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Inclusion in Welfare Programs and Employee Performance in the Manufacturing Sector in Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of inclusion in welfare programs (Health and safety benefits, work safety training and family friendly policies) on employee performance within the manufacturing sector in Kenya. While welfare programs are increasingly recognized as tools for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, their equitable implementation remains inconsistent in many developing economies. There is a clear gap in practice within Kenya's manufacturing sector, where welfare programs are often limited in coverage, unevenly implemented, and weakly connected to employee performance outcomes. Many firms provide welfare initiatives that largely benefit permanent or senior staff while excluding casual, contract, female, and shift workers who form a significant portion of the workforce. Existing programs are frequently generic, poorly funded, with low awareness and minimal utilization due to stigma or lack of communication. Moreover, most manufacturing firms do not integrate welfare initiatives with performance management to evaluate their impact on employee performance. This lack of inclusivity, strategic alignment, and monitoring creates a practical gap, as organizations cannot determine whether welfare interventions genuinely enhance employee performance or how to design programs that do so effectively. The study adopted a descriptive research design and targeted employees from medium and large manufacturing firms. The total population of the study was 150 respondents that translated to a sample of 108 respondents at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Data were collected through structured questionnaires. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, applying both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results revealed that welfare program components Health and Safety Benefits, Work Safety Training, and Family-Friendly Policies significantly enhance employee performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector with a Pearson correlation coefficient of r=0.66, 0.63 and 0.57 respectively. Descriptive results showed positive employee perceptions across all welfare dimensions, Regression findings confirmed that all three variables meaningfully contribute to employee performance outcomes at R^2=56%. Overall, inclusive welfare programs improve efficiency, teamwork, and productivity. The study recommends strengthening safety systems, implementing continuous safety training, and expanding family-friendly policies to support employee wellbeing and optimize performance in the manufacturing sector.

Key words: *Work Safety Training, Family Friendly Policies*

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized and competitive business environment, workplace diversity has become a crucial strategic component for enhancing organizational performance and innovation. Diversity management involves the deliberate effort to recognize, respect, and integrate differences in gender, age, ethnicity, religion, and physical ability within the workforce (Barak, 2016). Recent work frames diversity management as

tightly connected to employee well-being and the uptake of welfare programs (health, safety, leave policies, childcare support, flexible scheduling). There are different mechanisms proposed in the literature, including and not limited to Inclusive leadership and psychological safety offer greater awareness, use, and trust in welfare offerings, which increases employee wellbeing and retention (Liu et al. 2024).

According to Elamin, A. M. (2024). Perceived fairness and procedural justice in diversity policies promote higher diversity programme uptake and perceived value of welfare measures among underrepresented groups. Although broad diversity, equity, and inclusion wellbeing research is stronger in the services sector, a growing number of empirical studies examine manufacturing contexts and report consistent patterns such as Diversity management improves engagement and innovation, which indirectly supports welfare outcomes (e.g., engaged workers report better uptake of health and safety programs. Field evidence from multiple contexts shows diversity programs correlate with higher employee engagement, which mediates benefits from welfare initiatives. Elamin, A. M. (2024).

However, Welfare measures in manufacturing (safety, medical, welfare facilities) remain central to employee satisfaction; studies in casting metal and other manufacturing subsectors found targeted welfare packages raise satisfaction and perceived organizational support, particularly where welfare delivery is sensitive to gender, age, and disability differences. Sai V. and Khadar B (2024). Inclusive management styles supervisor developmental feedback, inclusive leadership are empirically tied to improved workplace well-being and help translate diversity policy into actual welfare gains.

This is especially relevant in manufacturing where supervisor influence is strong. Liu, Y. et al. (2024). Empirical literature shows that there is a rising emphasis on holistic workplace wellbeing trends for 2025 stress embedding wellbeing into operations and leadership accountability, which supports integrating diversity management and welfare programming in manufacturing. (Global Wellness Institute, 2025). Where diversity management is a proactive policy, training, and inclusive leadership, welfare programs are more likely to be equitable in reach, where different groups use benefits more appropriately and effectively measured by wellbeing, retention, and safety outcomes. Empirical studies across 2024–2025 show that inclusive leadership and diversity practices act as moderators between welfare programs and employee outcomes. Liu, Y. et al. (2024). In manufacturing, job design and frontline supervision matter more than in some service sectors: welfare programs that ignore occupational realities, shift patterns, physical risk, and plant culture see lower uptake even when diversity policies exist. Several manufacturing-sector studies (2024–2025) highlight the importance of matched design (welfare options tailored to shifts, physical safety, and gendered needs) as critical.

In Kenya, the manufacturing sector is a vital pillar of economic growth, contributing about 7.6% to the national GDP and providing thousands of formal sector jobs (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). However, the sector has been slow to embrace comprehensive diversity practices, with issues such as gender imbalance, limited inclusion of persons with disabilities, and underrepresentation of minority groups persisting in many workplaces (ICRW, 2020). This undermines employee engagement and may contribute to high turnover

and low productivity.

