

Does Autonomy Affect Employee Performance Of Nurses In A Hospital? Case Of Moi Teaching And Referral Hospital Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The main objectives of this study were to determine the role of autonomy as a predictor of employee performance in a hospital setting in Kenya.

Approach/Methodology/Design: The study was an explanatory study which offers a profile to describe relevant aspects of the phenomenon of interest to the researcher. The target population was 2000 nurses who work in Moi teaching and referral hospital Eldoret. A sample of 330 nurses was selected using simple random sampling. The research instrument used was a 5 point likert scale questionnaire. The study used questionnaires as a tool of collecting data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as tables, pie charts, One-way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis.

Findings: From the findings, the null hypothesis that states that there is no relationship between autonomy and employee performance is rejected. This is because the results of the study showed that the level of autonomy in the hospital had a high influence on employee performance ($\beta_4=0.443$, P Value =0.000).

Originality/value: The study findings brings out the importance of a nation's largest group of health professionals, nurses as they play an important role in the delivery of quality and cost effective health care. As a result of focusing on the need for nurses to work to their full potential, health care system efficiency will be optimized and retained through autonomy. This study therefore came up with autonomy strategies that can assist the leadership of the hospital to harvest to their full potential of nurses hence employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges facing the healthcare industry was to identify factors that contribute to performance and to use those factors to implement an effective plan for the healthcare personnel retention. The healthcare personnel form an integral part of patient care. From the time of Florence Nightingale who formalized the healthcare personnel during the Crime War, they have played a major role in the healing process and have been held in high regard in the community. It is also important for healthcare personnel to anticipate patients' requirements or needs. The healthcare personnel need to anticipate the needs of the terminally ill and the dying and respond accordingly (Abraham, 2002). The proper autonomy practice in the hospital can influence them in their work performance. Job design was the creation of tasks and work settings for specific tools.

The department of Nursing Services constitutes about 25% of the total workforce of the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital. The Nursing workforce is quite rich in its professional qualification stratum that encompasses holders of Masters Degrees, Basic degrees, Diplomas and Certificates. The diversity in specialization and experience has significantly contributed to the upsurge in the quality of services provided by the nurses. To steer the nursing workforce, there was an established nursing administration team of eighteen (18) members that comprises the Chief Nurse, the Deputy Chief Nurse, an Administrator and fifteen Nurse Managers, besides the ward in charges and a competent teaching team.

The department is committed to the realization of the Hospital vision through furtherance of the Hospital's mission of providing accessible, specialized quality health care services and teaching facilities through research, training, capacity building, innovation and participation in National Health planning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Autonomy refers to job independence. How much freedom and control employees have to perform their job, for example, schedule their work, make decisions or determine the means to accomplish the objectives. According to Jones and Lockwood (2002) employee performance is a difficult concept to define but its principally to do with the application of effective effort. In the organizational context, performance is usually defined as the extent to which an organizational member contributes to achieving the goals of the organization (Lansbury, 1988).

Additionally, growth, effectiveness of efficiency of the organization and how employee's intentions to leave the organization (Mosadeghard, 2000). Obstinate, dissatisfied individuals leave the organization and inflate the motivation of those staying there (Feinstein, 2000) and as a result workers loose performance and efficiency and might sabotage the work and leave the job (Sonmezer & Eryaman, 2008).

Various researchers have contributed their research findings from organizational set ups, in order to increase employee performance and have given various suggestions to boost up the satisfaction. Feinstein (2000) says in order to increase individual's satisfaction level employees should be given advancement opportunities. Similarly changes in organizational variables, such as pay scales, employee input in policy development, and work environment could then be made in an effort to increase organizational commitment and overall outcome. Elton Mayo found that interaction within the group is the biggest satisfier. Safety, relation to work and success are followed by inter-group relations (Bektas, 2003).

An employee will be satisfied if he has reached the ideals in his profession; he will develop positive feelings towards his profession (Sirin, 2009). Absence of work life balance, lack of advancement opportunities, work environment, lack of encouragement, lack of recognition may lead to stress, which ultimately causes dissatisfaction, burnout and finally increased turnover rate within organization (Ahmadi & Alireza, 2007). Employee performance is inversely related to burnout, intentions to leave the organization (Penn *et al.*, 1988). Employee performance is increased when income is greater than predicted income in education sector (Bender & Heywood, 2006).

Hypothesis development

Autonomy and Employee Performance

Autonomy is the individual's control of their individual work where possible, employees should have input as to how their jobs are done, the order of tasks, the speed of work, etc. Where possible, employees should have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect them. Streit and Brannon (1994) support the observation that it is not the model of care (in particular, primary nursing) but the individual's commitment to and preparation for patient care that influences outcomes. Further to this, level of autonomy reflected in the model of care will influence outcomes. Autonomy is one of the most widely studied job characteristics. Research suggests that job redesign that provides for greater autonomy and decision-making authority is associated with increased job satisfaction (Lowe, 2003). Autonomy has been identified as a highly relevant characteristic of work for knowledge workers (Parker et al, 2001).

