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Employee Motivation and Organizational Performance in The Public Sector in Kenya: A Case Study of Kenya National Examinations Council

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of employee motivation on organizational performance in the public sector, focusing on the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The study employed a descriptive design using questionnaires and SPSS analysis to examine how training, rewards, work environment, and work-life balance affect organizational performance among KNEC employees. The findings revealed that three motivational factors—rewards and incentives, employee training and development, and work environment—had significant positive effects on organizational performance, while work-life balance had a weak but negative effect. The regression coefficients showed that rewards and incentives ($B = 0.584$, $p < 0.001$) were the strongest predictor of performance, followed by work environment ($B = 0.328$, $p < 0.001$) and employee training and development ($B = 0.307$, $p < 0.001$), whereas work-life balance had a negative coefficient ($B = -0.095$, $p = 0.039$). The overall model indicated a strong relationship ($R = 0.876$), explaining 76.8 percent of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.768$, $F = 147.131$, $p < 0.001$). The study concluded that equitable and transparent reward systems, continuous training, and a supportive work environment are critical in enhancing productivity and service delivery in public institutions. It recommends that KNEC strengthen motivation strategies by aligning training programs with departmental needs, improving reward fairness and recognition mechanisms, and adopting flexible but performance-conscious work-life policies to sustain institutional efficiency, employee engagement, and organizational excellence.

Keywords: *Employee Motivation, Organizational Performance, Public Sector, Kenya, National Examinations Council.*

1.1 Background to the Study

Employee motivation has emerged as one of the most significant pillars of organizational effectiveness in contemporary management discourse. It refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain human behavior toward achieving organizational goals (Quintana, 2023; Uka & Prendi, 2021). Motivation encompasses intrinsic elements such as self-fulfillment, recognition, and personal growth, and extrinsic factors including remuneration, promotion, and incentives (Wahyudi, 2022). When employees are motivated, they demonstrate greater commitment, creativity, and persistence, contributing directly to institutional efficiency and innovation (Hajiali et al., 2022). Motivation in organizations can be fostered through four critical dimensions—training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance. Training enhances competencies and career growth, rewards strengthen commitment, the work environment shapes satisfaction and collaboration, while work-life balance sustains long-term engagement by reducing burnout (Aziz, Widodo, & Subagja, 2021; Manzoor, Wei, Nurunnabi, & Subhan, 2021; Fathiah, Hamzah, Setiawan, & Zulkarnain, 2021; Mulang, 2022).

Organizational performance, on the other hand, reflects an institution's ability to efficiently utilize its resources to achieve strategic goals, deliver quality services, and ensure sustainability (Aguilera, De Massis, Fini, & Vismara, 2024). In the public sector, performance extends beyond profitability to include service delivery, transparency, policy execution, and citizen satisfaction (Garengo & Sardi, 2021). High performance depends on governance quality, leadership effectiveness, employee competence, and the organization's ability to adapt to technological and societal changes (Knies, Boselie, Gould-Williams, & Vandenabeele, 2024). Public institutions face bureaucratic constraints that often limit flexibility, making human capital motivation a crucial determinant of success. Moreover, performance management systems and digital transformation efforts influence motivation by promoting fairness, accountability, and recognition of employee effort (Beer, Micheli, & Besharov, 2022; Felício, Samagaio, & Rodrigues, 2021; Mikalef, Islam, Parida, Singh, & Altwaijry, 2023).

The relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance is both direct and reciprocal. Motivated employees are more productive, committed, and innovative, while organizations that perform well often sustain motivation through recognition and reward systems (Asif & Rathore, 2021; Beer et al., 2022). Studies reveal that employee motivation improves service quality, reduces absenteeism, and enhances operational efficiency, particularly in public institutions where bureaucratic rigidity can dampen enthusiasm (George, Pandey, Steijn, Decramer, & Audenaert, 2021). Conversely, lack of motivation stemming from poor remuneration, limited growth opportunities, or unsupportive work environments leads to disengagement and diminished productivity (Felício et al., 2021). Thus, integrating motivational strategies into performance management frameworks enhances both individual and institutional outcomes, reinforcing long-term organizational sustainability (Mikalef et al., 2023).

