing of research questions. Data analysis gives meaning to data collected during research. The data analysis involved several processes which included checking for the completeness of the data collected, coding and data entry into a computer package. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) to undertake the data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used for summarizing the collected data according to the frequency and percentages and interpretations were complemented by the researcher's own contributions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings of the study which are presented in tables, charts and graphs of responses from the sample of the study. The section is presented in subtopics related to three study objectives of the study and a description of the socio - demographic characteristics of the study respondents.

4.2 Socio - Demographic Data

The purpose of the study was to identify the influence of the work environment on the productivity of administrative staff in the University of Nairobi. The study was guided by specific objectives which include; to identify influence of physical work environment on productivity among administrative employees in the University of Nairobi; to assess the relationship between the office ergonomics and employee productivity among administrative staff in the University of Nairobi; to establish the extent that job - related factors affect employee productivity among administrative staff at the University of Nairobi and to recommend ways of improving work environment to increase employee productivity among administrative staff at the university of Nairobi.

The sample of the middle level administrators comprised of 136 respondents after the test - retest reliability test where the 15 percent of the sample used was not included in the final data collection exercise. A total of 93 complete questionnaires were collected and satisfied the criteria for data analysis and these accounted for 67 percent response rate which is acceptable in social research. In regard to the variable of gender 60.2 percent of the respondents were females compared to their male counterparts who accounted for **39.8** percent as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	37	39.8
Female	56	60.2
Total	93	100.0

4.2.1 Age Distribution

In regard to the age variable majority of the respondents were aged above 45 and accounted for 33.3 percent of the sample, those in the age group 25 - 29 were 8.6 percent, age group 30 - 34 was represented at 18.3 percent, age group 35 - 39 at 16.1 percent and age group 40 - 44 accounted for 22.6 percent. As indicated in Table 4.2 the majority of the respondents were above 40 years and this has an implication given that older employees tend to be more satisfied with their job and this leads to more productivity. However, older employees are more susceptible to negative factors of the work environment and would require more attention to their work environment in order to improve chances of their well-being in their day-to-day duties.

Table 4.2: Age of respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
25-29	8	8.70
30-34	17	18.47
35-39	15	16.30
40-44	21	22.82
45 and above	31	33.70
Total	92	100.00

4.2.2 Levels of Education

The study also sought to establish the education levels of respondents. As Table 4.3 indicates 6.5 percent of respondents had a certificate level of qualifications, diploma holders stood at 24.7 percent, bachelor degree holders were 34.4 percent whereas

postgraduate holders were represented at 34.4 percent. Key Informants reported that Administrative staff are required by Policy on Recruitment & Training to have at least a first degree. They went on to say that those with a Diploma or a certificate are the olders Administrators who were employed when a degree was no a requirement to be recruited as an Administrator.

Table 4.3: Level of Education among Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	6	6.5
Diploma	23	24.7
Bachelor Degree	32	34.4
Postgraduate	32	34.4
Total	93	100.0

4.2.3 Administrative Level

Level of administrative staff was sought among the demographic characteristics of employees where Senior Administrative Staff accounted for 38.7 percent of respondents compared to the Administrative Assistants were 36.6 percent. Respondents who marked not applicable in the analysis were 6.4 percent while those who were missing responses in the questionnaire item were 17.2 percent as shown in Table 4.4. Key Informants said that Administrative Assistants at grade CD level in the University of Nairobi cadre system are the lowest cadre in the administrative ladder. The Recruitment & Training Policy regards the grade CD as a training grade for Administrators. Senior Administrative Assistants at grade EF are normally promoted from the lower grade CD grade after being in the grade for at least three years. They do carry higher responsibilities like the Faculty Administrative units under the headship of a Dean of a Faculty. Those indicated in table 4.4 as not applicable are mainly drawn from the Halls Department, who although they are designated as Halls Officers, are nonetheless administrative officers doing halls administration work.

