

Relationship between Flexible Work-Arrangement and Commitment of Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kenya

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Abstract *The study was set to determine the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. The study adopted cross sectional survey design and the target population consisted of 1217 nurses in 27 level 4 and 5 public hospitals. The researcher utilized simple random sampling to select counties that formed the sample of study. Five (5) counties out of forty seven (47) counties in Kenya were selected for the study. Proportionate random sampling was used to select 8 hospitals from the five counties selected. From the 7 hospitals sampled 364 nurses were selected through proportionate simple random sampling. Primary data were collected through the use of questionnaires which had both structured and unstructured questions. For data analysis linear regression analysis was used to regress relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. It was found out that there is a significant positive relationship between flexible work arrangements and nurses' commitment in public hospitals in Kenya ($\beta = 0.725, p < 0.01$). The study concludes that flexible work arrangement (flexitime, compressed work schedule, shift schedule and job sharing) has a positive significant linear relationship with nurses' commitment. It recommends that matrons and administrators in public hospitals to develop flexible work arrangements practices that suit individual needs of the nurses and implement them in order to greatly enhance their commitment.*

Key words Relationship, Flexible work arrangement, Commitment, Nurses and Public Hospitals

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1. Introduction

In today's competitive world both private and public organizations are facing new challenges regarding sustained quality service delivery and creating committed workforce (Wainaina, 2015). Currently neither public nor private organization can perform at highest levels unless each and every employee is committed to the organizations goals and objectives (Varsha and Bhati, 2012). Organizations have realized that employees are one of the key resources to build efficiency and gain competitive advantage on (Lissy and Ventakash, 2014).

Studies across the world have shown that both public and private organizations are implementing work-life balance initiatives, among them flexible work arrangement, to minimize on the negative effects of work-life imbalance and hence tap on the associated benefits which include but not limited to increased productivity, increased employee morale, increased customer service, increased employee commitment, and reduced absenteeism (Hughes, 2007; Todd, 2004).

Lockwood (2003) observes that companies in the USA introduced six hours instead of eight hours shifts per day as early as before World War II. This was done to enhance employee's morale. Aybars (2007); Cole 2006 and Hill, *et al.* (2007) revealed that flexible work hours, job sharing, parental leave on-site child care facility and telecommuting are commonly implemented to build morale, job satisfaction and work efficiency. In India both private and government managed institutions embraced the concept of work-life balance initiatives observes Satpathy *et al.* (2012); Dev (2012)' Fatima and Sahibzada (2012).

In Africa, the concept of work life balance initiatives uptake and development compared to other continents has received lower attention. In Nigeria, Mordi and Ojo (2011) observed that most employees suffer work life conflict due to among others an overwhelming working environment. Thus the utilization of

work-life initiatives is not given much consideration in Nigeria as compared to other countries of the west and Europe as evidenced above. Patel *et al.* (2006) revealed that in South Africa that despite the availability of work-life balance initiatives and strong legislation to support the uptake of work-life balance initiatives, there is a growing conflict between work and family. It was further observed that women are the most affected as demand for home life and responsibilities clashed with their commitment to work compared to their male counterparts (Brink and De la Rey, 2001).

In Kenyan context, both public and private organizations have embraced work life balance initiatives to mitigate negative impact on employee commitment, observed Strathmore Business School (2011); Muinde and Guyo (2012) and Biwott *et al.* (2015). Multinational organizations such as The Coca-Cola and Safaricom Kenya at headquarters have initiatives such as a flexible work arrangements among others to enable their employees balance work and non-work roles (Sarapay, 2012).

Statement of the problem

It is widely observed that health provision in public hospitals in Kenya is not of the desired quality. Many have raised this concern, for example, Ministers of health during the fifty-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa (WHO 2002) observed that service delivery in most public hospitals in Africa is very poor. Akacho (2014) indicated that there is poor service delivery in public hospitals in Kenya. The public service commission of Kenya through the line ministry of health has policy interventions among them flexible work arrangements to enhance the commitment of nurses among other health personnel and hence improve on services in hospitals.

Despite availability flexible work arrangements in the public hospitals to enhance nurses' commitment, the quality of services in most public hospitals remains wanting. Furthermore, the extent to which flexible work arrangements relates to nurses' commitment and thus performance remain unclear in public hospitals (Wang and Walumbwa, 2007).