Globally, motivation is recognized as a strategic driver of performance across both private and public institutions. Wahyudi (2022) emphasizes that motivation underpins workforce productivity and innovation, while Quintana (2023) associates it with sustainable competitive advantage in knowledge-driven economies. In advanced economies, performance-based rewards, flexible working arrangements, and continuous professional development have become integral to human resource strategies (Beer et al., 2022). Governments and international organizations have adopted performance-linked pay and competency-based appraisals to ensure accountability and foster commitment (Aguilera et al., 2024). Digital governance systems and artificial intelligence applications have further optimized public service motivation by reducing inefficiencies and enabling transparent performance monitoring (Mikalef et al., 2023). These global shifts highlight that motivation-driven workforce policies are indispensable for improving both service delivery and institutional resilience.

Regionally, Sub-Saharan Africa has made progress in recognizing the value of employee motivation as a driver of public sector efficiency. Forson, Amoako, and Laryea (2021) found that in Ghana, effective compensation systems, clear career progression, and supportive leadership significantly enhanced employee motivation and performance in public agencies. Similarly, Reda (2022) reported that in Ethiopia, extrinsic motivators such as fair remuneration and promotion opportunities had stronger effects on performance compared to intrinsic motivators. In Tanzania, Njunwa (2024) noted that motivation levels were lower in rural local governments due to poor working conditions, limited incentives, and inadequate recognition, which hindered service delivery. These regional findings underscore the persistent need to develop motivation policies that integrate both financial and non-financial incentives to improve productivity in Africa's public sector institutions.

In Kenya, motivation has been identified as a cornerstone of public service performance, particularly within the education and health sectors. Nyabonga and Muathe (2022) established that motivation significantly enhances service delivery, employee commitment, and efficiency in public health facilities. Musangi, Ndegwa, and Kibe (2023) observed a strong positive relationship between employee motivation and performance in county hospitals, where recognition and conducive working environments were key drivers of job satisfaction. Kariuki and Kiiru (2021) further demonstrated that recognition and fair reward systems improved morale and retention among public servants. Despite these gains, public institutions continue to face challenges including limited compensation, rigid promotion procedures, and inadequate work environments, all of which reduce motivation and affect institutional performance (Nyabonga & Muathe, 2022).

The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) represents a vital public organization entrusted with administering, regulating, and certifying national examinations across Kenya's education system. Established under the Kenya National Examinations Council Act (Cap 225A) in 1980, KNEC's mandate includes developing examination policies, ensuring integrity in assessment, and issuing valid certificates to candidates. The Council oversees major national assessments such as the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), which are central to the academic progression and career development of millions of learners annually (Kinoti, 2022). KNEC's performance is measured by the timeliness, fairness, and accuracy of examinations, which directly influence public confidence and educational equity. Nonetheless, challenges such as delayed examiner remuneration, resource constraints, and employee dissatisfaction have at times undermined service efficiency (Mugambi, Njeru, & Wanyoike, 2022). The study examines how employee motivation influences organizational performance at KNEC to strengthen understanding of motivation-performance dynamics in Kenya's public sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous public sector reforms in Kenya, consistent organizational performance remains elusive, largely because service outcomes depend on motivated personnel whose effort must translate into tangible, valued results. At the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), persistent operational challenges such as delayed examiner payments, recurrent system failures, examination irregularities, and growing public skepticism regarding result credibility indicate deep-seated performance strain in a mission-critical environment where accuracy, trust, and timeliness are imperative (Kinoti, 2022; Mugambi, Njeru, & Wanyoike, 2022). Internally, issues such as limited career progression, inadequate training opportunities, weak recognition mechanisms, and low morale point to a fragile linkage between employee effort, performance, and rewards (Salaries and Remuneration Commission, 2024). These gaps risk perpetuating inefficiencies, eroding institutional credibility, and undermining employee retention.