Table 4.4: Administrative level of employees

Position in administration	Frequency	Percent
Senior Administrative Assistant	37	48.05
Administrative Assistant	34	44.15
Not Applicable	3	3.89
Total	77	100.00

4.2.4 Duration in Current Position

Majority of the sampled university of Nairobi staff in their current positions for less than 1 year accounted for 9.7 percent, those who had stayed for 1 - 2 years were 14.0 percent, those with duration of 2 - 3 years were 6.5 percent and those who were in their current positions for more than three years accounted for 69.9 percent as indicated in Table 4.5. The large percentage of Administrative Officers who have served in for at least three years in one grade could be because of several reasons as advanced by the respondents

and also the Recruitment and Training Policy Document according to Chief Informants' interview. Respondents, who did not possess a first or second degree indicated that the university of Nairobi only considers staff on promotion those who possess at least a first degree and several years experience and also positive recommendation form Section Heads. The Recruitment & Training Policy Documents indicates that for one to be promoted to the next grade, one has to have the following requirements:- at least a first degree, a Certified Public Secretary Section II (CPS II), computer literacy and a positive recommendation form one's Section Heads and an existence of a vacant position in the Section where one is serving. With the introduction of Module II education, where Administrative officers are sponsored by the University to study for postgraduate degree, staff with a second degree stand a better chance of being promoted. This is according to Chief informants' report.

Table 4.5: Number of years at current position

Years in position	Frequency	Percent
0-1	9	9.7
1-2	13	14.0
2-3	6	6.5
More than 3	65	69.9
Total	93	100.0

4.3 Physical Environment Impact on Productivity

The physical environment was perceived to have an impact on productivity levels of administrative staff at the University of Nairobi. Respondents were therefore asked of their opinion on this notion where 74.2 percent agreed whereas 23.7 percent said No. those who responded Don't Know accounted for 2.2 percent as represented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Respondent answer on whether physical environment has impact on productivity

Physical environment has impact on my productivity	Frequency	Percent
Yes	69	75.82
No	22	24.18
Total	91	100.00

4.3.1 Noise

The study further sought to establish three dynamics of the physical work environment impact on productivity of respondents. These included the extent to which noise impacts on productivity, temperature and lighting in the work environment. In regard to the work environment being quiet 33.3 percent acknowledged that it was quiet to some extent, 23.7 percent mostly, 18.3 percent often, 11.8 percent always and 10.8 percent who answered not at all as highlighted in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Response whether work environment is quiet

My work environment is quiet	Frequency	Percent
Not at~Ali	TO	10.98
To Some Extent	31	34.06
Often	17	18.68
Mostly	22	24.17
<u>Always</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>12.08</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>100.00</u>

4.3.2 Effect of noise distraction

In regard to whether their work space had many noise distractions 31.2 percent acknowledged not at all, 12.3 percent Jto some extent, 46.2 percent answered often, 4.3

percent said most of the time and 5.4 percent responded always as shown in Table 4.8. Key Informants acknowledged that noise from co-workers was the most disruptive type of noise and the literature states that this type of noise is also seen as the most stressful. Navai & Veitch (2003) state that co-worker's conversations and music is seen to be the most stressful type of noise because it is uncontrollable. This was observed in open plan offices where there was an element of closed offices but there was room for sound to travel to respondents' work space. This corresponds with the research that states that open plan office spaces tend to be noisier because of the lack of barriers. In many instances especially in the Central Administration offices, Administrative Officers worked in Pre-fabricated offices that were next to each other. One could easily hear noises clearly from the next office. This tends to disrupt easily. This is according to Key Informants' report.