Given the prevailing situation in the public hospitals in Kenya, there was a dire need to establish the relationship between nurses' commitment and flexible work arrangements. This will go a long way in coming up with strategies of enhancing nurses' commitment through flexible work arrangements and thus improve service delivery to clients. The study was set out to determine the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya.

1.1. Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to establish the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses' in public hospitals in Kenya.

1.2. Hypothesis

The study was set to test the following hypothesis;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between flexible work-arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya.

1.3. Justification for the Study

The study may be of great benefit to the Government, nurses in public hospitals, human resource practitioners, other researchers and students in appreciating the relationship between flexible work-arrangements and employee commitment in an organization as follows; The study may be of great use to the Ministry of Health and their respective departments in the 47 counties in coming up with appropriate strategies and policies for commitment improvement of healthcare personnel specifically nurses in public hospitals through the use of flexible work-arrangements. To Human Resource Practitioners, the study may help them come up with effective strategies to improve employee commitment by embracing flexible work-arrangements in their respective organizations. To other researchers and students this study may act as a reference document. The study may also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on flexible work-arrangement and employee commitment.

2. Literature review

The study was based on the following theories.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory observes that all human relationships are formed by a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives (Wainaina, 2015). Social exchange involves a series of interactions that generate obligations. These interactions are usually seen as interdependent and contingent on the actions of another person. The social exchange perspective argues that people calculate the overall worth of a particular relationship by subtracting its costs from the rewards it provides (Wainaina, 2015). In institutional setting, there exists a relationship between an employee and the organization and its destiny will be determined by the worth of the relationship on both parties (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

The social exchange theory observes that the major force in interpersonal relationship is the satisfaction of both parties' interest (organization and employees). Employees expect benefits in form of such things like flexible work–arrangements. Commitment will act as cost in terms of time spent in the workplace and lost opportunities (Heshizer, 1994). According to De DeCuyper, De Witte and Emmeric (2011) to promote commitment and productive behavior among workers employers should follow the practice of social exchange. In order for an organization to reap the benefits in terms of loyalty and commitment employees need fair and just treatment.

Lambert (2000) Suggests that flexible work–arrangements may promote employee participation in organization's activities and initiatives through a felt obligation to give extra effort in return for additional benefits. Therefore, it is suggested that organizations that provide flexible work –arrangements may induce an obligation manifested as enhanced employee commitment. Consequently, an organization that offers flexible work –arrangements might experience outcomes like reduced turnover or greater employee commitment (Haar and Spell, 2004). Social exchange theory can therefore be used in this study to explain the relationship between flexible work –arrangements and commitment. Higher job commitment may result if flexible work –arrangement provided produce a better match with an individual employee's particular needs.

Three Component Model (TCM)

The model is commonly referred to as Mayer and Allen commitment model. The model has three differentiating aspects of commitment: affective (emotional attachment to the organization), continuance (perceived costs associated with leaving the organization) and normative (feelings of obligation towards the organization). These three dimensions are viewed as facets of organizational commitment as observed by Biwott *et al.*, (2015) and Wainaina, (2015). This means that a given employee can be affectively, normatively and instrumentally committed to the organization. Employees tend to be affectively committed if they feel that the organization is supporting them. Continuance commitment develops when the employee recognizes that he/she stands to lose investments in the organization, and/or perceives that there are no alternatives other than remaining in the organization. Normative commitment develops when people receive benefits that induce them to feel the need to reciprocate to the organization. They will therefore accept the terms of a psychological contract between them and the organization (Rego and Cuhna, 2007). The theory is appropriate for this study because through provision and utilization of flexible work–arrangements the nurses are induced to reciprocate by being committed to the organization. The theory further explains the three aspects of commitment; affective, normative and continuance commitment which are the indicators of the dependent variable for the current study.

3. Methodology of research

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey design was appropriate for the study because it focused on description of the relationship of the variables under investigation occurs at a single point in time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Further, survey was preferred for its special appeal for generalizability the view also held by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who observes that survey design is important in explaining or describing data collected from population that are too large to observe.

The target population consisted of 1217 nurses in 27 level 4 and 5 public hospitals. The researcher utilised simple random sampling to select counties that formed the sample of study. Five (5) counties out of forty seven (47) counties were selected for the study. Gay (1996), Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Saunders and Lewis (2009) postulates that at least ten percent of especially a large population is sufficient for reliable findings. Proportionate random sampling was used to select 7 hospitals from the five counties selected. From the 7 hospitals sampled 364 nurses were selected through proportionate simple random sampling. Simple random sampling gives equal, fair and known chance to all the elements in the target population thus enhancing the representation of the population (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003).