Existing research affirms that motivation drives public service performance, yet most Kenyan studies focus on broad civil service contexts or single sectors like health and education, overlooking specialized assessment institutions such as KNEC. Moreover, previous studies often analyze individual motivational factors—such as training or rewards—in isolation, neglecting how multiple dimensions interact to influence performance in highly regulated and high-pressure environments. Consequently, managers at KNEC lack empirical evidence on which motivational levers—training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance—most significantly affect organizational outcomes or how employees perceive fairness and reciprocity within the motivation–performance framework. The study addresses the lack of integrated evidence on how training, rewards, supportive environments, and work-life balance jointly influence organizational performance at KNEC. Bridging this gap will inform effective motivation strategies that enhance efficiency, integrity, and service quality in Kenya's examination system.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

i. To examine the effect of employee training and development on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya.

ii. To assess the influence of rewards and incentives on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya

iii. To evaluate the effect of the work environment on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya.

iv. To determine the influence of work-life balance on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

i. What is the effect of employee training and development on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya?

ii. How do rewards and incentives influence organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya?

iii. How does the work environment affect organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya?

iv. What is the influence of work-life balance on organizational performance in the public sector in Kenya?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focused on examining the influence of employee motivation on organizational performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). It specifically analyzed four core dimensions of motivation—training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance—as key factors shaping employee commitment and output. Organizational performance was assessed using indicators of service delivery efficiency, employee productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness. The study targeted employees across all hierarchical levels and departments at KNEC headquarters and selected operational offices within Nairobi. Data collection was conducted between April and July 2025, capturing current organizational dynamics and providing a comprehensive understanding of how motivational practices affect performance within Kenya's public examination management context.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on four key theories that explain the relationship between employee motivation and organizational performance within public sector institutions: Expectancy Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Job Characteristics Model, and Work-Life Border Theory. Each provides a unique lens for understanding how motivational variables such as training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance shape employee behavior and institutional outcomes. Among these, Expectancy Theory serves as the study's foundational framework since it directly links individual effort to performance outcomes and subsequent rewards, thereby aligning with the study's focus on effort–performance–reward relationships within the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC).

2.1.1 Expectancy Theory

Developed by Victor Vroom (1964), Expectancy Theory posits that employee motivation arises from the belief that effort leads to performance (expectancy), performance leads to rewards (instrumentality), and those rewards are personally valuable (valence). The theory assumes that individuals are rational decision-makers who assess the likelihood that their efforts will yield desired outcomes. Motivation therefore depends on the perceived credibility of organizational systems linking effort, performance, and reward (Lokman et al., 2021).

Expectancy Theory's strength lies in its logical structure and practical applicability in designing performance-based reward systems. It provides a clear foundation for analyzing how employees perceive fairness and reward transparency. Nonetheless, critics argue that it overlooks emotional and environmental influences on behavior and assumes all employees act rationally with full information (Ilgen & Klein, 1988; Rehman, Sehar, & Afzal, 2019). In KNEC's bureaucratic context—where promotions and recognition may be delayed—the perceived gap between effort and reward can diminish motivation. The theory is thus relevant for assessing whether KNEC's motivational practices maintain credible and fair linkages between employee effort, training outcomes, and institutional rewards, which in turn influence performance and service delivery.

2.1.2 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg, along with Mausner and Snyderman (1959), proposed that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction stem from two distinct sets of factors: motivators (intrinsic factors like achievement and recognition) and hygiene factors (extrinsic conditions such as salary and job security). The theory assumes that eliminating dissatisfaction does not automatically create motivation—genuine motivation arises from intrinsic job enrichment and opportunities for growth (Saleem et al., 2021).

The theory's strength is its practical guidance in identifying what truly motivates employees beyond material incentives. It encourages management to focus on job enrichment, autonomy, and recognition. However, the rigid separation between motivators and hygiene factors has been criticized as oversimplified and culturally limited (Robbins & Judge, 2020; King, 2017). Despite this, the theory is particularly useful in KNEC's public service environment, where monetary rewards are often constrained. Applying Herzberg's framework helps explain how non-financial motivators—such as recognition, growth, and work enrichment—can enhance motivation and performance even when pay scales remain fixed.

2.1.3 Job Characteristics Model

Developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) asserts that certain job features; skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback enhance employees' psychological states and intrinsic motivation. It assumes that motivation is derived from the job itself, and that individuals seek meaningful work that fosters responsibility and personal growth (Oldham & Hackman, 2010).

The JCM's strength lies in its structured approach to job design and its emphasis on intrinsic motivation as a function of meaningful work. It provides measurable variables for redesigning jobs to boost engagement and performance (Ali et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it has been critiqued for assuming uniform employee preferences and for limited applicability in rigid bureaucracies (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Within KNEC, the model underscores the importance of aligning job design and task clarity with employee autonomy and feedback systems. It is relevant for analyzing how job structure and work environment influence motivation and contribute to institutional effectiveness.