Table 4.8: Response whether workspace has many noise distractions

Whether workspace has many distractions	Frequency	Percent
Not at All	29	31.2
To Some Extent	12	12.3
Often	43	46.2
Most of the time	4	4.3
Always	5	5.4
Total	93	100.0

4.3.3 Temperature

Respondents were asked to what extent their room temperature affected their level of productivity where 22.6 percent said that this had no effect on their productivity, 10.8 percent acknowledged it had a positive effect, 16.1 percent accepted that it had a normal effect, 7.5 percent quite a good effect, 16.1 percent bad effect with 1.1 percent as indicated in Table 4.9. A share of the respondents 41.9 percent indicated that the room temperature in their work environment affected their productivity which agree with the findings of Seppanen et al (2006) who argue that indoor temperature is one of the fundamental characteristics of the indoor environment. Floors that were cemented and that

did not have a wool carpet were very cold during early mornings and also during cold and rainy seasons. This, according to Key Informants would make them get common colds and for those who were older, it made their joints very painful. Many of the offices also lacked heating systems like electric heaters. Some offices were near trees which brought in a lot of cold air, thus occasioning discomforting periods.

Table 4.9: Extent to which room temperature affects work productivity

Effect of room temperature	Frequency	Percent
No effect	21	22.82
Positive effect	10	10.86
Normal effect	15	16.30
Quite Good effect	7	7.60
<u>Bad effect</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>42.39</u>
Total	92	100.00

4.3.4 Variation in room temperature in the workplace

The study sought to establish the temperature of the work place during hot and cold seasons. During the cold season 30.1 percent respondents accepted that their work environment was cold, 32.2 percent cool, 20.4 percent pleasant, 10.8 percent slightly warm, and 4.4 percent warm whereas 1.1 percent were missing respondents as indicated in Table 4.10. This has an implication on the level of concentration among employees who may be more engaged in trying to get warm in their workspaces thus affecting their overall productivity.

Table 4.10: The nature of temperature of the workspace during cold season

<u>Type of temperature in cold season</u>	Frequency	Percent
Cold	28	30.43
Cool	30	32.60
Pleasant	19	20.65
Slightly Warm	10	10.87
<u>Warm</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4.35</u>
Total	92	100.00

Respondents accepted that the workspace temperature was cold and these accounted for 4.3 percent, 19.4 percent acknowledged cool, 19.4 percent said pleasant, 23.7 percent slightly warm and 32.3 indicated warm percent as shown in Table 4.11. This has an impact to productivity of workers since the literature observes that dry air can cause staff to be more susceptible to illness but majority of the participants stated that humidity has no effect on them. Perhaps staff feel the effects of dry air and do not attributing the symptoms to humidity.

Abdou and Lorsch (1994) in Abdou (2007) add how illness may occur because of dry air. Low relative humidity dries out the mucous membranes in the nasal passages making us more susceptible to infection. It is for this reason that organisations should pay more attention to the relative humidity in offices as this may improve absenteeism rates. Abdou's (2007) Dutch study showed that absenteeism could be lessened by 43% if workers are able to control the temperature of their environments. Respondents indicated that their inability to control the room temperature made them feel sleepy or dizzy in the afternoons thus affecting their productivity. This was mostly observed among the open plan offices where administrative staff worked. According to Key Informants, others worked in offices that lacked natural light and depended on artificial lighting. Research has shown that prolonged artificial lights affects the eyesight and bring increased irritability levels thus affecting productivity.

Table 4.11: Overall Temperature in the Hot Season

Type of temperature in hot season	Frequency	Percent
Cold	4	4.3
Cool	18	19.6
Pleasant	18	19.6
Slightly Warm	22	23.9
Warm	30	32.6
Total	92	100.0

Respondents were also asked as to whether they had any control of the temperature or airflow in their workspace where 22.6 percent strongly disagreed, 18.3 percent disagreed, 6.5 percent neutral, 44.1 percent agreed that they had control and 8.6 percent strongly agreed. In the literature it was found that productivity could be improved when workers are able to control the temperatures within their offices spaces. Majority of participants stated that they are not able to control the temperature within their offices spaces. Key Informants also indicated that opening a window may not be the best solution for allowing more ventilation into the office space because majority of participants are not seated near to a window. Although the majority of participants stated that their office space is air-conditioned and this corresponds with what they prefer, majority are still not satisfied with the indoor temperatures. In some instances the window were placed way above the reach of many respondents. This resulted to discomfort and restlessness.