Table 1. Sample size determination

Counties	Number of Hospitals	Number of Nurses	Hospitals	Nurses
Kericho	8	171	2	51
Kirinyaga	3	171	1	51
Nyamira	3	98	1	29
Embu	4	323	1	98
Mombasa	7	454	2	136
TOTAL	25	1217	7	364

Source: Kenya Nursing Workforce Report: The Status of Nursing in Kenya, 2012

A standard questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The instrument used in this study was adapted and modified from previous research questionnaire. The utilization of previous studies' instruments of survey questionnaires not only assists in the reliability and validity of the instruments, but it also helps reduce the amount of work needed in developing and testing new instruments (Cooper and Schindler 2011). For data analysis linear regression analysis was used to regress relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. Linear regression analysis attempts to determine whether a variable will predict a given dependent variable.

The linear regression model for the study was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e \quad (1)$$

Where:

Y= Nurses Commitment, X= flexible work arrangements, β_0 =constant (intercept),

β_1 =coefficient of flexible work arrangements and e=error term.

4. Research findings

The Questionnaire contained items which sought to establish the relationship between flexible work arrangements and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. Flexitime, Compressed work schedule, shift schedule and job sharing were the items of flexible work arrangements, while affective normative and continuance are the items which sought to establish nurses commitment in public hospitals.

Regression Analysis of Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and Commitment of Nurses in Public Hospitals

A test to establish the amount of variation on dependent variable explained by the independent variable was carried out. The results of the linear regression analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.725$, $p < 0.01$) This means that increase in the use of work arrangements by nurses in public hospitals will lead to increase in organization commitment in public hospitals in Kenya. The independent variable reported R value of 0.725 and $R^2 = 0.525$ which means that 52.5% of corresponding variations in nurses commitment can be explained/ predicted by work arrangements. The rest of the variation 47.5 % could be explained by other variables not included in the model. The model is commitment of nurses ($Y = 28.776 + 1.633X$ (flexible work arrangement)).

The results of regression analysis revealed that there was significant positive relationship (0.725, $p < 0.01$) between work arrangement and commitment of nurses. This implies that nurses who experience higher levels of work arrangement tend to have higher commitment. Therefore H_{01} of the study is supported which states that there is no significance relationship between work arrangements and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya; hence we reject the null hypothesis. This shows that the regression model has less than 0.01 likelihood (probability) of giving a wrong prediction. Hence the regression model has a confidence level of 99%.

Table 2. Correlations

		Work arrangement	Commitment
Flexible work arrangement	Pearson Correlation	1	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	309	309
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.725**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	309	309

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	28.776	1.751		16.432	.000
Flexible work arrangement	1.633	.089	.725	18.430	.000

a. Dependent Variable: commitment

5. Discussion of findings

The objective for this study was to determine the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. The coefficient for work arrangement was 1.633. This means that unit change in work arrangement will result to a change in nurse commitment by a factor of 1.633 at 5% significant level. The results of regression analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.725$, $p < 0.01$ (see table 1 d) between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya.

The finding of this study agrees with Powers (2004) cited in Muchiti and Gachunga (2015) who observes that employees with greater control over work schedules are more likely to show increased engagement, commitment, retention and job satisfaction. Hill *et al.* (2001) argues that flexible work arrangements enable employees to manage their work and family responsibilities harmoniously. Hill, et al (2010) view is supported by Dalcos and Daley (2009) who revealed that flexible work arrangement such as flex time allows employees to choose when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks, thus enhance engagement. Williams *et al.* (2000), Chow and Keng-Howe's, (2006) revealed that work arrangements where employees participation is incorporated shows higher levels of concentration, and performance. It is therefore evident that flexible work arrangement is very significant in enhancing employees' commitment, quality service delivery in the public hospitals and thus client satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between flexible work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. Study concludes that there is a strong relationship between work arrangement and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya.

7. Recommendations

The study therefore recommends that management in public hospitals in Kenya to develop flexible work arrangements practices that suit individual needs of the nurses and implement them in order to greatly enhance their commitment.

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