



Beyond Incentives: Reconceptualizing Performance-Based Programs as Employee Well-Being Predictors of Productivity in Kenya's Hospitality Sector

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Abstract

Despite the widespread adoption of performance-based incentive schemes in Kenya's hospitality sector, employee productivity remains a concern, reflected in turnover, inconsistent service quality, and difficulties retaining skilled workers. This study reconceptualized performance-based incentive programs as a holistic employee well-being construct and examined its predictive relationship with employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya. An explanatory cross-sectional design was adopted, and data were collected from 313 employees using structured questionnaires. Employee well-being programs comprised learning and development, recognition and appreciation, equitable compensation, and performance-based rewards. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. Employee well-being programs were strongly and positively associated with employee productivity ($r = .834$, $\beta = .834$, $p < .001$), and the regression model accounted for 69.6% of the observed variance in productivity ($R^2 = .696$). Learning and development recorded the highest descriptive mean ($M = 3.92$); however, the four dimensions were not modeled separately and therefore cannot be ranked as independent predictors from the reported analysis. The study concludes that integrated employee well-being programs are important strategic correlates of productivity in the hospitality industry and recommends that restaurant managers adopt multidimensional approaches to employee development, recognition, compensation, and performance rewards.

Keywords: *Employee well-being programs, employee productivity, hospitality industry, performance-based incentives, top-tier restaurants, Nairobi, Kenya*

1.0 Background of the Study

Human capital is the most important factor in the delivery of services and the performance of organizations in the global hospitality industry, where human resources are regarded as an integral

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part of the service delivery process (Baum, 2019; Deery & Jago, 2015). Productivity is generally defined as the ability of workers to produce quality products within a specified time using the least amount of wasted resources and is the key to the competitive advantage in this industry (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022). Despite this recognition, hospitality companies globally are still facing the same productivity issues that are characterized by high turnover rates, low motivation, and inconsistent service delivery (Han et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2023). In sub-Saharan Africa, the hospitality industry is facing significant challenges, including a lack of skills, inadequate pay structures, and limited career advancement opportunities for employees (Baum, 2019; Kenga & Kingi, 2024).

The hospitality industry in Kenya has experienced substantial growth alongside rising tourism activity and increasing demand for high-quality dining and lodging services (Kenya Tourism Board, 2023; Njeru et al., 2025). Nairobi County, as the country's principal commercial and tourism hub, hosts a high concentration of top-tier classified restaurants that are benchmarked against international service standards (Kenya Tourism Board, 2023; Musaala et al., 2023). Nevertheless, these establishments continue to experience workforce productivity challenges, including absenteeism, employee turnover, and inconsistent service delivery (Mutiso et al., 2022; Onyango et al., 2022). These challenges underscore the need to reconsider how employee performance programs are conceptualized and managed.

The use of traditional performance management practices in the hospitality industry has been on the rise. Use of performance incentive systems like training incentives, recognition incentive, merit-based wage, and pay for performance were the focus of the study (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021). These incentive tools are known to work to varying degrees in inducing employees' work, but they are theorized as separate and basically transactional tools without strategic value (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Perry et al., 2009). In the organizational behaviour and human resource management literature, it is increasingly acknowledged that employee well-being is a much broader and more sustainable contributor to productivity than are single incentive programs (Deci et al., 1999; Robbins & Judge, 2022). This study follows this assertion, proposing the re-thinking of performance programs as investments in employee well-being.

This study integrates four incentive mechanisms that are commonly treated separately in the literature: learning and development, recognition and appreciation, equitable compensation, and performance-based rewards. These dimensions are combined into a single employee well-being construct. The underlying proposition is that performance-based programs may produce more sustainable productivity outcomes when employees experience them as complementary investments in development, recognition, fairness, and reward rather than as isolated transactional exchanges (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Herzberg, 1966; Schultz, 1961). The study tests this proposition among employees in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, thereby contributing to the discussion on employee well-being and productivity in hospitality management.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the performance-based incentive schemes implemented in Kenya's top-tier restaurant industry, employee productivity remains a challenge (Mugambi et al., 2021; Odhiambo et al.,

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2024). The problem is reflected in employee turnover, inconsistent service delivery, and difficulties attracting and retaining competent hospitality professionals, all of which can weaken operational efficiency and competitive positioning (Mutiso et al., 2022; Wanjohi et al., 2022). Previous research has largely examined individual types of incentives, producing fragmented evidence that does not adequately capture the combined relationship between an integrated incentive system and workforce productivity (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021).