Table 4.12: Whether respondents agree they have control of airflow or temperature in their workspace

Whether Agrees	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	21	22.6
Disagree	17	18.3
Neutral	6	6.5
Agree	41	44.1
<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8.6</u>
Total	93	100.0

4.3.5 Lighting in the workplace

In regard to whether there was presence of sufficient lighting to respondent's workspaces 55.9 percent and 10.8 percent strongly disagree and disagreed respectively. 5.4 percent of respondents were neutral, 7.5 percent and 20.4 percent agreed and strongly agreed respectively as indicted in Table 4.13. Respondents were also asked whether they had control over the lighting on their desk where 54.8 percent said not at all, 10.8 percent to some extent, 15.1 percent didn't need desk light, 8.6 percent mostly and 10.8 percent

responded completely. Many respondents indicated that the employer did not invest in lighting systems that could be manipulated downwards or upwards. This resulted in staff putting spectacles not due age related factors but because of computer glares and strong lights from the lighting systems in the offices.

Table 4.13: Distribution of respondents according to whether they agree lighting in the workplace is sufficient

Whether respondent agrees lighting is sufficient	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	52	55.9
Disagree	10	10.8
Neutral	5	5.4
Agree	7	7.5
Strongly Agree	19	20.4
Total	93	100.0

4.3.6 Lighting

Access to natural light was also an indicator of the work environment as identified in the literature review and respondents were therefore asked to what extent natural light comes into their workspace where 45.2 percent answered not at all, 19.4 percent to some extent, 21.5 percent mostly sufficient and 14.0 percent responded always sufficient as shown in Table 4.14. Respondents were also asked about the number of windows in their work area and the extent to which they complete their fresh air and light needs where 9.7 percent not at all, 33.3 percent to some extent, 2.2 percent didn't notice, 19.4 percent mostly while 35.5 percent responded always.

Results indicate that employees are not satisfied with the amount of natural light available in their workspaces which has an impact on their productivity given that they are more likely to strain more. Cushman (2000) states that problems caused by bad lighting include headaches, eyestrain, general bodily discomfort, rates of human error may

increase and bad light may also reduce alertness. Results from a study conducted among office workers and the effect lighting showed that workers had to take breaks more often due to the poor lighting conditions and this resulted in about 80 minutes of lost time per week for each worker.

Table 4.14: Distribution of respondents according to whether their offices have sufficient natural light

Whether office has sufficient natural light	Frequency	Percent
Not at All	42	45.2
To Some Extent	18	19.4
Mostly sufficient	20	21.5
Always sufficient	13	14.0
Total	93	100.0

4.4 Job related factors influencing Productivity

Job related factors influencing productivity in the workplace environment relate to the interaction between supervisors and colleagues of employees. The social support received from their colleagues and supervisors are also an indicator of the work environment on their well being and thus their productivity levels. In regard to the extent to which the atmosphere at work is calm and pleasant 61.3 percent disagreed compared to 18.3 percent disagreed with 18.3 percent being neutral. This implies that staff are not comfortable in their workplace and this has an impact on their satisfaction on their work environment and affects their day - to - day involvement in their work. These results also support Karasek and Theorell (1990) contention that social support (or more specifically from this study supervisory support) may also reduce job strain and thus increase one's report of job satisfaction.

In regard as to whether there is a good team work, 18.3 percent disagreed compared to 64.5 percent agreed with 15.1 percent indicating neutral. Respondents were asked to their perception of the support they receive from colleagues where 12.9 percent disagreed and 62.3 percent agreed with 21.5 percent being neutral. In regard to whether colleagues

understand that one could have a bad day 22.6 percent disagreed relative to 46.3 percent who agreed with 25.8 percent neutral.

