
Nurses' Perception on Leave Arrangements in Public Hospitals in Kenya.

Denis Okerosi Okemwa

Rongo University College, School of Business & Human Resource Development

Abstract: *The study was set to determine the nurses' Perception on leave arrangements in public hospitals in Kenya. The study adopted cross sectional survey design and the target population consisted of 1217 nurses in 27 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 were selected for the study. Proportionate random sampling was used to select 7 hospitals from the five counties. 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. The study findings indicate that there is a favourable perception on leave arrangement by nurses in public hospitals in Kenya. From the findings the study recommends that compassionate and parental leaves should operate as a distinct leave entitlement and maternity and annual leaves could be increased so that it is more than fourteen weeks to enable nurses have adequate days to address non work demands.*

Key words: *Perception, Staff leave arrangements, Nurses and Public Hospitals.*

1. Introduction

Work-life balance has been the subject of concern among researchers, policy makers and managers in Kenya lately. (Wainaina2015; Kangure 2015; Machiti and Gachunga 2015 ; Okemwa 2016, Kamau 2013 and Njoroge 2014). It has been observed that the cost of poor work-life balance on individuals and society as a whole is high. Among the costs of poor work-life balance are low organizational commitment, lower job satisfaction, impaired physical and psychological health (Beauregard and Henry 2009). Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between work-life balance initiatives and organizational wide positive outcomes (Kamau 2013 & Okemwa 2016).

Therefore there comes a need for organizations to strengthen the utilization of work-life interventions among employees. This noble cause is aimed at promoting the realization of positive organizational outcomes.

Orogbu, Onyeizugbe & Chukwuemeke (2015) reveals that Work Life Balance initiatives can be broadly divided into four dominant categories which include flexible working arrangement (home working, compressed hours); leave arrangement (annual leave, Parental leave, Maternity leave, Paternity leave, Compassionate leave, Sick leave); dependent care assistance (Child care & Elder care arrangements) and general services (Employment assistant programs) .

This study delve on finding the perception of nurse's on the leave arrangement available to them with the aim of coming with ways of enhancing utilization of leave arrangement to attract positive work outcomes.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on organizational support theory. According to Rhoades & Eisenberger,(2002)Organizational support concerns "the extent to which employees perceive that their contributions are valued by their organization and that the firm cares about their well-being". Stamper& johlke (2003) observes that organizational support develops through multiple interactions between employees and their employers.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) observes that when employees feel supported by their organization through say provision of staff leaves such as annual leave, parental leaves , sick leave ,study leaves, maternity and paternity leave feel obligated to reciprocate by being committed to it. Wainaina (2015) agrees with Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) and reveals that employees form general beliefs concerning how much the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being in this case facilitation in the utilization of various staff leave arrangements.

Colakoglue and Culha (2010) and Wainaina (2015) observes that provision to employees' staff leave arrangements make them feel appreciated and thus results in employee commitment among other positive employee outcomes. Employees who are committed to their organization show better performance and more meaningful contributions (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

The relevance of this theory to the study is the theory may help explain the perception of nurses' on staff leave arrangement. That is organizations are expected to enhance utilization of appropriate employee leave arrangements to enable them have a favourable work life balance.

3. Staff leaves arrangement

Leave is a period of time that one must be away from one's primary job, while maintaining the status of employee according to Muchiti and Gachunga (2015). Orogbu et.al (2015) posits that leave arrangements refers to the number of hours or days employees of an organization are permitted to be away from their employment position within a period of time without consequences. Njoroge (2014) observes that leaves arrangements give workers a chance to release themselves from work stress and create a balance between work and their family activities.

Cook (2004) and Orogbu et .al (2015) reveals that staff leaves arrangements are categorized into the following; annual leave, parental leaves ,Compassionate leave , sick leave ,study leave, maternity and paternity leave.

According to Orogbu et al (2015) annual leaves provide employees an opportunity to relax for an extended period and to return to the job with renewed interest and vitality. After twelve months of continuous service, a worker is entitled to an annual leave of at least thirty working days that may not be deferred by more than twelve months (Employment Act 2007). Supervisors should work with employees to develop and coordinate annual leave plans so that accruals remain at manageable level and so that maximum limits are not exceeded (Njoroge, 2014). Annual leave arrangement is extended to all employees regardless of their terms of contract except those that are excluded explicitly (such as entitlement to pensions). When an employee transfers to another department, leave balances are also transferred.