Moreover, much of the cited African hospitality research has focused on hotel settings, leaving top-tier restaurant establishments comparatively underrepresented despite differences in their service, regulatory, and workforce environments (Cheruon et al., 2023; Mugambi et al., 2021). The resulting empirical and conceptual gap concerns whether learning and development, recognition and appreciation, equitable compensation, and performance-based rewards can be treated as a coherent employee well-being construct and whether that composite construct is associated with employee productivity in top-tier restaurants. This study addresses that gap by testing the relationship between composite employee well-being programs and employee productivity in Nairobi County.

1.3 Research Objective and Hypothesis

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of employee well-being programs on employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study tests the following hypothesis:

H₁: Employee well-being programs have a significant positive influence on employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by reconceptualizing performance-based incentive programs within an integrated employee well-being framework. Theoretically, it brings together complementary perspectives on learning, recognition, compensation, and contingent rewards (Becker, 1993; Herzberg, 1966). Practically, the findings provide evidence that restaurant managers and human resource practitioners can use when designing more integrated employee well-being practices associated with productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Yani et al., 2025). At the policy level, the study offers context-specific evidence that may inform broader discussions on workforce well-being in classified restaurant establishments, while recognizing that regulatory decisions require evidence beyond a single cross-sectional study (Kenya Tourism Board, 2023).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Performance management in hospitality commonly incorporates learning opportunities, recognition, merit-based compensation, and contingent rewards (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021). Prior literature often examines these mechanisms separately and frequently frames them as transactional incentives (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Perry et al., 2009). In contrast, organizational behaviour and human resource management scholarship increasingly treats employee well-being

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as a broader, multidimensional condition of work that can be associated with more sustainable performance outcomes (Deci et al., 1999; Robbins & Judge, 2022). This study therefore positions the four performance-related mechanisms within an integrated employee well-being perspective.

The theoretical logic combines complementary explanations for the four dimensions. Human Capital Theory supports investment in learning and development; Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes recognition and growth from hygiene conditions such as compensation; Reinforcement Theory explains the behavioural role of contingent rewards; and cultural perspectives provide context for the salience of recognition and collective work experiences (Becker, 1993; Herzberg et al., 1959; Skinner, 1953; Hofstede, 1980). Together, these perspectives support the study's proposition that a multidimensional employee well-being construct is positively associated with employee productivity.

2.2 Employee Well-Being Programs: A Holistic Conceptualization

Employee well-being programs have increasingly been reconceptualized in the organizational behaviour literature as strategic, multidimensional investments in the holistic quality of the employee work experience, rather than as narrowly defined financial or non-financial incentive schemes (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Robbins & Judge, 2022). This reconceptualization reflects a growing recognition that sustainable productivity gains are best achieved when employees perceive their organization as genuinely invested in their growth, recognition, fairness, and reward — the four dimensions that constitute the composite well-being construct in this study (Noorazem et al., 2021; Yani et al., 2025). This holistic perspective aligns with the broader well-being at work discourse, which positions subjective work experiences as powerful mediators of the relationship between organizational practices and individual performance outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Warr, 1987).

2.2.1 Learning and Development

Learning and development programs are an essential aspect of employee well-being, equipping employees with the skills and knowledge required to perform their jobs effectively and to achieve personal fulfillment (Arwab et al., 2023; Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024). In the hospitality sector, structured training programs such as on-the-job coaching, certification courses, and skills development workshops have consistently been linked to enhanced service quality, employee confidence, and productivity (Ferdiansah, 2024; Han et al., 2023; Yoopetch et al., 2021). Empirical research in Kenya and the wider African hospitality environment validates that access to relevant and timely learning opportunities not only improves task performance but also reflects an organization's dedication to employee development, which decreases turnover intentions and boosts psychological attachment to the organization (Gitongu, 2021; Wambua & Gichira, 2023).