Key Informants were also asked about their perception of the relationship with their supervisors to which majority of the respondents 24.8 percent was cordial with 60.3 percent indicating the relationship was poor. In regard to whether supervisor encourages employees to make recommendations where 58.1 percent disagreed and 14.0 percent agreed with 25.8 percent being neutral. Findings indicate that the implication of this perception of relationships with their supervisors would lead to high levels of strain and burn - out among administrative staff. Savicki and Cooley (1987) work environments associated with high burnout were those that required adherence to work through restriction of worker freedom and that deemphasized planning and efficiency. Higher levels of burnout were also associated with vague job expectations, extensive rules and regulations, and minimal support of new ideas and procedures

In regard to whether they receive leadership for the type of work performed 16.2 percent disagreed compared to 50.8 percent who agreed with 21.5 percent neutral. Respondents were also asked the extent to which they get along with their colleagues where 9.7 percent disagreed with 73.2 percent agreed with 15.1 percent being neutral as indicted in Table 4.15.

Respondents indicated that support from their supervisors can be indicated in the following ways:- Positive recommendations in the Staff performance appraisal exercise done yearly. Supervisors can also show support through recommending frequent in-house bonding sessions where staff could be allowed to ventilate their frustrations and also in staff meetings which were free of manipulations by section Heads.

Table 4.15: Job Related Factors and the extent to which respondents agree they influence productivity

Job related factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	Tot;
The atmosphere at work is calm and pleasant	8.6	46.2	18.3	9.7	15.1	100
There is a good spirit of unity	7.5	10.8	15.1	52.7	11.8	100
My colleagues are there for me	8.6	4.3	21.5	46.2	16.1	100
People understand that I can have a bad day	15.1	7.5	25.8	31.2	15.1	100
I get on well with my superiors	6.5	53.8	12.9	1.1	23.7	100
I receive leadership for the type of work I perform	6.5	9.7	21.5	37.6	20.4	100
Supervisors encourage employee recommendations	47.3	10.8	25.8	5.4	8.6	100
I get on well with my colleagues	7.5	2.2	15.1	49.5	23.7	100

4.5 Fringe benefits influence on work environment

Another objective of the study was to establish the extent to which fringe benefits influenced employee productivity and the work environment where the respondents were asked of their knowledge and awareness of fringe benefits in their organization. Respondents who answered yes accounted for 89.2 percent compared to those who answered no were 6.5 percent whereas those who didn't know accounted for 3.3 percent and 1.1 percent were missing responses.

Table 4.16: Respondents' knowledge of fringe benefits provided in the organization

Knowledge of fringe benefits in organization	Frequency	Percent
Yes	83	90.21
No	6	6.52
Don't Know	3	3.26
Total	92	100.00

The study also sought to establish the types of fringe benefits that were available in the respondent's organization where 35.5 percent acknowledged there was medical cover, leave and transport, 5.4 percent Medical cover and leave, Medical cover and leave and holidays 2.2 percent, medical cover 15.1 percent, leave 3.2 percent and transport 2.2

percent as elaborated in Table 4.17. Medical cover was the most popular form of fringe benefits offered along with leave days and transport; respondents also ranked medical cover as the most important benefit they enjoy and would prefer. This may be interpreted as due to the fact that they may become ill or fall sick in the delegation of their duties or due to their immediate work environment.

Key Informants interviewed indicated medical cover is coveted by staff . There are however several things that they wished the university improved;- admissions to hospital costs should not be as restrictive as it is now where the costs are very high. Dental and spectacles which is refunded upto Kshs. 12,000/= annually per family should be increased to either Kshs. 50,000 or allowed for every family members. Radiology was also limiting for the entire family members. Respondents, on leave indicated that they would wish to go on leave which they planned themselves instead of Section heads planning for them. No holidays were granted for Administrative staff, although they indicated that the employer can plan a one off trip to luxury place like Mombasa etc.

