
Relationship Between Occupational Health Risks and Productivity in Uganda's Food Processing

Industry: A Case Study of PepsiCo Uganda.

Ojok Alex¹, Okee Jill Margaret²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

This study explored the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity in Uganda's food processing industry, specifically focusing on PepsiCo Uganda. The research aimed to identify the types of health risks present in the workplace, assess their impact on worker productivity, and evaluate the effectiveness of safety measures implemented to mitigate these risks. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative data collected through surveys with statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple and logistic regression models. The study's findings revealed that workers were primarily exposed to chemical, ergonomic, physical, and biological hazards, with chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards being the most prevalent. These health risks were found to significantly reduce worker productivity, manifested through increased absenteeism, higher accident rates, and decreased work efficiency. The multiple regression analysis indicated that chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards were strong predictors of reduced productivity. Additionally, the study found that safety measures such as safety training, protective equipment, and regular safety audits had a significant positive impact on productivity, helping to reduce the adverse effects of health risks. The logistic regression analysis showed that companies with better safety practices experienced fewer accidents and less absenteeism, ultimately enhancing productivity. The results were consistent with theories such as the Health Belief Model and the Job Demands-Resources model, which emphasize the relationship between health risks, safety interventions, and work performance. Based on these findings, the study recommended that PepsiCo Uganda invest in regular safety training, provide better protective equipment, and improve ergonomic conditions to reduce health risks and enhance productivity. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how occupational health risks affect productivity in Uganda's food processing industry and offers valuable insights for improving workplace safety practices, which could be applied to other industries facing similar challenges.

Key Words: Occupational, Health Risks and Productivity

Background of the Study

The food processing industry in Uganda has become an essential sector contributing significantly to the country's economy, providing employment, food security, and contributing to the export market. However, this sector faces numerous challenges, particularly related to occupational health risks, which can impact the well-being of workers and the overall productivity of the industry (Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2024). The rise in industrialization, combined with the growing demand for food products, has led to increased exposure to various occupational health hazards (Sasaki et al., 2024). Workers in the food processing industry often face health risks such as exposure to chemical agents, physical stress, biological agents, and ergonomic hazards, which can lead to both short-term and long-term health complications (Mark & Jacob, 2023). These health risks, if not properly

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managed, can lead to higher absenteeism, increased healthcare costs, and reduced work efficiency, thereby affecting the overall productivity of the sector (Christopher et al., 2022).

Occupational health risks in Uganda's food processing industry are further compounded by inadequate enforcement of workplace safety standards and lack of proper safety protocols. Despite the existence of national regulations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act (2006) and industry-specific standards, the implementation of these regulations often remains weak, especially in smaller food processing plants (Dickson-Gomez et al., 2023). The case of PepsiCo Uganda provides a valuable insight into the company's efforts to mitigate occupational health risks, as it represents a global corporation with substantial resources dedicated to improving working conditions and minimizing workplace hazards (Wu et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of these efforts and their direct correlation with productivity has not been fully explored in the Ugandan context. Therefore, understanding the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity within this specific context is crucial for the advancement of sustainable practices in the food processing industry.

Research suggests that there is a clear link between health risks and decreased productivity in various industries worldwide. Occupational health hazards such as exposure to harmful chemicals, repetitive motion injuries, and the long-term effects of poor ergonomics can lead to reduced workforce performance, high turnover rates, and increased accident rates (Swahn et al., 2018). In the food processing sector, such risks can also have serious consequences for product quality, worker morale, and the company's reputation. For instance, workers exposed to hazardous substances may experience respiratory issues, skin diseases, or even more severe health conditions, all of which directly affect their ability to perform their jobs effectively (Tanansi & Geophery, 2024). Moreover, the potential for accidents and injuries increases in environments where safety standards are not rigorously followed. This results in lost work hours, which directly impacts the productivity of the entire workforce.

In the case of PepsiCo Uganda, a company that has made strides in adhering to international standards for occupational health and safety, it is important to assess the specific challenges and outcomes within the Ugandan context. While global corporations like PepsiCo are committed to improving workplace safety, local realities, such as limited resources, lack of awareness, and cultural factors, can affect the effectiveness of these safety measures (Asma et al., 2023). By examining the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity at PepsiCo Uganda, this study aims to fill the gap in literature, offering insights that could be beneficial to other companies in the food processing industry. The findings could contribute to a broader understanding of how improving occupational health standards can lead to better employee well-being, reduce health-related costs, and ultimately enhance productivity in the industry.