According to the Employment Act (2007), a female employee is entitled to three months maternity leave in addition to any period of annual leave she is entitled to, and sick leave if she happens to fall sick during the time of confinement and with consent of the employer. The law does not set a limit on maternity leave. Maternity leave cannot be extended in terms of extending the three months maternity leave. But an extension may be granted, with the consent of the employer, by taking sick leave or annual leave, compassionate leave or other leave entitlements. Male employees are entitled to 14 days paternity leave in the event that their recognized wives give birth. The provisions on paternity leave under the

employment act allow an eligible employee to take fully paid paternity leave.

Parental Leave is an official permission given to employees with child care giving responsibilities or official permission for an employee to take time off to take care for an immediate family or household member who is sick or injured or help during a family emergence (Orogbu et.al (2015). But it comes out of the employee personal leave balance.

Sick leave is time off from work that an employee can use to address their health and safety needs without losing pay after a period of two consecutive months of service (Employment Act 2007).The minimum period of entitlement is seven days with full pay and seven days with half pay for every 12 months, subject to production of a certificate of incapacity to work duly signed by a qualified medical practitioner.

4. Empirical studies

Kamau et al, (2013) in the study of WLB practices and the effect on employee job performance at Eco Bank Kenya concluded that staff leaves arrangements impact on performance by reducing work-related stress. Njoroge (2014) Work-Life Balance in Kenya; Perception of young advocates in Nairobi, observed that the young advocates working in law firms in Nairobi had an inadequate Work-life Balance. The researcher revealed that to enhance WLB, compassionate leave should operate as a distinct leave entitlement and maternity leave could be increased so that it is more than fourteen weeks. Kamau et al, (2013) and Njoroge (2014) failed to determine the perception of nurses on various leave arrangements, which is the focus of the current study

Brough et al(2009) and Renda et al. (2009) observes that paid family leave are important for parents' ability to manage job and family demands. Further, Brough et al (2009) in their study revealed that parents without paid paternity and maternity leave, experience financial distress, negative attachment to the child and negative outcomes on their personal health wellbeing. A study by Casper and Harrism (2008) revealed that child rearing, paternity, and parental leaves contribute to affective commitment. Brough et al (2009) and Renda et al. (2009) though they investigated the impact of paid leave to employees, they failed to look at the perception of nurses on various leave arrangements. Secondly the study may provide relevant literature on the perspective of employees in Kenya on different types of leaves.

Ang et al .(2005) in their study revealed that there is generally higher commitment experienced when employees received more

generous annual leave entitlement. Meyer, et al, (2001) in their study on the best organizations for working mothers revealed that organizations offering work-life balance practices such as family sick leave, parental leave are strongly related to increased profits. Though the study came up with very useful findings, it failed to address the issue of perception of employees in terms of adequacy of the days provided for by the various leave arrangements which is the concern of this study.

5. Methodology

Operationalization and Measurement of Variable

The study variables were given operational meaning as given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Operationalization and Measurement of Variable

Category	Variable	Indicators	Operationalization	Measurement
Independent	Staff Leave arrangements	Maternity leave	Three months extended to female employees to welcome the new bundle of joy.	Aggregated index of 1-5 point scale
		Paternity leave	Male employees are entitled to 14 days paternity leave in the event that their recognized wives give birth.	Aggregated index of 1-5 point scale
		Annual leave	Employees get an opportunity to relax for an extended period and to return to the job with renewed interest and vitality.	Aggregated index of 1-5 point scale
		Sick leave	time off from work that an employee can use to address their health and safety needs without losing pay after a period of two consecutive months of service	Aggregated index of 1-5 point scale
		Parental /Compassionate leave	is an official permission given to employees to attend emergency or urgent personal/family demands	Aggregated index of 1-5 point scale

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey design is used when the focus of the study is on description of characteristics of variables under investigation occurs at a single point in time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Further, survey is preferred for its special appeal for generalization 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 is too large to observe.

Target population

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. 5 counties out of 47 counties in Kenya were selected for the study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Saunders and Lewis (2009) posit that at least 10% of the target population is appropriate for a large population. 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 is probability sampling technique that 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). Gay (1996) postulates that atleast ten percent of the population is sufficient for reliable findings.

Table 2. 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.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study consisted of 10 items focusing on nurses ‘ perception on staff leaves. All the questions were measured using a 5-Point Likert scale and were tested for reliability and validity. The reliability of the study was using the Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alpha is a technique that helps to determine the reliability of a survey instrument and the internal consistency of the average correlation of variables in the survey (Gleim and Gleim, 2003). The accepted value for the cognitive test Alpha is equal to .7 ($\alpha = .7$). Table 3 presents the summary of the reliability results of the instruments based on the pilot test carried out prior to the actual data collection.

Table 3. Reliability Results of the Instrument

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach alpha (α)
Perception on staff leave arrangements	10	0.75

In order to achieve the purpose of this study descriptive statistics were carried out to establish the perception of nurses on staff leave arrangements.