2.1.4 Work-Life Border Theory

Proposed by Clark (2000), the Work-Life Border Theory explains how individuals manage boundaries between their work and personal lives. It assumes that work and home are distinct domains with different norms, and that employees act as "border-crossers" who negotiate the flexibility or permeability of these boundaries. Motivation and well-being improve when these borders are well-managed through supportive organizational policies (Clark, 2000).

A major strength of this theory is its recognition of the dynamic interaction between work and personal life, emphasizing flexibility, managerial empathy, and institutional support as determinants of motivation. Its weakness lies in assuming individuals have control over their boundaries, which may not hold true in hierarchical or resource-limited public institutions (Allen et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the theory's relevance to this study lies in its ability to explain how work-life balance practices—such as flexible schedules, leave policies, and wellness initiatives—affect employee motivation and sustained performance at KNEC. In a demanding public sector environment, adopting work-life supportive practices can reduce burnout, improve morale, and enhance institutional service delivery.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). This design was appropriate because it enabled systematic description and analysis of the relationships between the key motivation variables training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance and organizational performance indicators such as service delivery, productivity, and institutional effectiveness. The target population comprised 400 employees across all management levels and departments at KNEC. A sample size of 200 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula (1967) and selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation from top, middle, and lower management. Data were collected using structured questionnaires aligned with the study variables, measured on a five-point Likert scale. A pilot study involving 20 respondents from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) was conducted to refine the instrument and test its clarity, reliability, and validity.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, applying both descriptive and inferential statistics. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the individual and combined effects of the independent variables on organizational performance. Instrument reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), while validity was ensured through expert review and statistical tests such as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Ethical standards were strictly adhered to, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection, in accordance with NACOSTI and institutional guidelines. This methodology ensured accuracy, credibility, and generalizability of findings on how employee motivation influences performance within KNEC's public sector context.

4.0 Findings

This section presents the descriptive statistics as well as inferential results.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the findings. The findings are presented as per the set out objective.

4.1.1 Employee Training and Development

The first objective of this study was to examine the effect of employee training and development on the organizational performance of the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Training and Development

Employee Training and Development	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
1. The training programs offered are relevant to my job.	3.95	0.537
2. I have acquired new skills through the organization's training programs.	4.01	0.457
3. Trainings are conducted frequently enough to enhance employee competence.	4.15	0.619
4. The training received has improved my job performance.	4.09	0.724
5. The organization evaluates training effectiveness regularly.	4.14	0.459
6. Opportunities for training and development are accessible to all staff.	4.13	0.425
Average	**4.078**	**0.537**

The results presented in Table 1 show that employee training and development significantly contribute to organizational performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The overall mean score of 4.078 and a standard deviation of 0.537 indicate that most respondents agreed that the existing training programs at KNEC are relevant and beneficial to their professional growth and the institution's effectiveness. This consensus suggests that continuous employee development has been embraced as a strategic priority, supporting job competence and service efficiency. According to Aziz, Widodo, and Subagja (2021), regular and well-structured training enhances workforce capability and ensures that employees remain aligned with evolving institutional demands. The relatively high mean values across most items in the table, particularly for training frequency, evaluation of effectiveness, and accessibility, reflect KNEC's deliberate effort to provide equitable and recurrent learning opportunities to its employees. Such consistency supports the view of Jennifer and Asri (2022) that recurrent capacity building improves engagement, confidence, and overall institutional performance.

Despite these positive outcomes, the slightly lower mean of 3.95 on the relevance of training programs highlights the need for KNEC to strengthen the linkage between training content and specific departmental roles. This finding mirrors observations by Urbancová, Vrabcová, Hudáková, and Petrů (2021) that in many public institutions, training initiatives sometimes focus more on procedural compliance than on building job-specific capabilities, which can limit their motivational and performance-enhancing impact. Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the Human Capital Theory and the Resource Based View (RBV), which emphasize that investment in employee knowledge directly contributes to higher productivity and sustained competitive advantage (Tumi, Hasan, & Khalid, 2022). In this context, KNEC's investment in regular and accessible training programs demonstrates a commitment to strengthening its internal capacity to manage national examinations effectively. Therefore, while training and development are evidently strong performance drivers at KNEC, greater customization of training to operational realities would further enhance motivation, professional growth, and long-term institutional effectiveness.