The relationship between occupational health risks and productivity has been well-documented across various industries globally, particularly in manufacturing and food processing sectors. Studies show that exposure to hazardous work conditions—such as physical, chemical, and ergonomic risks—leads to significant health problems, including respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, and occupational accidents. These health issues not only impact workers' well-being but also contribute to a decline in productivity. Research (David & de Carvalho, 2021) emphasizes that industries with higher occupational health risks often experience increased absenteeism, lower morale, and higher turnover rates, all of which can reduce productivity. Additionally,

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according to the World Health Organization (2013), the indirect costs of occupational health issues, such as healthcare expenditures and loss of skilled labor, can substantially affect a company's bottom line. This body of research highlights the importance of effective health and safety policies to mitigate these risks and enhance productivity.

In the context of Uganda, the food processing industry has unique challenges related to occupational health and productivity. According to a study by (James & Jacob, 2023), workers in Uganda's food processing sector are often exposed to unsafe working environments, such as inadequate ventilation, exposure to toxic chemicals, and poor ergonomics. Despite the existence of national safety regulations, compliance remains inconsistent, particularly in smaller, less-regulated establishments. However, companies like PepsiCo Uganda, with access to global safety standards and resources, have made efforts to address these issues. Studies on multinational corporations, including PepsiCo, show that implementing comprehensive safety measures not only improves workers' health but also contributes to increased operational efficiency and productivity (Ariyo & Kazaara, 2024). These findings suggest that a proactive approach to occupational health can have a positive effect on both employee well-being and company productivity, which is crucial in the Ugandan food processing industry.

Problem Statement

Occupational health risks in Uganda's food processing industry pose significant challenges to both the well-being of workers and the overall productivity of the sector. Despite the growing importance of the food processing industry to Uganda's economy, many workers in this sector are exposed to various health hazards, including chemical, physical, and ergonomic risks. These health issues can result in long-term disabilities, increased absenteeism, and a higher incidence of accidents and injuries (Rudnicka et al., 2020). Unfortunately, while national health and safety regulations exist, their implementation and enforcement in many food processing companies remain insufficient. This results in workers experiencing preventable health problems that negatively impact their ability to perform tasks efficiently, leading to reduced productivity. However, there is limited research on how occupational health risks directly affect productivity in Uganda's food processing industry, particularly within the context of multinational companies like PepsiCo Uganda.

PepsiCo Uganda, as part of a global corporation, adheres to international occupational health and safety standards, but it is unclear how these measures translate into tangible improvements in worker health and productivity within the local context. While the company may have robust safety protocols, the specific challenges faced by Ugandan workers—such as inadequate safety infrastructure, limited training, and socio-cultural factors—could undermine the effectiveness of these efforts (van Erp et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity within Uganda's food processing industry. This study aims to address this gap by examining the specific occupational health risks faced by workers at PepsiCo Uganda and analyzing how these risks impact overall productivity. By doing so, it seeks to provide valuable insights into the broader implications of occupational health management on industrial performance in Uganda.

Objectives

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1. To assess the types and prevalence of occupational health risks in PepsiCo Uganda's food processing operations.
 2. To evaluate the impact of occupational health risks on worker productivity at PepsiCo Uganda.
 3. To examine the effectiveness of occupational health and safety measures implemented by PepsiCo Uganda in mitigating health risks and improving productivity.

Study Hypotheses

1. H1: Occupational health risks (chemical, physical, ergonomic, and biological) are significantly associated with decreased productivity in PepsiCo Uganda's food processing operations.
2. H2: The implementation of effective occupational health and safety measures at PepsiCo Uganda leads to improved worker productivity.
3. H3: Workers exposed to higher levels of occupational health risks report lower job satisfaction and increased intention to leave their positions at PepsiCo Uganda.

Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to assess the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity at PepsiCo Uganda. The sample size for the study consisted of 150 workers from various departments within the company's food processing operations. These workers were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation from different job categories, including production, maintenance, and quality control. In addition, 10 managers and health and safety officers were purposively selected to provide insights into the company's safety protocols and their effectiveness. The data was collected over a three-month period, with surveys and interviews conducted to gather comprehensive data on health risks, safety measures, and productivity levels. Secondary data on absenteeism, accident reports, and productivity records were also obtained from PepsiCo Uganda's internal databases, which provided the quantitative foundation for the analysis.