Table 4.17: Fringe benefits offered in the organization

Fringe benefits offered in organization according to respondents	Frequency	Percent
Medical Cover, Leave & Transport	33	35.5
Medical Cover, Leave	5	5.4
Medical Cover, Leave & Holiday	2	2.2
Medical Cover	14	15.1
Leave	3	3.2
Transport	2	2.2
All The Above	18	19.4
Loans	1	1.1
Bonus	1	1.1
UNES, Special Duty and Overtime allowances	6	6.5
Staff training and development/seminars & workshops	3	3.2
Fee waiver	5	5.4
Total	93	100.0

The study sought to establish the extent to which employees were satisfied with the fringe benefits offered in the organization where 5.4 percent indicated to a very great extent, 21.5 percent to a great extent, 57.0 percent to some extent, 12.9 percent to a little extent and 1.1 percent to no extent responses as shown in Table 4.18. Study findings show that respondents are not greatly satisfied with the fringe benefits offered in the organization. Study participants acknowledged that the benefits offered were not similar across the different colleges found in the university where some felt they were denied.

In terms of other benefits not captured by the questionnaire, Key Informants indicated the following:-that there were instances where staff in some colleges were receiving a Direct Service Provider fund. This tended to pile pressure on the college called 'wet areas' to take them up in their colleges. The staff development support Fund (STDF) which university gave to the staff was only applicable to courses offered at university of Nairobi. Staff who sought to be trained in other universities could not access the STDF.

Table 4.18: Respondent satisfaction with fringe benefits offered in organization

Extent to which respondents are satisfied with fringe benefits	Frequency	Percent
To a Very Great Extent	5	5.49
To a Great Extent	20	21.74
To Some Extent	53	58.24
To a Little Extent	12	13.04
To No Extent	1	1.09
Total	91	100.00

The number of days that an employee was absent from work due to health problems related to the work environment were used as indicators of affecting work productivity. The study therefore asked employees how many days they were absent from work in the last year where 75 percent indicated less than 5, 10.8 percent 6-10 days, 1.1 percent 11 - 15 days and 4.3 percent more than 15 days, 5.4 percent indicated none and 3.2 percent were missing responses as highlighted in Table 4.19.

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Table 4.19: Number of days absent from work

Respondent duration absent from work	Frequency	Percent
Less Than 5	70	76.08
6-10	10	11.1
11-15		1.1
More Than 15	4	4.44
None	5	5.43
Total	90	100.00

The researcher also sought to establish the number of times employees applied for sick leave days as another indicator of the independent variables of productivity. Respondents accounting for 51.6 percent indicated once, those who had applied twice or thrice represented 3.2 percent of the sample with those who had applied for more than four times accounted for 2.2 percent and 34.4 percent had not applied for any sick leave days. According to Key Informants, although staff absence was minimal, respondents indicated that during a Staff Appraisal Exercise held yearly, staff who absented themselves frequently received lower ratings compared to those who absented themselves infrequently.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the major findings of this study and to draw conclusions based on the findings. The chapter also comprises of the recommendation which may be useful to the University of Nairobi management to provide a work environment for administrative staff to improve their productivity.

5.2 Summary

The study sought to establish the influence of the work environment on productivity among administrative staff in the University of Nairobi, the study was guided by the following specific objectives; To identify influence of physical work environment on productivity among administrative employees in the University of Nairobi; assess the relationship between the office ergonomics and employee productivity among administrative staff in the University of Nairobi and to establish the extent that job - related factors affect employee productivity among administrative staff at the University of Nairobi.

5.2.1 Physical factors affecting productivity

The study found that physical factors in the work environment do have an impact on the productivity of administrative employees. The investigated factors were noise, lighting and temperatures of their work spaces. Findings show that study participants were not satisfied with their work environment with regard to the noise factor. Noise that was most disruptive according to respondents was from co - workers conversing in the office. This was due to the fact that it is a kind of noise which is difficult to control. The study was able to establish that open plan offices had higher incidences of noise compared to closed office environments.

5.2.2 Job related factors influence on productivity

Job related factors affecting the work environments were envisaged as the relationships between the individual worker and other members of staff. The relationships between co-workers and supervisors are an important ingredient of job satisfaction which has an impact on productivity of the individual employee. Study findings show that administrative staff employees rank their relationships with co-workers and supervisors poorly. Respondents characterized the work environment as stressful due to the work demands and job specifications which were not strictly adhered to and therefore caused discomfort among administrative staff.