4.1.2 Rewards and Incentives

The second research purpose of this research was to evaluate the impacts of rewards and incentives on the work-performance of the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The descriptive findings are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Rewards and Incentives

Rewards and Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I am satisfied with the monetary rewards provided by the organization.	4.14	0.403
2. non-monetary recognition (e.g., praise, certificates) motivates me to work harder.	4.15	0.467
3. There are clear opportunities for career advancement at KNEC.	4.09	0.309
4. The reward system is fair and transparent.	4.15	0.563
5. My performance is acknowledged and rewarded appropriately.	4.15	0.455

6. Rewards and incentives influence my level of engagement at work.	4.15	0.417
Mean	**4.138**	**0.4422**

The results presented in Table 2 show that rewards and incentives have a strong positive influence on employee motivation and performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The overall mean score of 4.138 with a standard deviation of 0.4422 indicates high and consistent agreement among respondents that KNEC's reward systems are effective in motivating staff and enhancing engagement. The consistently high mean values of 4.15 across several items—including non-monetary recognition, fairness and transparency of the reward system, acknowledgment of performance, and the influence of incentives on engagement—highlight that employees highly value recognition and equitable reward practices. These results align with the observations of Manzoor, Wei, Nurunnabi, and Subhan (2021) and Alase and Akinbo (2021), who found that both financial and non-financial incentives contribute to employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall productivity. The findings further demonstrate that non-monetary rewards such as praise and certificates play a particularly significant role in motivating employees within public service settings where salary adjustments may be limited.

Although the general perception of KNEC's reward and incentive systems is positive, the slightly lower mean of 4.09 for career advancement opportunities suggests that some employees perceive limited pathways for upward mobility. This is consistent with Kumari, Ali, un-Nisa, and Khan (2021), who noted that restricted promotion opportunities and rigid civil service structures can weaken long-term motivation despite strong reward frameworks. The low standard deviation across all items indicates that this perception is broadly shared across departments, reflecting consistent application of human resource policies. Theoretically, these findings support Equity Theory, which underscores fairness and transparency as central to sustaining motivation and reducing dissatisfaction, and the Resource Based View (RBV), which positions well-designed reward systems as strategic assets that strengthen institutional capability and retention (Liaquat, Sajjad, Farooq, & Ali, 2024). Overall, the descriptive results affirm that KNEC's balanced use of monetary and non-monetary rewards effectively enhances employee engagement and performance, though greater attention to structured career development and succession planning would further consolidate motivation and institutional loyalty.

4.1.3 Work Environment

The third objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of the work environment on the organizational performance of the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The descriptive findings are shown in table 3 below;

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Work Environment

Work Environment	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I receive adequate support from my supervisor.	4.15	0.399
2. The physical workspace is conducive for productive work.	4.05	0.489
3. Communication and teamwork are encouraged within the organization.	4.09	0.396
4. I feel psychologically safe to express myself at work.	4.11	0.377
5. The work environment enhances my job satisfaction.	4.01	0.399

6. Organizational culture promotes a supportive atmosphere.	4.09	0.635
Average	4.083	0.449

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the work environment at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) is generally perceived as positive and supportive, with an overall mean of 4.083 and a standard deviation of 0.449. Respondents expressed strong agreement that their supervisors provide adequate guidance and support (mean = 4.15), highlighting the pivotal role of effective supervision in enhancing motivation and job performance. This finding aligns with Arfan (2021) and Iis, Yunus, Adam, and Sofyan (2022), who observed that supervisory support in public institutions enhances engagement, accountability, and employee satisfaction. Similarly, high ratings for communication, teamwork, and psychological safety (means above 4.00) indicate that KNEC fosters an environment where collaboration and openness are valued. These results correspond with the assertions of Basalamah (2021), who emphasized that collaborative structures and ergonomic working conditions stimulate productivity and reinforce organizational cohesion, particularly in structured public entities.