4. Results

The results of the study were as presented in table 4

Table 4. Nurses’ Perception on Staff Leave arrangements.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Remarks
B1	My supervisor approves my annual leave in line with annual leave plans agreed.	(135) 43.5%	(25) 8.1%	(8) 2.5%	(72) 26.5%	(59) 19.1%	SA
B2	Not carrying forward annual leave days is good for me.	(51) 16.5%	(48) 15.5%	(31) 10.0%	(44) 14.3%	(135) 43.7%	SD
B3	Paternity/Maternity leave days are promptly approved provided relevant supportive documents are availed.	(124) 40.1%	(77) 25%	(19) 6%	(49) 15.9%	(40) 13%	SA
B4	Paternity/Maternity leave days allowed are adequate.	(19) 6%	(49) 15.9%	(40) 13%	(77) 25%	(124) 40.1%	SD
B5	Compassionate leave days allowed should not eat into my annual leave days.	(129) 41.7%	(43) 13.9%	(39) 12.6%	(47) 15.2%	(51) 16.5%	SA
B6	Compassionate leave usually approved in this hospital is too short.	(129) 41.7%	(43) 13.9%	(39) 12.6%	(47) 15.2%	(51) 16.5%	SA
B7	Sick leave is quickly approved by my supervisor.	(124) 40.1%	(77) 25%	(19) 6%	(49) 15.9%	(40) 13%	SA
B8	Sick leave allows me to attend to my health issues.	(124) 40.1%	(77) 25%	(19) 6%	(49) 15.9%	(40) 13%	SA
B9	While on leave am not expected to respond to job related functions.	(72) 41.1%	(36) 11.7%	(28) 9.1%	(46) 14.9%	(127) 23.3%	SA
B10	Study leaves are not always approved when requested.	(135) 43.5%	(25) 8.1%	(8) 2.5%	(72) 26.5%	(59) 19.1%	SA
	Mean percentage response	34.8%	17.1%	8%	19.5%	20.4%	SA

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Survey data 2016, computation from SPSS 20 Analysis

On the question of whether supervisor approves annual leave in line with annual leave plans, majority of the respondents (43.5%) strongly agreed while 19.1% strongly disagreed. The findings support Njoroge (2014) assertion that annual leave plans when worked out between supervisor and employee enhance work-life balance thus leading to organizational productivity. Therefore, a working model between the supervisor and subordinate on annual leave plan should be

crafted. This will eventually lead to favourable perception on annual leave arrangement.

Further on the question of not carrying forward previously unutilized annual leave days to the next year, 43.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this policy, while 16.5% strongly agreed. Though the policy encourages employees to utilize their due leave days within the accepted framework, carrying forward leave days is likely to hurt future operations of the organization thus not

yielding the intended objectives of the policy itself. Nurses need to be sensitized on the working operations of this policy for their individual benefits and also for the general good of the hospital. This will go a long way in changing this unfavorable perception towards not carrying forward un-utilized leave days.

On the statement whether Paternity/Maternity leave days are promptly approved provided relevant supportive documents are availed. 40.1% of the respondents strongly agreed while 13% strongly disagreed. This implies that majority of nurses have favorable perception towards this policy because it enhances the utilization of the intervention. This good gesture by supervisors obligates the nurses to extend a timely hand to the organization when and where required. This finding is in agreement with Kamau et al (2013) and Njoroge (2014) findings that staff leaves arrangements impact positively on performance. Further on the question whether Paternity/Maternity leave days allowed are adequate, 40.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed while paltry 6% strongly agreed. This implies that nurses are not comfortable with the 3 months paid maternity leaves and 14 days paid paternity leave policy. The findings are in agreement with Njoroge (2014) recommendation that maternity leave could be increased so that it is more than fourteen weeks.

On the questions whether Compassionate leave usually approved is inadequate and Compassionate leave days allowed should operate as a distinct leave, 41.7% of respondents strongly agreed while 16.5% strongly disagreed. The study findings show that the nurses are not happy with the policy on compassionate leave as it is currently constituted. From these results the nurses have voiced two concerns: firstly to increase the number of days for compassionate leave and secondly compassionate leave should not reduce the annual leave days. Further it can be observed that the utilization of this policy in the eyes of the nurses' seems to hurt work-life balance particularly on non work demand side. This may result in costs associated with work-life imbalance. The findings are in agreement with Njoroge (2014) recommendation that compassionate should operate as a distinct leave and thus should not depend on annual leave days as currently is the norm.