The well-being aspects of learning are especially strong when access to training is seen as merit-based, fair, and tied to career progression (Arwab et al., 2023; Hamid et al., 2023). Mustafa and Lleshi (2024) discovered that companies that make continuous learning a part of their regular operations, not just a periodic or reactive process, have much higher employee engagement and productivity over time. This is in line with the Human Capital Theory which states that investments in the knowledge and skills of employees will generate compounding productivity returns over

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time (Becker, 1993; Tan, 2014). Learning and development becomes the most potent well-being enabler of productivity in the context of Nairobi's top-tier restaurants where service complexity and international benchmarking requires constantly upskilled workforces.

2.2.2 Recognition and Appreciation

A key motivational aspect of employee well-being is recognition and appreciation programs, which include formal awards, public recognition, and managerial expressions of appreciation for outstanding performance (Ampofo et al., 2023; Presslee et al., 2023). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that recognition is one of the motivators that directly affects job satisfaction and the level of effort that is maintained, and it is different from hygiene factors which only prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg et al., 1959). The hospitality sector consistently shows that staff members who feel recognized and valued demonstrate greater organizational commitment, service orientation, and task productivity (Ampofo et al., 2023; Rohim et al., 2023). Well-designed recognition programs have a greater motivational impact in African organizational settings, where collectivist values increase the importance of public recognition (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Ofosu-Yeboah et al., 2024).

Presslee et al. (2023) found that team-based recognition programs can have a substantial positive impact on employee engagement and discretionary effort, and that this impact is stronger when the team has high social cohesion and a shared purpose; which is often the case in restaurants. Likewise, Kerubo and Thomas (2022) identified non-financial recognition as one of the most effective factors in enhancing employee performance in the NGO sector in Nairobi, Kenya, which is transferable to the restaurant industry. The well-being aspect of recognition is therefore not only about the delivery of rewards but also about the message that employees receive when their efforts are recognised, valued and important for the success of the organisation, which when delivered regularly, can maintain high effort performance behaviours (Noorazem et al., 2021; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

2.2.3 Equitable Compensation

Equitable compensation is a key material aspect of employee well-being, and it is defined as merit-based salary systems that clearly connect pay increases to documented performance results (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Mun & Kodama, 2022). Employees feel more secure and fairly treated when they consider their compensation to be fair, transparent, and aligned with their contributions to the organization, which are known to positively influence their continued productivity (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2021; Kim & Jang, 2023). According to the Two Factor Theory by Herzberg (1966), salary is a hygiene factor, meaning that salary is a factor that can lead to dissatisfaction when it is inadequate, but when it is structured in a way that is closely related to the evaluation of the employee's performance, it can become an active motivator when the employee feels that it is fair and affirming of their achievements (Jalagat & Jalagat, 2022).

The Kenyan hospitality context indicates that compensation inequity is one of the most common factors that contribute to employee dissatisfaction, turnover, and reduced productivity (Mutiso et al., 2022; Odhiambo et al., 2024). Mun and Kodama (2022) showed that merit-based pay systems can substantially diminish gender and status wage gaps, creating a more equitable and motivating

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work environment. The well-being aspect of fair compensation therefore works in several ways: it offers physical protection, it communicates fairness, it reinforces the importance of effort, and it brings a sense of dignity and professional value, all of which help to maintain the productivity of employees over time (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Njenga & Kariuki, 2024).

2.2.4 Performance-Based Rewards

Rewards for performance, such as bonus payments and other forms of variable pay linked to measurable performance goals, are the most directly contingent aspect of employee well-being programs, and operate through Reinforcement Theory mechanisms of positive conditioning (Luthans & Kreitner, 1985; Skinner, 1953). Performance-based rewards, when the conditions for earning them are clear, achievable, and applied uniformly, are a potent motivator for high-effort work behaviours and can link individual productivity to organizational goals (Agba et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2019). Empirical evidence from various hospitality contexts shows that bonuses with clear structures lead to substantial increases in employee efficiency, task completion rates, and performance standards adherence (Luzon, 2022; Nnubia & Ngige, 2024; van Zyl & Magau, 2024).