While most indicators were rated highly, the lowest mean of 4.01 for job satisfaction suggests that some employees perceive a limited connection between environmental factors and their personal fulfillment. This finding mirrors the concerns raised by Hayani, Amalia, and Hadi (2021), who noted that bureaucratic rigidity, workload pressure, and insufficient job autonomy can constrain motivation despite favorable work conditions. The relatively low variability across responses reflects a shared experience of uniform working conditions, which is expected in state corporations governed by standardized civil service regulations (Iis et al., 2022). Theoretically, these results align with Organizational Support Theory, which postulates that employees who perceive institutional care and adequate resource provision exhibit higher morale and commitment (Fathiah, Hamzah, Setiawan, & Zulkarnain, 2021). Likewise, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory helps explain that while KNEC's conducive environment acts as a hygiene factor preventing dissatisfaction, additional motivators such as job enrichment, role autonomy, and recognition could strengthen satisfaction and engagement. Overall, the descriptive findings affirm that KNEC's work environment supports effective performance through leadership, teamwork, and communication, though targeted interventions to enhance psychological well-being and professional growth could further improve employee satisfaction and institutional performance.

4.1.4 Work Life Balance

The fourth objective of this study was to determine the influence of work-life balance on organizational performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The descriptive findings for the subject are presented below.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Work Life Balance

Work Life Balance	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
1. I am able to manage both my work and personal life effectively.	4.13	0.412
2. KNEC offers flexible work arrangements when needed.	4.07	0.603
3. The organization has clear leave policies that support employee wellbeing.	4.05	0.517
4. I rarely experience burnout due to heavy workload.	4.01	0.486

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5. Work-life balance policies have positively impacted my productivity.	4.04	0.548
6. I feel supported by management in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.	4.06	0.434
Average	**4.06**	**0.5**

The results in Table 4 indicate that employees at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) hold favorable perceptions regarding the organization's work life balance practices, with item means ranging from 4.01 to 4.13 and an overall average mean of 4.06. This generally positive response suggests that KNEC has established an enabling environment that allows employees to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively. The highest mean of 4.13 corresponds to employees' ability to balance work and personal life, reflecting that most staff members feel supported in managing competing demands. These results are consistent with the findings of Marecki (2023) and Palumbo, Cavallone, and Nucciotti (2022), who emphasized that flexible work arrangements and formal support structures significantly improve well-being and productivity in public sector institutions. Similarly, the high mean scores for flexible work arrangements (4.07) and leave policies (4.05) confirm that structured policies play an essential role in sustaining employee motivation and reducing stress.

Despite these positive outcomes, the relatively lower mean score of 4.01 on burnout suggests that while work-life balance initiatives are effective, workload pressures and staffing challenges still pose a risk to employee well-being. This observation aligns with Mulang (2022), who noted that rigid schedules and high workloads in public institutions often limit the full realization of balance and satisfaction. Managerial support, which recorded a mean of 4.06, underscores the role of empathetic leadership and organizational culture in enabling employees to integrate work and life commitments effectively (Oloyede et al., 2021). The low overall standard deviation (0.5) indicates uniform experiences across departments, suggesting that KNEC's policies are applied equitably. Theoretically, these findings align with Work Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000), which argues that institutional support for managing work and personal domains enhances satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. In practice, KNEC's structured leave provisions, flexible scheduling, and wellness support appear to have a measurable impact on employee motivation and institutional performance. Nonetheless, introducing targeted workload monitoring and stress management programs could further strengthen these outcomes by mitigating fatigue and sustaining high performance levels across the organization.

4.1.5 Organizational Performance

In this study, organizational performance was conceptualized as the dependent variable, representing the core outcome influenced by employee motivation practices at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Performance

Organizational Performance	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. KNEC delivers services efficiently and within expected timelines.	3.99	0.508
2. Employees are generally productive in their roles.	3.77	0.595

3. There are continuous efforts to improve institutional effectiveness.	3.88	0.551
4. KNEC is responsive to stakeholder needs and feedback.	3.97	0.773
5. Performance targets are regularly reviewed and achieved.	4.04	0.54
6. There is a clear alignment between employee output and organizational goals.	3.91	0.6
Average	**3.927**	**0.595**

The findings presented in Table 5 show that respondents held moderately positive views of the Kenya National Examinations Council's (KNEC) overall performance, with an average mean of 3.927 and a standard deviation of 0.595. The results suggest that while KNEC performs effectively in meeting its institutional mandates, opportunities remain to strengthen certain aspects, particularly employee productivity. The highest mean score (4.04) on the achievement of performance targets reflects recognition of KNEC's structured systems, procedural consistency, and adherence to timelines. Similarly, high scores for service delivery efficiency (3.99) and stakeholder responsiveness (3.97) indicate that employees perceive the institution as reliable in meeting public expectations. These findings align with Garengo and Sardi (2021), who argue that public sector performance is often measured by service efficiency, policy compliance, and responsiveness to citizen needs.