Empirical studies in Kenya have shown that inclusive practices such as gender equality in career development, cultural sensitivity, and welfare inclusion positively influence employee performance in manufacturing firms (Nduati, 2024; Kamau, 2020). Additionally, diversity contributes to better decision-making, improved interpersonal relations, and increased innovation, all of which are critical in manufacturing environments where coordination and productivity are key (Mazur, 2010).

This study seeks to explore the relationship between inclusive welfare programs and employee performance within Kenya's manufacturing sector. Specifically, family friendly policies, employee assistance programs (EAP). Kenya's manufacturing sector largely under-delivers on inclusive welfare especially family-friendly policies and formal EAPs because of weak enforcement, cost and capacity constraints (SMEs), mismatch with shift/plant realities, and limited managerial commitment to inclusive implementation. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2025). Kenya has updated OSH law and policy instruments (drafts and regulations in 2024) that raise employer obligations for workplace welfare and safety, but inspection/enforcement capacity and SME coverage remain patchy so legal duties don't automatically translate into inclusive welfare on the shop floor. The occupational safety and health bill (2024).

High-profile Kenyan companies such as telecoms, large multinationals, some beverage firms have advanced parental leave and lactation supports, but these remain the exception. The National Care Policy (draft 2024) and commentaries call for wider adoption of parental leave, flexible hours and childcare supports because many sectors manufacturing included lag behind. Small and medium manufacturers typically lack formal family-friendly arrangements.

Studies and sector guidance stress that welfare programs not adapted to shift patterns, night work, or plant hazards fail to reach large swathes of factory workers for example night-shift, contract workers. International guidance (UNICEF family-friendly toolkit for factories) recommends shift-sensitive design which many Kenyan factories still struggle to implement (Unicef, 2025). Kenyan EAP providers and institutional counselling services exist in professional associations and private vendors, yet uptake in manufacturing is limited by awareness, perceived stigma, budget priorities, and access for casual and shift workers. Where EAPs are present in larger firms, they often operate as add-ons rather than integrated, inclusive welfare systems that reach family members or night-shift staff. The findings of this study aim to inform policy and organizational strategies that promote inclusive and high-performing work environments.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Workplace diversity has become an essential consideration for organizations seeking to improve employee engagement, productivity, and innovation. Globally, organizations that embrace diversity report improved performance outcomes due to the varied perspectives, talents, and experiences brought by diverse teams (Cox & Blake, 1991; Shore et al., 2011). However, in the Kenyan manufacturing sector, effective diversity management remains

underdeveloped, with significant gaps in the implementation of inclusive policies and practices (ICRW, 2020; KNBS, 2022). Despite government efforts to promote equality and inclusion through labor laws and national development strategies such as Vision 2030, manufacturing firms often lack structured frameworks to address gender disparities, cultural integration, and equitable welfare programs (GoK, 2007). The Manufacturing is central to Kenya's economic transformation agenda: under the Medium-Term Plan IV (2023–2027), the manufacturing subsector is explicitly identified as a "growth and development accelerator" contributing to poverty reduction through job creation and value-addition (State Department of economic planning (2015).

Much of Kenya's manufacturing sector is made up of MSMEs, which employ a large share of semi-skilled, low-income workers. These workers are especially likely to benefit from inclusive welfare programs but SMEs often lack resources for robust welfare provision. The sector continues to exhibit a male-dominated workforce, limited inclusion of persons with disabilities, and cultural homogeneity in managerial roles (ICRW, 2020). These challenges have been linked to reduced employee motivation, limited talent retention, and decreased organizational performance (Barak, 2016). Moreover, existing diversity initiatives, where present, are rarely linked to performance metrics, and their impact on employee outcomes remains poorly documented in empirical literature, especially within Kenya's manufacturing context (Kamau, 2020).

Emerging research indicates that inclusive welfare programs, gender-sensitive leadership, and cultural diversity management can significantly enhance employee performance by fostering loyalty, engagement, and job satisfaction (Nduati, 2024). However, the extent to which these factors influence performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector remains unclear. Without targeted studies, the sector risks continued underperformance due to misaligned human resource practices. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this knowledge gap by examining how workplace diversity management practices specifically inclusion in welfare programs affect employee performance in the manufacturing sector in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objectives

To determine the influence of inclusion in welfare programs (Health and Safety Benefits, Work Safety Training and Family Friendly Policies) on employee performance in the manufacturing sector in Kenya**.**

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory (HCT) posits that employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are valuable assets that organizations can enhance through investment (Becker, 1964). Inclusive welfare programs such as health insurance, wellness initiatives, and employee assistance services represent strategic investments in employees' well-being and capacity. By improving physical, psychological, and social resources, these programs enhance employees' ability to perform effectively, reduce absenteeism, and boost productivity. From the HCT perspective, welfare programs are thus not mere benefits but critical tools for

developing organizational human capital, linking inclusion in such programs directly to improved employee performance.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a complementary perspective by emphasizing the reciprocal nature of workplace relationships (Blau, 1964). When employees perceive that their organization genuinely supports them through welfare programs, they are more likely to respond with increased loyalty, commitment, and discretionary effort. SET explains how inclusion in welfare programs fosters motivation and positive work behaviours, highlighting the relational mechanism through which organizational support translates into enhanced employee performance.