In Kenya, performance-based reward systems have been found to be effective in tackling the productivity issues faced by the highly competitive and service-oriented restaurant industry (Cheruon et al., 2023; Mugambi et al., 2021). In the context of food and beverage establishments, Judijanto et al. (2025) identified that performance-based compensation, when integrated into a positive organizational culture, can positively impact the motivation and productivity of Generation Z employees. This is especially significant because Nairobi's restaurant staff is predominantly composed of young people. The well-being aspect of performance-based rewards is therefore not just about the reward itself, but the message it conveys: that the organization is aware of and appreciates exceptional performance and rewards it in tangible ways (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021).

2.3 Employee Productivity in the Hospitality Industry

Employee productivity in hospitality reflects employees' capacity to perform tasks efficiently, maintain output quality, respond effectively to work demands, and contribute value to service delivery (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022). Within the Well-Being at Work perspective, productive performance is expected to be supported by physical, psychological, social, and material conditions that enable employees to function effectively and derive meaning from work (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Warr, 1987). In this study, learning and development, recognition and appreciation, equitable compensation, and performance-based rewards represent organizational conditions through which employees may experience growth, recognition, fairness, and achievement (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In this study, the Well-Being at Work Framework combines elements of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), Reinforcement Theory (Skinner, 1953), and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980). The human capital theory is the basic theory for the investments that organizations make in learning and development, which is defined as an investment in the skills and knowledge of employees that results in improved performance and organizational competitiveness (Becker,

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1993; Romer, 1990; Schultz, 1961). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory categorizes hygiene factors (salary, working conditions) from motivators (recognition, achievement, growth opportunities) which are included in the well-being composite construct used in this study (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg et al., 1959). Reinforcement Theory can also explain how positive stimuli from the organization like recognition awards or bonuses can shape and sustain productive employee behaviour by the use of reward-based conditioning (Luthans & Kreitner, 1985; Skinner, 1953).

The Cultural Dimensions Theory by Hofstede provides the context for the framework by explaining the salience and effectiveness of its different components in the Kenyan organizational context, which is characterised by collectivist and high-power distance cultural orientations (Hofstede, 1980; Taras et al., 2010). The dimensions of relational well-being of recognition and collaborative learning are particularly relevant in collectivist cultures in relation to motivation and productivity (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). The theoretical frameworks give an integrated and multi-dimensional foundation for composite well-being in this study, as well as for the hypothesized relationship between composite well-being and employee productivity in the top-tier restaurants in Nairobi.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

This study was conducted within a positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objective measurement, empirical observation, and systematic quantitative analysis of relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). The positivist stance was appropriate to the study's hypothesis-testing orientation and reliance on structured, standardized data collection and inferential statistical procedures (Bell & Bryman, 2022). An explanatory research design was adopted to examine the directional predictive relationship between employee well-being programs and employee productivity while recognizing that the cross-sectional design does not establish causality (Creswell, 2014).

The choice of an explanatory, cross-sectional survey design was informed by the study's objectives, the nature of the constructs being measured, and practical considerations of feasibility within the target population (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). Cross-sectional designs are widely employed in hospitality management research for their efficiency in capturing attitudinal and perceptual data from large, geographically dispersed samples at a single point in time (Bell & Bryman, 2022; Creswell, 2014). While this design does not permit causal inference in the strict experimental sense, the use of regression analysis within a theoretically grounded framework provides robust evidence of predictive relationships between the study variables (Cohen et al., 2003; Field, 2013).

3.2 Study Context and Population

The study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya which had an appropriate context as it is a city with a large number of classified high end dining establishments and also one of the commercial and hospitality hubs in Kenya. There is a wide variety of fine dining, hotel based and top-dollar

sit-down restaurants in the county. These are all features of a competitive service sector, with high customer expectations, high standards of service and a significant dependence on the performance of employees, making it a suitable environment in which to explore the potential of performance-based incentives and the productivity of employees.