Nonetheless, the lowest mean of 3.77 for employee productivity highlights the existence of operational inefficiencies and possibly underutilized human capacity, a pattern also noted by Marsidi, Hariyati, and Nurcahyo (2022) in their study of performance constraints within state corporations. The moderate variation in responses suggests that perceptions of performance may differ across departments, with administrative and supervisory teams viewing outcomes more favorably than operational staff who face heavier workloads and limited autonomy. Theoretically, these results support the Resource Based View (RBV), which emphasizes that sustained organizational performance depends on how effectively institutions leverage internal resources, particularly human capital (Adebayo, Sunday, & Adebisi, 2021). In this context, motivation-related practices such as targeted training, fair rewards, supportive work environments, and work-life balance play a central role in converting employee effort into tangible institutional outcomes. Overall, the descriptive analysis confirms that while KNEC maintains operational credibility and fulfills its public mandate, continuous improvement in employee motivation and productivity remains critical for enhancing institutional performance and long-term service excellence.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

The inferential presented here include correlation and regression.

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

According to Table 6, the analysis indicates that there are statistically significant positive correlations between the dependent variable, Organizational Performance, and all four independent variables. This research corroborates the hypothesis that employee motivation practices have a substantial impact on institutional performance outcomes in the public sector, as evidenced by the case of KNEC.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis

		Organizational Performance	Employee training and development	Rewards and Incentives	Work Environment	Work Life Balance
Organizational Performance	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.733**	.823**	.681**	.299**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Employee training and development	Pearson Correlation	.733**	1.000	.660**	.532**	.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.002
Rewards and Incentives	Pearson Correlation	.823**	.660**	1.000	.658**	.454**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
Work Environment	Pearson Correlation	.681**	.532**	.658**	1.000	.365**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Work Life Balance	Pearson Correlation	.299**	.228**	.454**	.365**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The correlation results presented in Table 6 demonstrate that all four motivational variables—employee training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance—exhibited statistically significant positive relationships with organizational performance at the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) at the 0.01 significance level. The strongest association was observed between rewards and incentives and organizational performance ($r = 0.823$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the critical influence of equitable and transparent reward systems in enhancing employee engagement and institutional effectiveness. This aligns with the findings of Kumari et al. (2022) and Mutuyimana and Sikubwabo (2021), who established that fair incentive structures play a decisive role in driving productivity in bureaucratic settings. The second strongest correlation emerged between employee training and development and organizational performance ($r = 0.733$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of continuous professional development in improving service quality and operational efficiency, as also affirmed by Aziz et al. (2021) and Jennifer and Asri (2022).

A significant positive correlation was also recorded between work environment and organizational performance ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that supportive and collaborative conditions substantially contribute to institutional success, consistent with Fathiah et al. (2021) and Basalamah (2021). The weakest, though still significant, relationship was between work-life balance and organizational performance ($r = 0.299$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that while balance initiatives are beneficial, their direct influence on performance may be less pronounced compared to tangible motivators such as rewards and training (Mulang, 2022; Oloyede et al., 2021). Inter-variable correlations were also significant, particularly between rewards and training ($r = 0.660$) and between rewards and work environment ($r = 0.658$), suggesting that motivational factors in KNEC function synergistically rather than independently. These findings are theoretically supported by the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory, which posit that coherent and reciprocal motivation practices enhance organizational capability and employee commitment. Overall, the correlation analysis provides strong empirical evidence that employee motivation practices are closely associated with improved organizational performance at KNEC, setting a firm basis for the regression analysis that follows.

4.2.2 Regression Analysis

The study conducted a regression analysis to determine the relationship among the variables. Table 7 indicates that the regression model produced a strong overall correlation between the four independent variables and organizational performance with an R value of 0.876.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.876a	0.768	0.763	0.127148

a Predictors: (Constant), Work Life Balance, Employee training and development, Work Environment, Rewards and Incentives

a Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

The model recorded a strong multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.876$), indicating a high degree of association between the independent variables; employee training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance and the dependent variable, organizational performance. The R Square value of 0.768 signifies that these four predictors collectively explain 76.8 percent of the variance in KNEC's organizational performance, while the Adjusted R Square of 0.763 confirms the model's reliability and stability after accounting for sample size and the number of predictors. This high explanatory power underscores the central role of motivational practices in shaping institutional outcomes, consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which posits that internal capabilities such as human capital, supportive structures, and employee-centered policies are key drivers of organizational success (Barney, 1991).

