

Influence of Flexible Work Scheduling on Performance of Nurses in Regional Hospitals in Tanzania

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Abstract

The health care industry is tremendously important to people around the world as well as to the national economies. The delivery of modern health care depends on groups of trained nursing professionals coming together as interdisciplinary teams. Research evidence suggests the performance improvement among nursing staff and its potential effect on the healthcare industry is of paramount importance. Despite availability of flexible working arrangements in the public hospitals to enhance the productivity of the health care personnel, nurses' performance in most public hospitals remain wanting. To create high performance work attitude among the existing staff and to attract potential new entrants, healthcare organizations have to adopt HRM strategies that would help them in performance improvement. This study aimed at identifying the influence of flexible work scheduling on performance of nurses in regional hospitals in Tanzania. The study also examined the intervening role of leadership support in mediating the relationship between flexible work scheduling on performance of nurses. Specifically, the study examined how job compressed working, flextime and shift working influenced performance of nurses in hospital settings. Guided by explanatory research design, the study adapted a positivism study philosophy. Data were collected from 381 nurses in 8 regional hospitals using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings indicated a significant correlation between compressed working, flextime and shift working with nurses' performance ($r=0.513$, $p<0.05$). Also, the study found that, leadership support and flexible work scheduling explained 52% of nurses' performance. It was finally concluded that nursing work scheduling was affected by staffing levels, rigid working practices but also by the design of the nurses' work system. This paper suggest ways in which hospitals can improve nurses' performance by increasing flexibility in working practice, reorganizing work structure to respond to the uncertainty in patient-care needs while respecting work rules.

Key words: Flexible working practices, Employee performance, Nursing shortages, Nurse scheduling, Quality health care