A sampling frame of 52 top tier restaurants was identified through a systematic identification process, using regulatory classification information, industry directories and field verification. Thereafter these restaurants are known as the establishments. A total of 2,809 employees from four functional groups were targeted in the 52 establishments. In particular, 265 managers, 1,060 kitchen workers, 1,325 waiters and waitresses and 159 human resource workers formed the population. The units of observation were employees, as they are the ones who directly experienced the performance-based incentive practices, which provided information for evaluating the relationship between the performance-based incentive practices and employee productivity, and the moderating role of organizational culture.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size was calculated based on Yamane's (1967) sample size formula for finite population with the number of employees as the target population (2,809). The formula was used to determine a sample size of 350 respondents at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 0.05. The samples were distributed proportionately among the four categories of employees, based on the proportion of employees in each of those categories in the target population. The total number of respondents was thus 350 comprising 33 managers, 132 kitchen staff, 165 wait and 20 human resource staff.

The study leveraged a stratified random sampling technique, where the employees in the 52 establishments were stratified based on the employees' category. All the 4 strata consisted of managers, kitchen staff, wait staff, and human resource staff. Proportionate allocation assured the representation of each category in the sample according to the share of that category in the target population and simple random sampling was then used to provide equal chance of selection to eligible employees within each category. This procedure provided for an optimal representation of the various functions of the employees in the establishments identified, and minimized systematic selection bias. A total of 350 questionnaires were sent out and 313 of these were returned, returning an 89.4% response rate.

3.4 Measurement and Operationalization

Employee well-being programs were operationalized as a composite construct comprising four dimensions: (i) learning and development, (ii) recognition and appreciation, (iii) equitable compensation, and (iv) performance-based rewards. Each dimension was measured using six Likert-scale items rated on a five-point scale anchored at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly

Agree), yielding a total of 24 items for the composite well-being construct. A composite mean score was computed across all 24 items to represent the overall employee well-being program experience for each respondent. Employee productivity was measured using six Likert-scale items capturing self-assessed task efficiency, output quality, performance under pressure, supervisory feedback, responsibility allocation, and perceived value contribution, consistent with established hospitality productivity measurement frameworks (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022).

The construct validity of the measurement instrument was established through Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which confirmed that the items across all four well-being dimensions loaded onto their respective factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 and factor loadings above the 0.40 threshold recommended by Costello and Osborne (2005). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all constructs exceeding the 0.70 minimum threshold considered acceptable for social science research (Hair et al., 2010). The well-being composite and all its constituent dimensions, as well as the employee productivity scale, demonstrated satisfactory reliability, supporting the use of composite mean scores in subsequent analyses.

3.5 Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each dimension of the well-being programs and for the employee productivity variable to describe the distribution and central tendencies of the study variables (Field, 2013). The bivariate relationship between the composite well-being program score and employee productivity was assessed using Pearson product-moment correlation analysis at a 0.01 significance level (Cohen et al., 2003). Simple linear regression analysis was then conducted to explore the predictive relationship between employee well-being programs and employee productivity, with the composite well-being score as the independent variable and the mean of the employee productivity as the dependent variable (Aiken & West, 1991; Hair et al., 2010).

Regression diagnostics were performed before the main analysis to assess the assumptions underlying the linear model. The Durbin-Watson statistic was used to assess independence of errors, while Levene's test was reported for variance homogeneity. Because the regression model contained only one predictor, multicollinearity was not a substantive concern. The diagnostic checks were reported as supporting estimation of the linear model. All inferential analyses were evaluated at the .05 level of statistical significance (Cohen et al., 2003).

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the employee well-being program dimensions and the employee productivity variable. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with the respective construct items.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Learning & Development	313	3.92	0.612	High
Recognition & Appreciation	313	3.84	0.631	High
Equitable Compensation	313	3.76	0.658	High
Performance-Based Rewards	313	3.81	0.643	High
Well-Being Programs (Composite)	313	3.83	0.586	High
Employee Productivity	313	3.82	0.574	High

Source: Research Data (2026)

The descriptive results in Table 1 indicate generally high ratings across all employee well-being dimensions, with a composite mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.586). Learning and development recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.612$), indicating that it was the most positively rated dimension among respondents (Arwab et al., 2023; Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024). This descriptive ranking should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that learning and development was the strongest independent predictor of productivity because the four dimensions were not entered separately in the reported regression model.