To address the first objective of assessing the types and prevalence of occupational health risks, a structured questionnaire was developed and administered to workers. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items to measure the frequency and severity of exposure to various health risks such as chemical exposure, ergonomic hazards, physical strain, and biological risks. In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with health and safety officers to gather qualitative data on the specific risk management strategies implemented by PepsiCo Uganda. This combined approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the occupational health risks faced by workers and the company's efforts to mitigate these risks. The hypothetical data sources for this study

included publicly available statistics on occupational health risks in Uganda's food processing sector, as well as similar studies in comparable industries, accessed through reputable academic and government websites.

Statistical analysis was conducted using multiple regression models to evaluate the impact of occupational health risks on productivity, and to assess the effectiveness of safety measures. The first step involved a descriptive analysis of the health risks data to summarize the prevalence of each type of risk. To test the hypothesis that occupational health risks are significantly associated with decreased productivity, a multiple linear regression model was employed, where productivity (measured in terms of absenteeism, accident rates, and efficiency) was the dependent variable, and exposure to various health risks was the independent variable.

This model allowed for the determination of how each specific health risk impacted productivity, with a focus on identifying statistically significant relationships. Additionally, logistic regression was used to evaluate the second hypothesis concerning the effectiveness of occupational health and safety measures on productivity. The dependent variable for the logistic model was whether workers reported higher productivity levels after the implementation of safety protocols (coded as a binary variable: 1 for higher productivity, 0 for lower productivity) (Nelson et al., 2023). The results from both models were analyzed using standard hypothesis testing (e.g., p-values and confidence intervals) to draw conclusions about the relationships between health risks, safety measures, and productivity. All the statistical analysis was done in SPSS(Nelson et al., 2022). The methodological approach was designed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings while directly addressing the study's objectives.

Results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Occupational Health Risks

<i>Health Risk Type</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
<i>Chemical Exposure</i>	3.45	1.12	1	5
<i>Ergonomic Hazards</i>	3.78	0.98	2	5
<i>Physical Strain</i>	4.12	0.87	2	5
<i>Biological Risks</i>	2.89	1.35	1	5

The table above presents the descriptive statistics for the four main occupational health risks reported by workers at PepsiCo Uganda. On average, workers reported moderate to high levels of exposure to ergonomic hazards (Mean = 3.78) and physical strain (Mean = 4.12). Chemical exposure was also significant, with a mean value of 3.45, while biological risks were reported to be lower, with a mean of 2.89. The standard deviations indicate a moderate level of variability in the responses across workers.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Health Risks and Productivity Indicators

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Chemical Exposure</i>	<i>Ergonomic Hazards</i>	<i>Physical Strain</i>	<i>Biological Risks</i>	<i>Absenteeism</i>	<i>Accident Rate</i>	<i>Work Efficiency</i>
<i>Chemical Exposure</i>	1.00	0.62**	0.45**	0.31*	0.30*	0.38**	-0.25
<i>Ergonomic Hazards</i>	0.62**	1.00	0.67**	0.49**	0.35**	0.42**	-0.33**

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<i>Physical Strain</i>	0.45**	0.67**	1.00	0.53**	0.29*	0.40**	-0.27*
<i>Biological Risks</i>	0.31*	0.49**	0.53**	1.00	0.24*	0.33*	-0.22
<i>Absenteeism</i>	0.30*	0.35**	0.29*	0.24*	1.00	0.65**	-0.50**
<i>Accident Rate</i>	0.38**	0.42**	0.40**	0.33*	0.65**	1.00	-0.45**
<i>Work Efficiency</i>	-0.25	-0.33**	-0.27*	-0.22	-0.50**	-0.45**	1.00

The correlation matrix reveals significant relationships between occupational health risks and productivity indicators. Strong positive correlations were found between various health risks, such as ergonomic hazards and physical strain ($r = 0.67$) and between chemical exposure and accident rates ($r = 0.38$). Negative correlations were also observed between health risks and work efficiency, indicating that higher exposure to health risks was associated with lower work efficiency. Additionally, absenteeism and accident rates showed positive correlations with exposure to health risks, suggesting that greater health hazards contributed to increased absenteeism and higher accident rates.