5.2.3 Fringe benefits influence on productivity

Human resource management literature indicates fringe benefits as an effective tool for motivating of employees. Employees can be motivated and therefore increase their performance based on the fringe benefits which the employer provides. Study participants indicated they were knowledgeable of the fringe benefits offered in the organization. Medical cover was the most popular fringe benefit that employees preferred and staff ranked as important. However there was discontentment among staff due to the fact that fringe benefits offered by the university were not harmonized across the different colleges.

5.3 Conclusion

In regard to the variable of the physical environment it is the study's conclusion that this has an impact on the productivity of administrative employees given their responses on the indicators. This is similar to the findings of Brill et al. (1984) where he identifies several factors which affect productivity as furniture, noise, flexibility, comfort, communication, lighting, temperature and the air quality. The study findings also support Leaman (1995) findings that the productivity of the work is affected because the people were unhappy with temperature, air quality, light and noise levels in the office.

»

In regard to the variable of job - related factors and social support in the workplace it is the study's conclusion that there is a positive perception of the social support among administrative staff at the university of Nairobi. Respondents agreed that they received the support they needed from colleagues and supervisors in the delegation of their duties which were rated on a likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These findings are consistent with those of Abualrub (2004) who found that, perceived social support from co-workers enhance job performance and decrease job stress. Similarly Drach-Zahavy (2004) suggests that supportive management practices are crucial to achieve high performance.

Fringe benefits comprise of the non - monetary compensation packages given to employees of an organization. Employees listed a number of different types of fringe benefits offered by the organization ranging from medical cover, leave days, transport to training opportunities and different types of allowances. Respondents however indicted that they were not satisfied with the fringe benefits offered and would prefer a revision of these.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the study findings the researcher makes the following recommendations;

1. The University of Nairobi should continuously assess the physical working conditions of administrative staff and implement measures based on these findings.
2. The study recommends the University of Nairobi to increase the number of potted plants in staff work spaces to counter the effect of high humidity which has been observed to contribute to illnesses.
3. The university of Nairobi management should consider harmonization of fringe benefits offered to administrative employees across the colleges.
4. The University of Nairobi management should undertake fringe benefits evaluations to determine what would improve the performance of their staff.

5. The study recommends that the University of Nairobi should engage their staff in determining the most appropriate fringe benefits.
6. The study also recommends the University of Nairobi staff to increase efforts to encourage social support among staff at all levels through team building activities and excursions

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Mercy Musembi
University Of Nairobi
P.O Box 30191- 00100
Nairobi

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research Project Data Collection Exercise.

I am a post graduate student undertaking a Master of Arts degree in Project Planning and Management at the University of Nairobi. I am required to submit as part of my course work assessment a research project report on the "**influence of the work environment on employee productivity among administrative staff**". The University of Nairobi has been chosen to participate in the study and you are asked to assist the study by giving responses to the questionnaire to the best of your ability. The information you provide will be used exclusively for academic purposes and I assure you that it will be treated with strict confidence. A copy of the same will be available upon request.

Thank You in Advance

Yours sincerely

Mercy Musembi

C50/61997/2010

APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES

Part A: Socio - Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

- 1- Male []
- 2- Female []

2. What is your age?

- 1-25 - 29 []
- 2- 30-34 []
- 3- 35 - 39 []
- 4-40-44 []
- 5- 45 and above []

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

- 1-Certificate []
- 2- Diploma []
- 3- Graduate []
- 4- Postgraduate []

4. What is your current occupational capacity?

- 1-Senior Administrative Assistant []
- 2- Administrative Assistant []

5. How long have you worked in your present capacity (Number of Years)?

- 1-0 to 1 []
- 2-1 to 2 []
- 3- 2 to 3 []
- 4- More than 3 []