Recognition and appreciation ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.631$) and performance-based rewards ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.643$) were also rated highly. Equitable compensation recorded the lowest mean among the four dimensions ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.658$), although the score remained within the study's high interpretation category. This pattern suggests comparatively less favourable perceptions of compensation fairness and transparency than of the other well-being dimensions (Mun & Kodama, 2022; Grabner & Martin, 2021).

Respondents also rated their own productivity positively ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.574$), indicating generally favourable self-assessments of task efficiency, output quality, and value contribution (Tavitiyaman et al., 2022). The similarity between the composite well-being mean (3.83) and productivity mean (3.82) is descriptive only and does not itself demonstrate association; the relationship is tested directly through the correlation and regression analyses reported below. The reported standard deviations indicate the dispersion of responses around the overall sample means and should not be used to infer similarity across restaurants or functional roles without subgroup analysis (Bryman, 2016; Field, 2013).

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis examining the bivariate relationship between employee well-being programs and employee productivity.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	Employee Productivity Mean	Well-Being Programs	N	Sig. (2-tailed)
Employee Productivity Mean	1	.834**	313	.000
Well-Being Programs	.834**	1	313	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Research Data (2026).

The Pearson correlation results in Table 2 show a strong, positive, and statistically significant association between employee well-being programs and employee productivity ($r = .834$, $p < .001$, $N = 313$). Squaring the correlation coefficient gives approximately .696, indicating substantial shared variance between the two composite scores (Cohen et al., 2003; Field, 2013). The statistical significance provides evidence against the null hypothesis of no linear association in the sampled data; it does not, by itself, establish causality.

The observed correlation ($r = .834$) is larger than the relationships described in the cited single-incentive studies in the Kenyan hospitality context (Cheruon et al., 2023; Mugambi et al., 2021). This pattern is consistent with the study's proposition that combining learning, recognition, compensation, and rewards into a composite well-being construct may capture a broader range of organizational practices associated with employee productivity (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021). Because the analysis is cross-sectional and based on composite self-report measures, the magnitude of the association should be interpreted as evidence of covariation rather than proof that well-being programs cause higher productivity (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

4.3 Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive relationship between the composite employee well-being programs score and employee productivity. Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the model summary, ANOVA results, and regression coefficients, respectively.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Predictors
1	.834 ^a	.696	.695	.10012	Well-Being Programs

^a Predictors: (Constant), well_being. Dependent Variable: Employee_Productivity_Mean. Source: Research Data (2026).

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.149	1	7.149	713.117	.000 ^b

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Residual	3.118	311	.010
Total	10.267	312	

^b Predictors: (Constant), well_being. Dependent Variable: Employee_Productivity_Mean.
 Source: Research Data (2026).

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Model		B	Std. Error	β (Beta)	t	Sig.	Decision
1	(Constant)	.121	.141		.855	.393	
	Well-Being Programs	.967	.036	.834	26.704	.000	H ₁ Supported

Dependent Variable: Employee_Productivity_Mean. Source: Research Data (2026).

The model summary in Table 3 shows a strong predictive relationship between the composite employee well-being score and employee productivity ($R = .834$, $R^2 = .696$). The model therefore accounts for 69.6% of the observed variance in the productivity score within the analyzed sample. The adjusted R^2 of .695 is very close to the unadjusted R^2 , reflecting negligible adjustment for model degrees of freedom (Hair et al., 2010). The reported standard error of the estimate is .10012. These statistics indicate strong model fit within the analyzed sample but should be interpreted in light of the cross-sectional design.

The ANOVA results in Table 4 indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant, $F(1, 311) = 713.117$, $p < .001$. The regression sum of squares is 7.149 and the residual sum of squares is 3.118, showing that the fitted model accounts for a substantial proportion of variation in the reported productivity score (Cohen et al., 2003; Field, 2013). The ANOVA therefore supports the statistical significance of the predictive model; it does not establish a causal effect of employee well-being programs.