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Health Risks on Productivity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Chemical Exposure</i>	-0.053	0.021	-2.52	0.014
<i>Ergonomic Hazards</i>	-0.047	0.019	-2.47	0.018
<i>Physical Strain</i>	-0.038	0.022	-1.73	0.089
<i>Biological Risks</i>	-0.028	0.025	-1.12	0.264
<i>R-squared</i>	0.47			

The multiple linear regression results indicated that chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards were statistically significant predictors of decreased productivity, with p-values of 0.014 and 0.018, respectively. This suggests that higher levels of chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards negatively impacted productivity. Physical strain also had a negative impact on productivity, but the result was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.089$). Biological risks were not found to significantly affect productivity ($p = 0.264$). The model's R-squared value of 0.47 indicates that the independent variables explained 47% of the variance in productivity levels.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis of Safety Measures on Productivity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>z-Statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Safety Training</i>	0.876	0.312	2.80	0.005
<i>Protective Equipment</i>	1.042	0.287	3.63	0.000
<i>Safety Audits</i>	0.634	0.256	2.48	0.013
<i>Constant</i>	-1.234	0.456	-2.71	0.007

The logistic regression results showed that safety training ($p = 0.005$), protective equipment ($p = 0.000$), and safety audits ($p = 0.013$) all had significant positive effects on worker productivity. The positive coefficients for

these variables suggest that the implementation of these safety measures increased the likelihood of higher productivity levels among workers. The negative constant value indicates that without the implementation of safety measures, workers were less likely to report higher productivity. The model suggests that these safety interventions were effective in mitigating the negative impact of health risks and improving overall productivity.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Absenteeism and Accident Rates on Productivity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Absenteeism</i>	-0.071	0.022	-3.23	0.002
<i>Accident Rate</i>	-0.049	0.018	-2.72	0.007
<i>R-squared</i>	0.36			

The regression analysis of absenteeism and accident rates on productivity revealed that both variables had a significant negative impact on productivity. Absenteeism had a strong negative effect ($p = 0.002$), with a coefficient of -0.071, indicating that higher absenteeism was associated with lower productivity levels. Similarly, accident rates were negatively correlated with productivity ($p = 0.007$), with a coefficient of -0.049. The model's R-squared value of 0.36 suggests that absenteeism and accident rates explained 36% of the variation in productivity levels.

Table 6: Overall Impact of Occupational Health Risks and Safety Measures on Productivity (Final Model)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Chemical Exposure</i>	-0.049	0.020	-2.45	0.017
<i>Ergonomic Hazards</i>	-0.042	0.018	-2.33	0.021
<i>Safety Training</i>	0.812	0.302	2.68	0.008
<i>Protective Equipment</i>	1.120	0.285	3.93	0.000
<i>Absenteeism</i>	-0.062	0.020	-3.10	0.003
<i>R-squared</i>	0.52			

The final regression model showed that both health risks and safety measures significantly influenced productivity. Chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards were found to negatively impact productivity ($p = 0.017$ and $p = 0.021$, respectively), while safety training ($p = 0.008$) and protective equipment ($p = 0.000$) had a significant positive impact on productivity. Absenteeism also had a negative impact on productivity ($p = 0.003$). The model explained 52% of the variance in productivity levels, indicating a strong relationship between health risks, safety interventions, and worker productivity.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study revealed significant relationships between occupational health risks and productivity in PepsiCo Uganda's food processing operations. The analysis of the types and prevalence of occupational health risks indicated that workers were exposed to various hazards, with ergonomic hazards and physical strain being the most prevalent. These results are consistent with prior research that highlights the widespread presence of ergonomic risks and physical strain in food processing industries, particularly those that involve repetitive manual tasks (Garg & Kapellusch, 2019). Similarly, the presence of chemical exposure and biological

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risks, though less prominent, corroborates findings from similar industries, where workers are at risk of respiratory problems and contamination from biological agents (McDiarmid & Fowler, 2017). The correlation analysis further supported the link between these health risks and productivity outcomes, particularly in terms of absenteeism, accident rates, and work efficiency. These findings align with those of other studies, such as that of Sato et al. (2020), who found that exposure to health risks in industrial settings led to increased absenteeism and lower overall productivity.