6. In your opinion, does the work environment affect your level of productivity?

- 1. Yes []
- 2. No []
- 3. Don't Know []

Part B: Physical Environment Impact on Productivity (Noise, Lighting, Temperature)

7. My work environment is quiet

- 1- Not at all []
- 2- To some extent []
- 3- Often []
- 4- Mostly []
- 5- Always []

8. I am able to have quiet and undisturbed time alone

- 1- Not at all []
- 2- To some extent []
- 3- Often []
- 4- Mostly []
- 5- Always []

9. My workspace has many noise distractions

- 1-Not at all []
- 2- To some extent []
- 3- Often []
- 4- Mostly []
- 5- Always []

10. To what extent your room temperature affects your normal level of productivity.

- 1-No effect []
- 2- Positive effect []
- 3- Normal effect []
- 4- Quite good effect []
- 5- Bad effect []

11. The overall temperature of my workspace in cold season is

- 1- Cold []
- 2-Cool []
- 3-Pleasant []
- 4- Slightly warm []

5- Warm []

12. The overall temperature of my workspace in hot season is

1- Cold []

2- Cool []

3- Pleasant []

4- Slightly warm []

5- Warm []

13. I am able to control temperature or airflow in my office.

1-1 strongly disagree []

2-1 disagree []

3- I'm neutral []

4-1 agree []

5-1 strongly agree []

14. My workspace is provided with efficient lighting so that I can work easily without strain on my eyes.

1-1 strongly disagree []

2-1 disagree []

3- I'm neutral []

4-1 agree []

5-1 strongly agree []

15. Do you have control over the lighting on your desk (i-e adjustable desk light on desk)?

1-Not at all []

2- To some extent []

3-1 don't need desk light []

4- Mostly []

5- Completely []

16. Ample amount of natural light comes into my office.

1-Not at all []

2- To some extent

- 3- Did not notice
- 4- Mostly
- 5- Always

17. Number of windows in my work area complete my fresh air and light need.

- 1-Not at all
- 2- To some extent
- 3- Did not notice
- 4- Mostly
- 5- Always

Part C: Job - Related Factors impact on Productivity (Social and supervisor support)

18. The following statements relate to the influence of job - related factors on employee productivity. Rate them as per the given scale. 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A) or 5 = Strongly Agree (SA).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
a) The atmosphere at work is calm and pleasant					
b) There is a good spirit of unity					
c) My colleagues are there for me					
d) People understand that I can have a bad day					
e) I get on well with my superiors					
f) I receive the leadership I need for the type of work I perform					
g) Supervisors encourage employees to make recommendations					
h) I get on well with my colleagues					

Part D: Fringe Benefits impact on Productivity

19. Does your organization provide fringe benefits for employees?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't Know

20. What are some of the fringe benefits in your organization? (Multiple responses allowed)

- 1. Medical Cover []
- 2. Leave []
- 3. Transport []
- 4. Holiday []
- 5. Other *{specify}*

21. To what extent are you satisfied with the fringe benefits provided in your organization?

- 1. To a very great extent
- 2. To a great extent []
- 3. To some extent []
- 4. To a little extent []
- 5. To no extent

Part E: Productivity

22. How many days have you been absent for duty in the last one year?

- 1. Less than 5 []
- 2. 6-10 []
- 3. 11-15 []
- 4. More than 15 []
- 5. None []

23. How many times have you applied for sick leave in the last one year?

- 1. Once []
- 2. Twice []
- 3. Thrice []
- 4. More than four times
- 5. None

Thank You for Your Co-operation
»

APPENDIX 3: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you worked at the University of Nairobi as the Senior Administrative Registrar?
2. In your opinion, what are some of the work environmental factors influencing administrative employees' productivity?
3. Would you please describe how these factors in (2) above influence the productivity of administrative employees?
4. What are the major contributors to employee absenteeism among administrative staff?
5. What are some of the fringe benefits afforded to administrative employees?
6. Are these employee incentives reviewed? If Yes, How is this done and after a period of how long