By integrating HCT and SET, a more holistic understanding emerges. HCT explains the instrumental value of welfare programs in building employee capability, while SET explains the behavioural and motivational outcomes stemming from perceived organizational support. Together, these theories suggest that inclusive welfare programs improve performance by both enhancing employees' capacity and stimulating reciprocal positive behaviours, emphasizing that welfare initiatives are both strategic investments and relational tools essential for sustainable organizational performance.

Inclusion in welfare programs, equitable access to training, and gender-sensitive career development are strategies that strengthen human capital. In the manufacturing sector, which relies heavily on productivity, technical skills, and teamwork, tapping into diverse human capital enhances efficiency, innovation, and retention. Thus, effective diversity management directly supports improved employee performance through the development and utilization of all employees' potential (Barak, 2016).

2.2 Empirical Review

According to Blom, (2025), the meta-analysis on family-friendly policies and workplace supports reviewed 3,640 potentially relevant studies sourced from Google Scholar and dissertations (Nov 2022–Jan 2023). From these, 211 studies met the inclusion criteria. The analysis found that family-friendly policies are beneficial, but their effectiveness varies by outcome. Policy bundles produce more consistent positive effects than single policies, and policy availability has a stronger impact than actual usage. The study also shows that work-friendly outcomes significantly moderate the positive effects, with the strongest improvements observed in work-to-family interactions and work–life balance**,** while effects on family-to-work interactions are comparatively weaker.

The reviewed literature positions Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) as essential mechanisms for promoting employee well-being and enhancing organizational performance. Authors such as Al-Fayez and Goodman (2024) and Doran (2022) emphasize EAPs' broad mandate addressing personal, psychological, and work-related challenges to improve productivity. While these claims align with mainstream HRM theory, they often assume a direct causal link between EAP availability and employee outcomes, which may oversimplify the complex interaction between workplace stressors, organizational climate, and employee behaviour.

A major strength in the empirical evidence is the cross-context comparison, with studies from Nigeria and Taiwan showing that EAPs can strengthen employee commitment and adapt to organizational development stages (Chen et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2021). These findings highlight that EAP effectiveness is not universal but contingent upon factors such as leadership support, organizational maturity, and cultural attitudes toward mental health. The Nigerian study, for example, links EAPs to enhanced affective, normative, and continuance commitment, suggesting a meaningful impact on organizational citizenship behaviours. However, this study is context-specific to the banking sector, which raises questions about transferability to other sectors such as manufacturing, where work conditions, stressors and employee demographic profiles differ significantly.

The Taiwanese study offers valuable insights into the evolution of EAP needs across an organization's lifecycle, shifting from primarily job-related interventions to more health-oriented support. Nonetheless, the reliance on self-reported needs and perceptions rather than objective performance metrics weakens the strength of the conclusions. The study assumes that changes in employee or organizational priorities reflect actual effectiveness, but such perceptions may not necessarily correspond with improved performance or reduced absenteeism.

The survey conducted across various Taiwanese public sector institutions provides an important multi-level perspective on EAP implementation. However, the methodological limitations are noteworthy. The total of 81 valid responses, divided among four different organizational categories, results in relatively small sample sizes per group (17–22 participants). Such limited representation raises concerns about statistical power and the generalizability of the findings. The use of questionnaires alone introduces potential bias, as responses may be influenced by social desirability, limited awareness of available services, or hierarchical workplace dynamics. Moreover, the study does not clarify whether employees have actually used the EAP services, which creates a gap between perceived needs and actual behaviour.

A further limitation is the lack of discussion on structural barriers affecting EAP uptake. Research in other contexts consistently shows that awareness, stigma, confidentiality concerns, and workload constraints especially in high-pressure sectors significantly hinder the utilization of EAP services. The reviewed literature implies that demand varies across organizational structures, yet does not interrogate whether the stated needs translate into meaningful use or improved outcomes. While the studies provide useful descriptive insights into EAP design, organizational needs, and employee perceptions, they fall short in establishing robust causal relationships between EAP interventions and organizational performance. The absence of longitudinal data, objective performance indicators, and comparative analyses across sectors limits the applicability of the findings. Future research should incorporate mixed methods, larger and more representative samples, and outcome-based evaluation frameworks to better understand how EAPs influence performance in diverse organizational contexts.

The umbrella review by Jack, Baird and Hill (2025) provides a comprehensive synthesis of firm-level work–family (FFW) initiatives by analyzing 26 systematic reviews published

between 2010 and 2022, following PRISMA guidelines. This methodological strength enhances transparency, replicability, and reduces bias often associated with narrative reviews. By including 3,766 initial studies and narrowing them to 221 eligible papers, the study demonstrates rigorous screening and provides a broad evidence base for evaluating the organizational and employee-level impacts of FFW initiatives.

A notable strength of the review is its ability to identify differentiated effect sizes across policy types**.** The strongest evidence is associated with work-based lactation support, which consistently benefits organizations, employees, and families. This focus on policy-specific effectiveness prevents the common pitfall of treating FFW initiatives as a homogeneous category and underscores the importance of tailored, context-specific interventions.