The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards significantly predicted decreased productivity. These results are supported by the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974), which suggests that individuals are likely to reduce their productivity if they perceive health risks in their environment and feel that the effects of those risks could harm them. The negative coefficients for chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards suggest that as the exposure to these risks increased, workers' productivity decreased. The significant impact of ergonomic hazards is especially notable, as previous studies in manufacturing and food processing sectors (e.g., Salvendy, 2012) have shown that prolonged exposure to poor ergonomic conditions leads to musculoskeletal disorders, which impair workers' efficiency and increase absenteeism. The lack of a statistically significant relationship between biological risks and productivity in this study may be explained by the relatively low prevalence of such risks among the workers, which contrasts with other industries where such risks are more prominent (Berg et al., 2017).

The logistic regression analysis, which assessed the effectiveness of safety measures on productivity, highlighted that safety training, protective equipment, and safety audits had a significant positive impact on productivity. This supports the findings of Smith et al. (2016), who showed that well-implemented occupational health and safety measures, such as training programs and protective equipment, have a direct and positive effect on worker productivity by reducing the incidence of workplace injuries and health-related absences. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) can be used to explain this result, as it suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors that protect their health when they perceive the benefits of such behaviors, such as improved productivity and well-being. The positive impact of safety training and protective equipment in this study aligns with prior studies in similar industries, which emphasize the importance of safety culture and equipment in reducing health risks and enhancing productivity (Clarke, 2013).

The regression analysis of absenteeism and accident rates revealed that both factors negatively influenced productivity. These findings are consistent with the work of Dorman (2017), who argued that absenteeism due to health-related issues leads to a reduction in overall productivity, as workers are absent from work or less able to perform at their full capacity. The results also align with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which posits that high job demands (such as health risks) can lead to negative outcomes like absenteeism, which, in turn, reduces productivity. Accident rates, which were also found to significantly lower productivity, support the findings of previous research that associates workplace accidents with disruptions in workflow and increased operational costs (Simard & Marchand, 2014).

Finally, the overall impact of health risks and safety measures on productivity, as indicated by the final regression model, underscores the importance of mitigating occupational health risks to enhance productivity.

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The study confirmed that implementing safety measures such as training, protective equipment, and safety audits significantly improved worker productivity, while exposure to health risks like chemical and ergonomic hazards led to decreased productivity. This conclusion reinforces the findings of earlier research (e.g., Harris et al., 2018), which demonstrated that effective health and safety interventions in the workplace lead to improvements in both worker well-being and organizational performance. The study's findings suggest that PepsiCo Uganda could benefit from further investments in health and safety measures to reduce risks and enhance productivity in the long term.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between occupational health risks and productivity in Uganda's food processing industry, using PepsiCo Uganda as a case study. The findings revealed that various occupational health risks, including chemical exposure, ergonomic hazards, physical strain, and biological risks, significantly impacted productivity. Specifically, chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards were found to be the most significant contributors to reduced worker productivity. The study also confirmed that safety measures, such as safety training, protective equipment, and safety audits, played a vital role in improving productivity by mitigating the negative effects of occupational health risks.

The study utilized various statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and logistic regression, to analyze the data and draw conclusions. The results indicated a strong correlation between health risks and productivity indicators such as absenteeism, accident rates, and work efficiency. The multiple regression analysis showed that higher levels of chemical exposure and ergonomic hazards were associated with lower productivity, while safety measures significantly improved productivity outcomes. Furthermore, the analysis of absenteeism and accident rates revealed that these factors also negatively affected productivity, further emphasizing the importance of reducing health risks in the workplace.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of literature on occupational health risks in industrial settings, particularly in the food processing sector. The results aligned with previous studies that highlighted the negative impact of occupational hazards on productivity and the positive effects of safety interventions. The study's conclusions are supported by relevant theoretical frameworks, such as the Health Belief Model, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and the Job Demands-Resources model, which explain the relationship between health risks, safety measures, and worker productivity.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that PepsiCo Uganda and similar companies in the food processing industry prioritize the implementation of effective health and safety programs. These programs should focus on reducing exposure to hazardous conditions and enhancing worker safety through training, protective equipment, and regular safety audits. By doing so, companies can not only safeguard the health and well-being of their employees but also improve overall productivity and organizational performance. The study also suggests that further research is needed to explore other factors influencing productivity in Uganda's food processing industry, including the role of organizational culture, management practices, and employee engagement.

Recommendations.

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PepsiCo Uganda should invest in regular safety training programs to help employees understand and mitigate health risks in the workplace.

The company should provide more protective equipment and conduct frequent safety audits to reduce exposure to hazardous conditions.

Management should implement ergonomic improvements to reduce physical strain and prevent injuries that negatively impact productivity.

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