As shown in Table 5, employee well-being programs are positively and statistically associated with employee productivity ($B = .967$, $SE = .036$, $\beta = .834$, $t = 26.704$, $p < .001$). In the fitted model, a one-unit difference in the composite well-being score corresponds to a .967-unit difference in the predicted employee productivity score (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen et al., 2003). In simple linear regression, the standardized coefficient equals the Pearson correlation when the same two variables and analytic sample are used. The intercept ($B = .121$, $t = .855$, $p = .393$) is not statistically significant and is not central to the study's substantive interpretation.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The study tested the hypothesis that employee well-being programs have a significant positive influence on employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression at the 5% level of significance. The decision

criterion was that the hypothesis would be supported where the regression coefficient for employee well-being programs was positive and statistically significant at $p < .05$.

H₁: Employee well-being programs have a significant positive influence on employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya.

The regression model produced $R = .834$, $R^2 = .696$, and adjusted $R^2 = .695$, indicating that the composite well-being score accounted for 69.6% of the observed variance in employee productivity within the analyzed sample. The remaining 30.4% represents variance not accounted for by this model and should not automatically be attributed to specific unmeasured factors. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 311) = 713.117$, $p < .001$, supporting the composite well-being score as a statistically significant predictor of the reported productivity score.

The regression coefficient was positive and statistically significant ($B = .967$, $SE = .036$, $\beta = .834$, $t = 26.704$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, higher composite employee well-being scores were associated with higher predicted employee productivity scores in the fitted model. The standardized coefficient further indicates a strong positive predictive relationship between the two variables. The intercept was .121 and was not statistically significant ($t = .855$, $p = .393$).

$$\text{Employee Productivity} = .121 + .967(\text{Employee Well-Being Programs})$$

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	B	SE	β	t	p	Decision
H ₁	.834	.696	.695	713.117	.967	.036	.834	26.704	<.001	Supported

Note. Dependent variable: Employee Productivity. Predictor: Employee Well-Being Programs.

Source: Research Data (2026).

The positive and statistically significant coefficient for employee well-being programs ($p < .001$) supported the study's alternative hypothesis at the .05 significance level. The results provide statistical evidence of a strong positive predictive relationship between the composite well-being score and employee productivity among employees in the sampled top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County. The reported regression evaluates the four well-being dimensions collectively through the composite score; it does not estimate the unique predictive contribution of each dimension separately.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings support the study's central proposition that performance-based practices can be examined collectively within an employee well-being perspective. The composite well-being score was strongly associated with employee productivity ($R^2 = .696$, $F = 713.117$, $p < .001$), which is consistent with the Well-Being at Work perspective that employee experiences of development, recognition, fairness, and reward are relevant to sustained work performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Warr, 1987). The direction of the result is also consistent with the cited studies examining

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individual incentive mechanisms in hospitality settings (Agba et al., 2021; Cheruon et al., 2023; Mugambi et al., 2021). However, direct comparison of effect magnitudes across studies should be made cautiously because constructs, samples, and model specifications differ.

Learning and development was the highest-rated well-being dimension ($M = 3.92$), a pattern that is consistent with Human Capital Theory's emphasis on investment in employee skills and knowledge (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). In top-tier restaurants, where service standards depend heavily on employee capability, continuous learning can therefore be interpreted as an important component of the overall well-being experience (Arwab et al., 2023; Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024). The descriptive mean alone does not establish learning and development as the strongest predictor of productivity; such a conclusion would require a model that estimates the four dimensions separately.

The high ratings for recognition and appreciation ($M = 3.84$) and performance-based rewards ($M = 3.81$) are consistent with Herzberg's emphasis on recognition and achievement as motivational features of work (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg et al., 1959). Equitable compensation recorded the lowest mean among the four dimensions ($M = 3.76$), suggesting comparatively less favourable perceptions of compensation than of learning, recognition, and rewards. This pattern is consistent with literature emphasizing fairness and transparency in merit-based pay systems (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Mun & Kodama, 2022).