The review also consolidates evidence showing small to moderate positive effects of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on job satisfaction, retention, absenteeism reduction, and employee well-being. Meta-analytic findings from Shifrin & Michel (2021), integrated within the umbrella review, strengthen the claim that FWAs support physical health outcomes through reductions in absenteeism and somatic complaints. Similarly, longitudinal evidence from Lunde et al. (2022) on work-from-home (WFH) arrangements suggests a lower risk of declining health relative to office-based employees, adding a temporal dimension often missing from cross-sectional studies.

However, the review is not without limitations. Despite the large pool of studies, the effect sizes across FFW interventions remain modest**,** raising questions about their practical significance. The review also highlights that some findings particularly those concerning long-term health impacts of WFH are based on low-quality or inconsistent evidence**,** which limits the strength of the conclusions. The conflicting outcomes in the WFH studies (some reporting benefits, others no significant relationship) demonstrate heterogeneity in study designs, measurement instruments, and organizational contexts. This variation weakens the ability to generalize results across industries, especially in sectors where flexibility is structurally constrained, such as manufacturing.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on existing systematic reviews rather than primary research. Umbrella reviews are limited by the methodological quality and bias of the included reviews, which the authors acknowledge but do not deeply interrogate. For example, the included meta-analyses use different operational definitions of health, productivity, and flexibility, introducing conceptual inconsistency. This inconsistency may inflate or dilute the observed effects. Additionally, the review does not sufficiently address implementation challenges**,** such as managerial resistance, workplace culture, and inequities in access to FFW benefits factors known to moderate the effectiveness of work–family initiatives.

The study also underemphasizes sector-specific relevance. While the umbrella review draws from diverse industries, it does not discuss how structural constraints e.g., shift-based work, manual labour, limited remote work capacity affect the adoption and impact of FFW policies in labour-intensive sectors like manufacturing. This limits the applicability of the findings to contexts where flexibility is inherently limited.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The inclusion of welfare programs in organizational management has gained prominence as firms recognize the relationship between employee well-being and performance outcomes (Blom, 2025; Amirah et al., 2024). Welfare interventions such as health and safety benefits, workplace safety training, and family-friendly policies are increasingly positioned as strategic levers for enhancing employee motivation, reducing workplace risks, and strengthening organizational commitment (Mutegi, 2023; Jack, Baird & Hill, 2025). However, the empirical evidence while generally supportive, presents important nuances that warrant critical reflection (Blom, 2025; Long, 2024).

Health and safety benefits are widely regarded as foundational to employee well-being, particularly in labor-intensive sectors; organizations offering comprehensive health coverage and safer working conditions report lower absenteeism, fewer injuries, and improved productivity (Mutegi, 2023). Yet many studies show these benefits are often implemented as compliance measures rather than strategically integrated welfare initiatives, which can limit employee trust and blunt performance effects. The effectiveness of such programs therefore depends on communication, implementation quality, and leadership endorsement (Amirah et al., 2024).

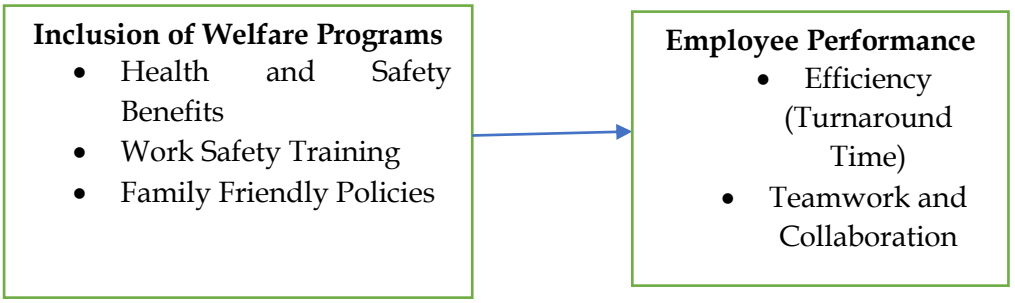
Workplace safety training is a critical welfare component that typically links to efficiency and teamwork; training equips employees to manage operational hazards, reduce errors, and coordinate under pressure. Empirical work documents improvements in operational efficiency and reductions in incident-related downtime following targeted safety training, but these effects depend on training relevance, frequency, and follow-up reinforcement (Amirah et al., 2024). Where training is irregular, generic, or poorly matched to on-the-job risks, its influence on performance is attenuated.

Family-friendly policies parental leave, childcare support, flexible arrangements, lactation facilities are associated with higher morale, lower turnover intentions, and gains in productivity in many reviews and meta-analyses. Recent meta-analytic evidence finds positive but variable effects, with policy availability often exerting a stronger signalling effect on employee commitment than actual policy use; effects are also moderated by job type, managerial attitudes, and organizational culture (Blom, 2025; Jack, Baird & Hill, 2025). In rigid, shift-based sectors such as manufacturing, structural constraints limit policy uptake and can generate uneven access that undermines intended benefits (Mandowa, 2025; UNICEF guidance on factory-adapted family supports).

