

EGULWA WAISWA HARRIET (2012-M191-10008)

Management of Job Related Stress among Health Workers in Selected General Hospitals in East-Central Uganda

Job stress is a problem that has been found affecting many employees and organisations. It is a fact that moderate to severe stress impacts on almost half of all the workers in different organisations as they do their work (WHO, 2013). The report revealed that 66% of employees find it difficult to even concentrate and focus on their tasks, because of stress. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports show that stress has been earmarked as the “*health Epidemic of the 21st century*”, estimated to cost American businesses up to 300 billion dollars a year. Management of this problem is still quite challenging and, therefore, requires an effort of the employees and the managers. The study was conducted in selected general hospitals in East – Central Uganda. The region comprises of nine districts, which include: Kamuli, Kaliro, Mayuge, Iganga, Namayingo, Namutumba, Buyende, Bugiri, and Luuka districts. It was conducted in four general hospitals, which included: Kamuli General Hospital, Kamuli Mission Hospital, Iganga Hospital, and Bugiri Hospital. The objectives of this study were: to identify the causes of job-stress among health workers in east –central Uganda, to examine the effects of job-stress on employees’ health and its impact on organisational performance, to assess the capacity of the managers in handling job stress, and to examine the challenges and limitations faced by managers in dealing with employee job-stress. This was a descriptive study, which adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods, and was conducted between May and September 2013. The data were collected using interview guides, and also generated from focus group discussions. The sample was calculated from the population under study, using a stratified random sampling method and it involved a total of 248 respondents, however, a total of 230 were achieved, giving a response rate of 93%. One hundred and eighty (185) of the respondents were health workers, and 45 were hospital managers who were all representative of the population. The sample size was determined using the hyper geometric model of sample size determination. The findings of the study were analysed in frequencies and percentages, following the research objectives, and presented in charts and tables.

The study revealed that stress among health workers was due to the job demands, lack of skills by the employees, workload, and low staff involvement in decision making. Other causes of stress as seen by this study were associated with age, gender, marital status, cadre, and department served by the employee. The study showed that stress was common in all age groups, however, it was more pronounced in the ages (49-60) at 59.50%, then 39-48 years at 50%, and then 18-28 years at 46.20%. It was seen from the study, that there was a progressive risk of developing job-stress, as one increased in age. The results of the study also showed that the married and those who had separated were more affected by stress than the unmarried. The study revealed that job stress levels were highest among the public health Nurses (75%), followed by Doctors (71.5%), and then the registered Nurses (60%). The least affected group of health workers from this study were the Dispensers, (0%), and the degree Nurses at (20%). Stress was also seen common in health workers working in inpatient departments, and maternity, both at (17%), then followed by outpatient and then children’s ward. However, the findings also revealed that males also occasionally suffer from some kind of stress, although results revealed that the majority of women are actually more affected by stress than their male counterparts. More findings of this study also further showed that the greatest indicator/effect of job stress was poor relationships among the employees, followed by employee absenteeism, and general ill health, late coming, poor attitude towards work,

and poor performance. Furthermore the findings of this study, indicated that managers faced a number of challenges in handling job stress, which included: inadequate funding, failure of managers to effectively diagnose job-stress, low motivation of the health workers, low staffing levels, compromising the stress management strategies, lack of stress management policies and guidelines and inadequate supply of logistics to which a manager may sometimes have little or no control at all. The study recommended that employers need to involve their employees in decision making, encourage and strengthen issues of autonomy, and advocate for the development of job stress management policies and guidelines. A further recommendation is that the public service commission should pay special attention to the public health Nurses, who appear to be more stressed among all the employees by stream lining their job descriptions, and also strengthening their performance capacity. It is also recommended that there should be an improvement in the staffing of all cadres, as a way of reducing workload. Furthermore, the quality of care at lower health facilities should be improved so that less numbers of patients are seen in general hospitals. Managers need to improve the work environments by strengthening effective communication and dialogue at all times. In conclusion, the findings of this study show that stress among employees is still a very big and challenging problem, affecting individual employees and organisational performance. The study will help to effectively and innovatively plan for improvement in the management of job related stress among health workers in east-central Uganda and in other regions of the country.

Key Words: Management, Job, Stress, Health Workers, General Hospitals, East-Central Uganda