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The overall model was statistically significant, as demonstrated by the ANOVA F-statistic ($F = 147.131$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the regression model fits the data well and that the combined effect of the independent variables meaningfully predicts performance at KNEC.

Table 8: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.514	4	2.379	147.131	.000b
	Residual	2.878	178	0.016		
	Total	12.392	182			

a Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance
b Predictors: (Constant), Work Life Balance, Employee training and development , Work Environment , Rewards and Incentives

The coefficients table provides deeper insight into the individual contribution of each motivational factor. Rewards and incentives emerged as the strongest predictor of performance ($B = 0.584$, $t = 9.201$, $p < 0.001$), implying that a one-unit improvement in the reward system leads to an approximate 0.584-unit increase in organizational performance, holding other variables constant.

Table 9: Coefficient of Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.611	0.257		-2.377	0.019
	Employee training and development	0.307	0.052	0.29	5.89	0.000
	Rewards and Incentives	0.584	0.063	0.534	9.201	0.000
	Work Environment	0.328	0.078	0.207	4.21	0.000
	Work Life Balance	-0.095	0.046	-0.085	-2.078	0.039

This finding aligns with Kumari et al. (2022) and Mutuyimana and Sikubwabo (2021), who emphasized that equitable and transparent reward systems significantly enhance employee engagement and institutional effectiveness, even within bureaucratic public service contexts. Employee training and development also had a statistically significant positive impact ($B = 0.307$, $t = 5.890$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing that targeted skill development directly improves productivity, service delivery, and institutional adaptability. This is consistent with Aziz et al. (2021) and Jennifer and Asri (2022), who found that continuous professional learning enhances employee capability, efficiency, and organizational competitiveness. Similarly, the work environment demonstrated a strong positive influence ($B = 0.328$, $t = 4.210$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who operate in supportive and collaborative settings contribute more effectively to institutional goals. This supports the findings of Fathiah et al. (2021) and Basalamah (2021), who observed that conducive physical and psychosocial environments enhance motivation and job satisfaction in public institutions.

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Interestingly, work-life balance showed a statistically significant but negative coefficient (B = -0.095, t = -2.078, p = 0.039), suggesting that an overemphasis on flexibility and reduced workloads may inadvertently affect output in a high-demand operational context such as KNEC. This outcome aligns with Mulang (2022), who observed that in certain public sector organizations, work-life balance initiatives can occasionally disrupt workflow during peak operational periods, reducing immediate productivity. Despite this, the negative relationship does not diminish the importance of balance policies; rather, it highlights the need for strategic calibration between employee well-being and operational efficiency. Collectively, the results affirm that employee motivation practices explain a substantial proportion of performance variance at KNEC, with rewards, training, and work environment emerging as the most influential drivers.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that employee motivation is a critical determinant of organizational performance in the public sector, as demonstrated in the case of the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The empirical results revealed that motivation dimensions—training and development, rewards and incentives, work environment, and work-life balance—collectively accounted for 76.8 percent of the variance in organizational performance, confirming their substantial influence on institutional effectiveness. Among these factors, rewards and incentives emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by training and development and work environment, underscoring the importance of equitable compensation systems, continuous professional growth, and supportive organizational culture in enhancing productivity and service delivery. Although work-life balance exhibited a weak negative effect, this finding emphasizes the need for careful alignment of flexibility policies with operational demands. The study therefore affirms that strategic investment in employee motivation fosters efficiency, engagement, and accountability, enabling public institutions such as KNEC to sustain performance excellence and uphold credibility in delivering national educational assessments.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that KNEC enhance employee motivation through fair rewards, targeted training, and improved work environments. It should establish transparent reward systems combining financial and non-financial incentives, align training with departmental needs, and regularly evaluate program outcomes. A supportive work environment characterized by effective communication, supervision, and teamwork will boost engagement. Strategic work-life balance initiatives, including wellness and counseling programs, should help reduce burnout. Finally, implementing an HR monitoring system to track motivation indicators will link staff well-being to institutional performance, strengthening efficiency and public trust in KNEC’s services.

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