Overall, welfare programs show a positive association with employee performance, but the magnitude and consistency of effects depend on contextual factors organizational culture, leadership support, implementation quality, and perceived fairness (Blom, 2025; Long, 2024). Performance is multidimensional: welfare interventions may differently affect efficiency (via reduced illness/injuries), teamwork (via shared safety norms and training), and collaboration (via reduced work–family conflict and improved morale). Without coherent integration, monitoring, and equitable access, welfare initiatives risk producing uneven performance gains; thus, they should be implemented as part of a strategic ecosystem aligning employee well-being with organizational objectives (Mutegi, 2023; Blom, 2025).

Inclusive welfare programs through health and safety benefits, workplace safety training, and family-friendly policies are proposed to influence employee performance. Health and safety benefits are expected to improve efficiency by reducing illness-related downtime and enhancing employees' physical well-being. Workplace safety training enhances both efficiency and teamwork, as trained employees perform tasks accurately and coordinate more effectively in operational processes. Family-friendly policies reduce work–family conflict, thereby strengthening collaboration and fostering a supportive work environment. Collectively, these welfare elements contribute to enhanced employee performance through improved morale, reduced strain, and greater alignment between individual and organizational needs.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the influence of inclusion in welfare programs on employee performance within Kenya's manufacturing sector. Descriptive research was in this study appropriate because it aims to observe and describe the current state of how inclusion in welfare programs influences employee performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector, without manipulating variables. This design was ideal for answering what, how and where questions about the present situation, making it suitable for a study focused on characterizing the existing relationship and current conditions. The study used questionnaires to gather data that provided insights into frequencies, percentages and perceptions, which can then be analyzed using descriptive statistics. According to Creswell (2014), a descriptive approach is suitable for examining relationships among variables as they exist in real-life settings.

The target population consisted of 150 employees drawn from medium and large manufacturing firms across Kenya. These firms were purposely selected because they are more likely to have established and structured welfare programs embedded within their human resource policy systems. Their organizational scale and formalization also ensured access to a diverse workforce in terms of gender, contract type, job function, and job level, thereby providing an appropriate setting to assess the extent of inclusion in welfare provision.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample was drawn from various departments and employee categories, including permanent, contract, and temporary staff. The strata were based on departments such as production, human

resources, administration, and quality assurance. This approach ensured that different perspectives regarding welfare inclusion were captured. The final sample consisted of 108 respondents**,** which was derived from 150 respondents as target population. This was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for calculating sample size based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that included both demographic and thematic sections. The questionnaire was divided into three major parts: the first part captured background and demographic data of the respondents; the second part focused on aspects of inclusion in welfare programs such health and safety benefits, Work safety training and family-friendly policies as independent variables constructs; while the Dependent variable was employee performance measured through indicators such as Efficiency (Turnaround time) and Teamwork and Collaboration. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to measure responses on both the independent and dependent variables.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by human resource experts who assessed its content relevance and clarity. A pilot study was conducted with 10 employees from a similar manufacturing context, and the feedback was used to make necessary adjustments. Reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 as recommended by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019). The results from the pilot indicated that the questionnaire had good internal consistency. The variables of the study met the threshold as indicated on the Table 1:

Table 1: Reliability Results

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Health and Safety Benefits	5	0.802	Good internal consistency
Work Safety Training	5	0.765	Acceptable internal consistency
Family-Friendly Policies	5	0.821	Good internal consistency
Employee Performance	10	0.842	Good internal consistency

Table 1, shows the reliability analysis that depict that all variables achieved acceptable to high internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.7. Health and Safety Benefits (0.802), Work Safety Training (0.765), Family-Friendly Policies (0.821), and Employee Performance (0.842) all demonstrate strong internal reliability, indicating that the items used to measure each construct were consistent and dependable, and the instruments were suitable for further statistical analysis.

Upon collecting the data, it was cleaned and coded, then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25**.** Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data and describe the characteristics of the respondents. Inferential statistics were employed to test the relationship between inclusion in welfare programs and employee performance. Specifically, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive strength of welfare inclusion on performance outcomes. The regression model used was:

$$Y=\beta 0+\beta_1 X_1+ \beta_2 X_{2+} \beta_3 X_{3+}\varepsilon$$

Where Y represented employee performance, X_1 denotes Health and safety Benefits, X_2 denotes work safety training, X_3 family friendly policies, β0 was the constant, β_1- β_3 the regression coefficient, and ε the error term. The study adhered to ethical research standards. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the participating organizations, and informed consent was sought from all respondents. Participation in the study was voluntary, and confidentiality was guaranteed by ensuring that no names or identifiable personal data were collected.

4. Findings & Discussion

The study sought to determine the influence of inclusion in welfare programs (Health and Safety Benefits, work safety Training and family friendly policy) on employee performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector. The findings are presented using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis to establish the strength and significance of the relationship between the variables.