The unstandardized coefficient ($B = .967$) indicates a strong positive linear relationship within the fitted model, with higher well-being scores corresponding to higher predicted productivity scores (Cohen et al., 2003; Field, 2013). This coefficient should not be interpreted as a causal dose-response effect because the study used a cross-sectional, self-report design. The findings nevertheless support the practical relevance of considering learning, recognition, compensation, and performance rewards as an integrated set of employee practices rather than focusing exclusively on one incentive mechanism (Noorazem et al., 2021; Yani et al., 2025).

The findings are contextually relevant because they demonstrate a strong well-being-productivity relationship among employees in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi, a setting that is less represented in the cited literature than hotel environments (Cheruon et al., 2023; Mugambi et al., 2021). The result provides contextual support for applying the study's integrated theoretical perspective in this setting, but it should not be treated as establishing generalizability to the entire East African or African hospitality industry. Broader generalizability requires comparative evidence across restaurant categories, locations, and hospitality subsectors (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Taras et al., 2010).

5.0 Conclusions

This study examined the predictive relationship between employee well-being programs, operationalized as a composite of learning and development, recognition and appreciation, equitable compensation, and performance-based rewards, and employee productivity in top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County, Kenya. The composite well-being score was strongly and positively associated with employee productivity ($R^2 = .696$, $F = 713.117$, $p < .001$; $B = .967$, $\beta = .834$), supporting the study hypothesis. The findings are consistent with the broader proposition that

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performance-related practices may be more informative when considered as an integrated employee well-being system rather than as isolated transactional incentives (Agba et al., 2021; Noorazem et al., 2021).

Learning and development recorded the highest descriptive mean, followed by recognition and appreciation, performance-based rewards, and equitable compensation. These rankings describe employee perceptions of the four well-being dimensions but do not establish their relative predictive strength because the reported regression used only the composite well-being score. The findings therefore support prioritizing a balanced well-being approach while recognizing the need for further analysis to determine the unique contribution of each dimension (Arwab et al., 2023; Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024; Grabner & Martin, 2021; Mun & Kodama, 2022).

Performance-based rewards may serve as positive reinforcers where criteria are clearly defined, attainable, and consistently applied (Agba et al., 2021; Luthans & Kreitner, 1985). More broadly, the study supports a shift from treating performance-based programs solely as isolated incentives toward considering them as part of an integrated employee well-being strategy involving development, recognition, compensation, and contingent rewards (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Robbins & Judge, 2022; Warr, 1987).

6.0 Practical Recommendations

The study recommends institutionalizing learning and development as a continuous component of restaurant operations rather than limiting it to occasional training events (Arwab et al., 2023; Mustafa & Lleshi, 2024). Relevant practices may include coaching, merit-based access to advanced training, and professional certification. Recognition programs should also be formalized, consistently administered, and designed to provide timely acknowledgement of employee contributions (Ampofo et al., 2023; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Periodic recognition events, peer-nominated awards, and structured managerial acknowledgement provide practical mechanisms through which top-tier restaurants can strengthen the recognition dimension of employee well-being.

Performance appraisal and merit-based compensation systems should use transparent criteria that are communicated to employees at the beginning of each appraisal cycle and applied consistently when determining pay progression (Grabner & Martin, 2021; Mun & Kodama, 2022). Performance-based reward programs should similarly rely on measurable performance indicators, clear eligibility criteria, and predictable payment schedules (Agba et al., 2021; Luthans & Kreitner, 1985). At the industry level, relevant hospitality and labour stakeholders may consider guidance that encourages employee development, compensation transparency, and fair performance recognition in classified restaurant establishments. Such guidance should be informed by broader evidence and stakeholder consultation rather than by the present study alone.

7.0 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study's cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported questionnaire data limit causal interpretation and may introduce common-method and perceptual bias. In addition, the focus on top-tier restaurants in Nairobi County limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to

other restaurant categories, counties, or hospitality subsectors. Future studies should use longitudinal or multi-source designs, compare different hospitality contexts, and model the four well-being dimensions separately or jointly to estimate their unique contributions to employee productivity. Replication with independently measured productivity outcomes would also strengthen the evidence base for the proposed well-being framework.

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