Hackman and Oldham (1980) define autonomy as having substantial control over aspects of one's work. The literature is replete with definitions of nursing autonomy (Stewart, Stansfield & Tapp, 2004) and suggests that autonomy is influenced by role expectations, organizational culture, opportunities for independent decision making and opportunities to influence work life factors such as scheduling. Current work by Stewart, Stansfield & Tapp (2004) suggests that autonomy as seen by nurses is not about independent practice and decision making but about providing a unique perspective and contribution to care that includes interdisciplinary co-ordination and collaboration.

Autonomy creates an opportunity for nurses to experience responsibility for patient outcomes and thus a feeling of significance and identity. It is important to note that some research indicates that not all nurses want autonomy present in their work. Nurses with relatively little preference for autonomy have been found to have higher absenteeism if autonomy is present in their work as compared to nurses who have a relatively high preference for autonomy (Landeweerd & Boumans, 1994).

HO₁: Autonomy has no significant effect on employee performances of nurses in a Hospital in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study emphasized positivism by providing a profile to explain relevant aspects of the phenomenon of interest from an individual, organization to industry to the researcher by using the explanatory analysis study to analyze the cause-effect relationship and describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in a case. The total population in this study was 2000 nurses (MTRH database, 2021). The study was carried out on a sample that acts as a complete representative of the target population. A sample of 330 nurses was selected because the population size was below 10,000. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) the formula for calculating the sample was applied. The table below shows the reliability analysis for the study variable.

Table 3.1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Alpha Value	Items
Autonomy	0.901	5

Source: Researcher, 2022

The reliability was tested using the Cronbach alpha in which an alpha value of more than 0.7 indicates sufficient reliability (Leedy, 2000).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Autonomy

Autonomy in any organization is a degree of freedom and discretion allowed to an employee over his or her job as a general rule, jobs with high degree of autonomy provides a sense of responsibility and greater job satisfaction in the employees. The study therefore sought to find out if efficiency of autonomy in promoting employee performance. The variables included having freedom in doing work, own decision making freedom over work, own decision making and having opportunity to develop work schedule for one's work. The table is shown below:

Table 4.1 Autonomy

	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Freedom in doing my job	6	29.9	17.9	41.8	4.5	2.89	0.911	0.278	-1.099
Exercising full control over my job	3	13.4	14.9	61.2	7.5	2.4	1.002	1.087	0.761
Making of decisions	6	6	17.9	61.2	9	2.34	0.701	1.322	1.889
Opportunity developing work schedule	59.7	35.8	35.8	1.5	3	4.51	0.833	-2.604	8.653
Autonomy Mean						2.67	0.666	0.412	1.001

Source (Survey Data, 2022)

From the results above it is seen that 46.3% of the nurses disagreed that they had freedom in doing their work, 35.9% agreed while 17.9 % were not sure if they had freedom or not, from these results it is revealed that in MTRH there is little freedom in nurses doing their work.

It is also seen that 68.7% of the nurses disagreed that they exercise full control over their jobs, 16.4 % disagreed while 14.9% were undecided exercising full control is important in an organization since it leads to greater job satisfaction in the employees and from these results it is revealed that nurses in MTRH do not exercise control over their jobs thus leading to poor performance. Decision making of nurses was also considered

Hypothesis testing (multiple regressions)

Table 4.2: Correlation Statistics

		Employee Performance	Autonom y
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.384**	1

** Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Source (Survey Data, 2022)

Results from table above shows that Correlation for autonomy and employee performance recorded a Pearson correlation of .384 significance at 0.01 (level of significance). Hence, autonomy had positive relationship with employee performance in the organization. This suggests that autonomy influence employee performance in an organization.

Table 4.3: Coefficient Of Estimates

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3.774	0.275		13.702	0.000	.497	2.012
Autonomy	0.526	0.061	0.443	8.574	0.000	.501	1.995

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance
Source (Survey Study, 2022)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Autonomy had the highest effect on employee performance (T ratio = 8.574). Public contribution had coefficient estimate (β_4) of 0.443 significant at 0.05 level of significance; consequently, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between autonomy on employee's performance and concluded that there is significant relationship between autonomy and employee's performance. This suggests that there is enough evidence that autonomy positively affect employee performance. Increase in autonomy with one unit increase employee's performance with 0.443.

Further research

In today's highly dynamic environments, in light of the increasingly involvement of organizations in medical operations and with rapid changes in information technology, a structure lay out can easily become out of date. Thus, structural redesign is an important among healthcare organization that can be used to help maintain the best fit between hospitals' lay out and situational demands.

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Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest

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