4.1 Descriptive Findings

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Health and Safety Benefits (n = 108)

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
My organization provides adequate health and safety benefits to support my wellbeing.	3.89	0.72
The company's medical insurance or health coverage meets my basic healthcare needs.	3.76	0.80
I feel that the workplace has effective safety measures to prevent injuries or accidents.	4.02	0.68
The organization invests in equipment and resources that promote employee safety.	3.94	0.74
I am satisfied with the occupational health services provided by the company.	**3.81**	**0.77**

The descriptive statistics revealed a generally positive perception among employees regarding the inclusivity of welfare programs in their respective organizations. The majority of respondents agreed that has effective safety measures to prevent injury or accidents with a mean of (M=4.02, SD=0.68) followed by the organization invests in equipment's and resources that promote employee safety (M=3.94, SD=0.74) the organization also provides adequate health and safety benefits to support their well-being (M=3.89, SD=0.72. Followed by satisfaction with the occupational health services provided by the company at (M=3.81, SD=0.77) and finally the lowest mean was the company medical insurance meets the basic healthcare needs with a mean of (M=3.76, SD=0.80). Standard deviations between 0.68 and 0.80 indicate relatively low variability, meaning most employees responded consistently.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Work Safety Training (n = 108)

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
I have received sufficient safety training to perform my job safely.	3.88	0.79
The safety training offered by the organization is clear and easy to understand.	3.95	0.74
Regular refresher safety trainings are provided in my workplace.	3.67	0.83
Training sessions adequately prepare employees to manage safety risks.	3.91	0.76
The company ensures all employees are aware of safety rules and procedures.	4.03	0.70

The descriptive statistics of work safety training reveals a generally positive perception among employees regarding inclusivity of welfare programs in their respective organization. Table 2 shows these perceptual measures and ranked as follows; majority of the employee agreed that the company ensures all employees are aware of safety rules and procedures with a mean of (4.03, SD=0.70) , followed by The safety training offered by the organization is clear and easy to understand with a mean of (3.95, SD=0.74) Training sessions adequately prepare employees to manage safety risks at (3.91, SD=0.76) followed by the employees reporting that they have received sufficient safety training to perform their job safely at (3.88, SD=0.79) and finally Regular refresher safety trainings are provided in my workplace at (3.67,SD=0.83) Standard deviations **(**0.70–0.83**)** suggest moderate but acceptable variation in responses, showing consistent perceptions across the sample

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Family-Friendly Policies (n = 108)

Item	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
My organization provides policies that help me balance work and family responsibilities.	3.62	0.88
Flexible working arrangements (e.g., leave, shifts, remote options) are available when needed.	3.55	0.92
The company supports employees with childcare or dependent care needs.	3.41	0.95
I feel comfortable requesting family-related leave or adjustments without fear of penalty.	3.68	0.84
Family-friendly policies in this organization positively influence my job satisfaction.	3.74	0.81

The Descriptive statistics for family friendly policies shows that the mean scores (3.41–3.74) indicate moderate agreement, showing that employees perceive some level of family-friendly support but with room for improvement especially on childcare with a mean of (3.41, SD=0.95). The employees perceived that family friendly policies positively influence their job satisfaction with (M=3.74, SD=0.81), followed by feeling comfortable requesting family related leave at(M=3.68, SD=0.84). The employees also perceived that the organization provides policies that help them balance work and family responsibilities at (M=3.62, SD=0.88) and finally the employee perceived that flexible working arrangements are available when needed at (M=3.55, SD=0.92). The Standard deviations (0.81–0.95) reflect acceptable variability, suggesting differing experiences across departments or employee categories.

Descriptive statistics of Employee Performance

Table 5: Efficiency (Turnaround Time) (n = 108)

Item	Mean (M)	Standard (SD)	Deviation
I complete my tasks within the expected timeframes.	3.92	0.73	
I am able to manage my workload efficiently without unnecessary delays.	3.85	0.77	
I can quickly adapt to urgent tasks without compromising quality.	3.88	0.76	
My turnaround time for assigned duties meets organizational expectations.	3.90	0.72	
I use my working time productively to achieve set targets.	3.94	0.70	

The results in Table 5, indicate that employees generally perceive themselves as efficient in completing tasks, with all mean scores falling between 3.85 and 3.94, suggesting a strong level of agreement across the board. The highest-rated item was "I use my working time productively to achieve set targets" (M = 3.94, SD = 0.70), indicating that employees feel particularly confident in how effectively they utilize their time. This score, together with its relatively low standard deviation, suggests a high level of consistency among respondents, pointing to a shared perception of strong time-use discipline. The item "I complete my tasks within the expected timeframes" (M = 3.92, SD = 0.73) and "My turnaround time meets organizational expectations" (M = 3.90, SD = 0.72) also scored highly and show low variability, reinforcing the notion that employees believe they meet procedural and production timelines reliably. The slightly lower-rated items managing workload efficiently (M = 3.85, SD=0.77) and adapting quickly to urgent tasks (M = 3.88, 0.76) still fall within the "agree" range, but their marginally lower means and slightly higher standard deviations indicate that efficiency may fluctuate more when workload pressure or unexpected tasks arise. This suggests the existence of subtle performance constraints related to workload surges, task complexity, or operational interruptions. Overall, the consistency of responses (SD = 0.70–0.77) implies that most employees share similar perceptions about efficiency, yet the small differences between items reveal areas where efficiency might be strengthened particularly in workload management and rapid adaptation to urgent tasks.