On the statement that while on leave nurses are not expected to respond to job related functions, 41.1% of the nurses strongly agree while 23.3% strongly disagree. This reveals that nurses are not comfortable with the policy that they should be a phone call away and ready to be recalled back when and where need arises. Perhaps the reason

could be the policy disrupt the leave engagements, however the demands of the hospital supersedes their own interests. This result supports findings by Kangure (2015) and Machiti and Gachunga (2015) who observed that a favorable working formula be drafted to allow only urgent critical issues to warrant recall from leave.

overall responses as shown in the mean percentage response indicate that **34.8%** of the respondents answer Strongly Agree, **17.1 %** answers Agree, **8%** answers Undecided, while **19.5%** and **20.4%** answers Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively to leave arrangements. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents have a favorable perception on the various leaves arrangement available to them. However majority of nurses (65.1%) indicated that the maternity and paternity leave days are inadequate. Further majority of nurses (58%) voiced the need to be allowed to carry forward annual leave.

Conclusion

Majority of the nurses are happy with various leave arrangements, however the need to increase annual, maternity and paternity leave days cannot be overlooked. This will go a long way in assisting them to sufficiently attend to personal or family demands.

Recommendations

Given that majority of nurses indicated the need to increase the maternity and compassionate leave days the concerned authority should look into the modalities of increasing them to enhance work-life balance. Further there is need to make compassionate leave a distinct leave arrangement.

Recommendation for further study;

1. Relationship between the various leave arrangements and commitment of nurses in public hospitals in Kenya
2. A comparative study on the perception on nurses on leave arrangements in private and public hospitals in Kenya.

References

- 1) Ang, S., A.H. Quazi, C. Ty and K. Khim, (2005) "Studies on the Impact of Work-life Initiatives on Employee and Firm Performance", Executive Report. Beauregard, TA and Henry, LC 2009. Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance, Human Resource Management Review, 19(1): 9-22.

- 2) Brough, P, O'Driscoll, MP and Biggs, A (2009). Parental leave and work-family balance among employed parents following childbirth: An exploratory investigation in Australia and New Zealand, *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 4(1):71-87.
- 3) Casper, W.J. and Harris, C.M (2008) "Work-life Benefits and Organisational Attachment: Self-Interest Utility and Signaling Theory Models", *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 72, pp.95
- 4) Colakoglu, U., Culha, O. & Atay, H. (2010). The effects of perceived organizational support on employees' affective outcomes: Evidence from the hotel industry. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 16(2), 125-150.
- 5) Cook, A. (2004). Corporate decision-making process: How organizations decide to adopt work/life initiatives: A Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia entry.
- 6) Denis Okerosi Okemwa (2016) Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangement and Commitment of Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences* Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 255-261
- 7) Employment Act No.11 of 2007
- 8) Gleim, J., & Gleim, R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for Likert-Type scales. *Midwest Research to Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education*.
- 9) Kamau J M, Muleke V, Mukaya SO and Wagoki J, 'Work-Life Balance Practices on Employee Job Performance at Eco Bank Kenya' (2013) 5 *European Journal of Business and Management* 179
- 10) Kangure, F.M. (2014). Relationship between Work Life Balance and Employee engagement in State Corporations In Kenya. Published PhD Thesis, JKUAT
- 11) Muchiti, E. and Gachunga, H. (2015). Influence of Work Life Balance on Employee Productivity in Kenya; A case of Milimani Law Courts Nairobi. JKUAT, Kenya ©strategic journals.
- 12) Meyer, J.P., & Allen (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory Research and Application*. Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- 13) Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. 2001. Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11: 299-326.
- 14) Mugenda, O.M. & Mugenda, A.G. (2003). *Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: African Centre for Technology Studies.
- 15) Melissa Wanjiku Njoroge (2014) Work-Life Balance in Kenya: An Analysis of the Legislative Framework and the Perceptions of Young Advocates in Nairobi. Published LLM Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- 16) Orogbu, L. O., Onyeizugbe, C. U. & Chukwuemeke Deborah Ngozi (2015) Work Life Balance and Employee Performance in Selected Commercial Banks in Lagos State *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Management Sciences* Vol. 3 No. 4, ISSN 2056- 5992
- 17) Renda, J, Baxter, J and Alexander, M (2009). Exploring the work-family policies mothers say would help after the birth of a child, *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 12(1):65-87.
- 18) Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived Organizational Support: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87 (4), 698-714
- 19) Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th ed.). Harlow, United Kingdom: FT Prentice Hall.
- 20) Stamper, C. L., & Johlke, M. C. (2003). *The impact of perceived organizational support on the relationship between boundary spanner role stress and work outcomes*. *Journal of Management*, 29(4), 569-588.
- 21) Wainaina Lawrence Warwimbo (2015) Determinants of Organizational Commitment among Academic Staff in Kenya's Public and Private Universities. Publishes Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.