Table 6: Teamwork and Collaboration (n = 108)

Item	Mean (M)	Standard (SD)	Deviation
1. I work well with my colleagues to achieve shared goals.	4.05	0.68	
2. I willingly support team members when they need assistance.	4.01	0.71	
3. Communication within my team enables smooth coordination of tasks.	3.97	0.74	
4. I actively contribute ideas and participate in team activities.	3.92	0.76	
5. My collaboration with colleagues positively impacts overall team performance.	4.03	0.69	

The results show strong employee perceptions of teamwork and collaboration, with mean scores ranging from 3.92 to 4.05, demonstrating a generally high level of agreement across items. The highest-rated item "I work well with my colleagues to achieve shared goals" (M = 4.05, SD = 0.68) indicates that employees strongly identify with collective goal achievement, suggesting that teamwork is deeply embedded in their work culture. The low standard

deviation further reflects a high level of consensus among respondents.

Similarly, “My collaboration with colleagues positively impacts overall team performance” (M = 4.03, SD = 0.69) reinforces the idea that employees recognize the broader contribution of their teamwork to organizational productivity. These two high scores signal that employee not only collaborate well but also perceive their collaboration as meaningful to team success.

Items related to interpersonal support and communication supporting team members (M = 4.01) and effective communication for coordination (M = 3.97) also scored highly, though slightly lower, suggesting that support and communication are generally strong but may vary slightly depending on workload or interpersonal dynamics. The item with the lowest mean active contribution to ideas and participation in team activities (M = 3.92, SD = 0.76) remains within the “agree” range but displays the highest variability. This indicates potential differences in initiative levels or uneven participation within teams, possibly influenced by job roles, confidence, or organizational culture.

Overall, the consistently high means and relatively low standard deviations (0.68–0.76) demonstrate a strong teamwork culture characterized by collaboration, mutual support, and effective communication. The slight differences across items highlight areas where engagement could be strengthened particularly in encouraging more active contribution and participation from all employees.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Health & Safety Benefits	Work Safety Training	Family-Friendly Policies	Employee Performance
Health & Safety Benefits	1	0.61	0.48	0.66
Work Safety Training	0.61	1	0.52	0.63
Family-Friendly Policies	0.48	0.52	1	0.57
Employee Performance	0.66	0.63	0.57	1

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between inclusion in welfare programs and employee performance. The results showed a positive and significant correlation with a Pearson coefficient (r) of 0.66(Health and Safety Benefits), 0.63(Work safety Training) and 0.57 and a p-value of 0.000**,** indicating a statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level. This implies that all the independent variables had a positive correlation with employee performance. The correlation among the independent variables had a moderate relationship between 0.48 to 0.61 suggesting that there was no severe multicollinearity.

This means that as organizations enhance their welfare programs such as health and safety benefits, workplace safety training, and family-friendly policies employee performance tends to improve correspondingly. The p-value of 0.000 ($p < .05$) demonstrates that this relationship is statistically significant, meaning the likelihood that this correlation occurred by chance is extremely low. Therefore, the findings provide robust evidence that welfare program inclusion is an important predictor of employee performance. This suggests that organizations that invest in comprehensive welfare programs are likely to experience

improvements in key performance dimensions such as efficiency, teamwork, and collaboration.

4.2 Regression Analysis

A Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which inclusion in welfare programs predicts employee performance. The regression model summary indicated an R-squared value of 0.56, which means that 56% of the variation in employee performance could be explained by the level of inclusion in welfare programs (Health and Safety Benefits, work safety Training and family friendly policies. The remaining 44% is explained by other factors not included in this study.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	**.75**	**.56**	**.54**	**0.000**

The ANOVA results further confirmed the significance of the model, with an F-statistic = 42.8 and a p-value = 0.000**.** This indicated that the model was statistically significant and that inclusion in welfare programs had a significant influence on employee performance. The regression model is statistically significant ($F(1, 107) = 42.8$, $p < .001$), confirming that inclusion in welfare programs significantly predicts employee performance.

Table 9: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Model	SS (Sum of Squares)	df	MS (Mean Square)	F	Sig.
Regression	48.2	3	16.07	42.8	0.000
Residual (Error)	37.8	104	0.364		
Total	**86.0**	**107**			

A Multiple regression was performed to determine how well inclusion in welfare programs predicts employee performance.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B (Unstandardized)	SE	β (Standardized)	t	p
Constant	0.98	0.21		4.67	0.000
Health & Safety Benefits	0.42	0.09	0.36	4.67	0.000
Work Safety Training	0.35	0.08	0.31	4.38	0.000
Family-Friendly Policies	0.28	0.07	0.24	4.00	0.000

The regression coefficients revealed that inclusion in welfare programs had a positive standardized beta coefficient (β) of 0.42 for Health & Safety benefits**,** with a t-value of 4.67 and a p-value of 0.000. work safety training had a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.35 with a t-value of 4.38 and a p value of 0.000 and finally family friendly policies standardized coefficient (β) of 0.28 with a t-value of 4.0 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicated that for every unit increase in inclusion in welfare programs, employee performance increased by approximately 0.36, 0.31 and 0.24 respective units, assuming other factors were held constant.

Employee Performance =0.98 +0.36(Health & Safety Benefits) +0.31(Work Safety Training) +0.24(Family Friendly Policies).

These findings demonstrate that inclusive welfare practices significantly enhance employee performance in the manufacturing sector in Kenya. Employees who had access to health and safety programs, family-friendly policies, and psychological support through employee assistance programs reported higher levels of motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. The results support the assumptions of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which posits that investment in employee well-being leads to improved productivity, and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that employees reciprocate fair treatment and organizational support with commitment and performance.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The results consistently indicate that more inclusive welfare provision is associated with better employee performance in Kenya's manufacturing sector: employees reported generally positive perceptions of health & safety benefits, safety training, and family-friendly policies (means = 3.6–4.0), each variable correlated moderately-to-strongly with employee performance (r = 0.57, 0.63 and 0.66), and the multiple regression showed that the three welfare dimensions jointly explain a large and statistically significant portion of performance variance (R^2=0.56), with Health & Safety Benefits the strongest unique predictor. This pattern aligns with empirical evidence from Kenyan and regional studies showing that occupational safety and health programmes, targeted training, employee assistance, wellness services, and work–family support enhance productivity, reduce absenteeism and improve job outcomes (Mutegi 2023; Abdul, & Ong, (2025).; Muli et al.;2014). The study's conclusion that welfare programs significantly enhance employee performance carries important implications for both managerial practice and national labour policy, highlighting the need for manufacturing firms in Kenya to prioritize worker wellbeing as a strategic productivity driver rather than merely a compliance requirement. However, the findings must be interpreted with caution due to limitations such as reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias, and the cross-sectional design, which limits causal inference despite strong correlations and regression results. Additionally, while Health and Safety Benefits emerged as the strongest predictor consistent with global evidence an unexpected finding was that Family-Friendly Policies, though significant, had a comparatively weaker effect, suggesting that cultural norms, rigid shift structures, or limited policy awareness may moderate their impact in manufacturing contexts.

5.2 Policy Implications

This study provides several actionable implications for policy formulation at both the organizational and national levels namely:

Strengthening Labor Policies: The findings highlight the need for policymakers, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, to enforce and enhance legislation that mandates inclusive welfare programs across all levels of manufacturing employment particularly for contract, temporary, and marginalized workers.

Inclusive HR Regulations**:** HR regulatory bodies like the Federation of Kenya Employers

(FKE) and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) can use these insights to promote sector-wide codes of practice on inclusive welfare, ensuring that firms provide equitable access to health insurance, safety programs, and family-related benefits. Alignment with Vision 2030**:** Inclusion in welfare supports Kenya's Vision 2030 goals for social equity, industrial growth, and human capital development. Therefore, inclusive workplace policies should be integrated into national development blueprints to improve industrial productivity and worker well-being.

Work Safety Training showed a strong and significant relationship with employee performance. Firms should adopt mandatory induction and refresher training for all employees, including casual and contract workers. To standardize safety competencies across the sector, the Ministry of Labour and NITA should develop industry-specific safety training frameworks and certification standards for manufacturing. This reduces workplace accidents, enhances efficiency, and builds a performance-oriented culture.

Integrate Employee Voice Mechanisms into Welfare Program Design Since welfare practices influence performance, firms should adopt participatory welfare committees, anonymous feedback channels, and periodic needs assessments. This ensures welfare programs remain relevant, cost-effective, and aligned with employees' evolving needs.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of academic literature on workplace diversity and employee performance in several ways:

Local Contextual: It provides empirical evidence on how inclusion in welfare programs affects employee performance specifically in Kenya's manufacturing sector an area previously under-researched.

Validation of HR Theories**:** The study affirms Human Capital Theory and Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating that welfare-related investments and fair treatment result in tangible performance gains.

Narrowing Conceptual Gaps**:** While existing literature often views diversity through the lens of race and gender, this study expands the understanding of diversity management by incorporating welfare inclusion as a vital component.

Sector-Specific Insights**:** By focusing on the manufacturing sector, the study addresses a specific industry with unique employee welfare challenges, contributing insights that can guide future sector-focused research.

5.4 Practical Implications for Managers

For manufacturing sector managers, the findings offer several actionable specific items:

Strategic HR Planning**:** Inclusion in welfare should not be treated as a cost center but rather as a strategic investment. Managers should integrate equitable welfare policies such as EAPs, medical schemes, and flexible working benefits into performance management

systems.

Employee Retention and Motivation: Inclusive welfare benefits directly contribute to higher employee satisfaction and retention. Managers can reduce turnover by ensuring that all categories of workers have fair access to benefits.

Workplace Equity and Compliance**:** Ensuring that welfare benefits are extended to contract and casual staff promotes equity and reduces workplace grievances. This also helps firms avoid penalties related to labor non-compliance.

Promoting a Culture of Inclusion**:** Managers should sensitize line supervisors and middle management on the value of inclusive welfare to build a more supportive and cohesive organizational culture.

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