INTRODUCTION

The health sector being responsible for providing one of the most crucial social services, retention of Human Resource for Health (HRH) is vital because they are the most central element of any health system [1]. Nonetheless, HRH are difficult to be retained in rural areas in almost all countries [2]. However, the supply of HRH in rural areas is determined by personal factors which influence individual choices among other factors [3, 1]. That is why; for instance, overproduction of health professionals in Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mali, monetary incentives in Niger, and regulated recruitment in Tanzania and Ecuador have not helped to supply and retain HRH in rural areas [4, 5]. That is the basis of the suggestion by World Health Organization (WHO) that government strategies towards retention of HRH in rural areas are to be based on the factors which affect their personal choices [6].

In trying to accommodate the question of personal choices among HRH with respect to their retention in rural areas, since 2006, Tanzania introduced partial centralization of recruitment of HRH in district hospitals and below. Under such arrangement, in-training HRH are allowed to choose regions where they wish to be posted after completing their studies. The arrangement is intended to enhance retention of HRH in rural areas as they are expected to choose regions for their allocation with reference to their personal preferences and interests as could be influenced by their rural experience and backgrounds [7, 8]. However, it is yet difficult to retain HRH in rural Tanzania, where, Kigoma is the most affected region [9]. Thus, that situation attracts further investigation on the personal factors which determine choices among HRH, hence, their retention in rural areas.

With respect to the personal factors which determine choices among HRH, attitudes towards job-related factors as well as contextual-factors in the rural job posts are found to determine retention of HRH in rural areas [10-13]. While, attitudes towards contextual-factors of rural job posts are influenced by rural experience and background among HRH [7, 8, 14]; little is known regarding the factors which underlie the attitudes of HRH rural areas towards job-related factors of rural job posts. Additionally, despite its role in determining retention of employees in organizations [15, 16]; the influence of length of service on attitudes towards job-related factors among HRH has received less attention.

Thus, this study attempted to answer the question of if length of service has influence on the attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts...
among HRH in who work in rural areas. Specifically, the study tried to:

- Determine if there is a difference in attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts among HRH of different length of service.
- Analyse the job-related factors of rural job posts for which the attitudes of HRH differ with respect to their length of service.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concepts

Length of service
Length of service refers to the number of years by which an employee has been in the current employment [16, 17]. Hence, it may also reflect the experience of an employee if it is viewed with respect to a particular job.

Attitudes
Robbins [16] views attitudes as relatively lasting clusters of feelings and thoughts and behavioural tendencies directed towards specific persons, ideas, objects or groups. Thus, attitudes are summaries of feelings, opinions and thoughts of an individual towards the environment.

Job-related factors
Job-related factors are features of a job which define not only the way the job is designed, but also the factors which surround it. Thus, such factors involve the design of the tasks and the relationships in a job [18]. There are five commonly referred job-related factors in rural job post among researchers in HRH, namely, opportunity to practice a variety of skills, opportunity of career advancement, support from other staff, autonomy at workplace and the extent to which the job is enjoyable [19, 20].

Table 1 below summarizes the commonly referred job-related factors of rural job posts in health sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Job-related factors of rural job posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to practice a variety of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity of career advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from other employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy at workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of enjoyment in the job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reviewed literature

Theoretical analysis-Psychological Choice theory
In investigating the differences in attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts among HRH of different lengths of service, the Psychological Choice theory was used because employee length of service entails job experience. Experience of individuals is responsible for the shaping of their attitudes (beliefs, feelings and thoughts) about a subject matter [21, 22]. On that basis the theory assumes that, persons interpret their surrounding environments through filters and simplifying mechanisms in the form of the varying sets of beliefs, feelings and thoughts [22]. Therefore, having positive or negative attitudes towards the job-related factors of rural job posts among HRH is potentially an outcome of their lengths of service in their job posts. However, the theory may be criticized for being entirely based on perception from the side of the perceivers, while ignoring the characteristics of the object (the factors of rural job posts in our study). Thus, it may result into attribution errors and unpredictable outcomes.

Employee length of service and attitudes towards rural job posts

The importance of retention of HRH in rural health facilities cannot be overemphasized. Failure to retain HRH in rural areas is generally associated with burnout among a few remaining HRH as well as poor quality of health services to rural communities [9, 23]. Fundamentally, the studies link retention of HRH in rural areas with choices among HRH. Hence, the focus among researchers is on the factors that influence personal interests and preferences among HRH in choosing places for their allocation [6]. With that respect, attitudes towards rural job posts are found out to be linked with retention of HRH in rural areas [10, 11, 12, 13].

Although most of studies could not separate the factors of rural job posts into those which are close to the job (job-related factors) and those which reflect more of the context of the job (contextual factors), a few studies which managed to separate such factors, found out that, attitudes towards job-related factors are better determinants of retention of HRH in rural areas [19, 20].

The factors of rural job posts which are often referred to as job-related are: opportunity to practice a

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variety of skills, opportunity of career advancement, support from other employees, autonomy at workplace and the degree of challenge in the job [11, 12, 19, 20]. On the other hand, the contextual-factors of rural job posts have frequently been represented by inter-personal relationship with superiors, inter-personal relationship with peers, friendliness of the community, sense of community, communication services and places for socialization [10, 13, 19, 20].

In connection to such factors, studies which involved final year students and graduates of medical related courses suggested that HRH who have rural experience and background hold positive attitudes towards rural job posts [7, 8, 14]. Since the respondents in those studies have never practically been in rural job posts, their attitudes towards rural job posts represent more of the contextual factors and less of the job-related factors in rural job posts. Thus, there is a gap yet to be filled regarding the factors which underlie the attitudes of HRH towards job-related factors in rural job posts.

On top of that, length of service of an employee reflects his/her experience on the job. On that, [15] suggests a link between job experiences among professional employees and productivity due to being knowledgeable on the methods of work. On the same line, [24] and [25] associate job experience with not only competence and task related stress, but also performance rates among employees.

Being linked to knowledge, competence, level of stress and performance rates, length of service among employees has a potential to influence attitudes of employees towards the job-related factors. Despite the potential ties of length of service among HRH with attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts, less attention among researchers is paid to substantiate such connections. Thus, this study was guided by the assumption of having differences in attitudes towards job-related factors in rural job posts among HRH of different lengths of service as summarized in the conceptual framework presented by Figure 1 below.

![Conceptual Framework](Image)

**Fig-1: Conceptual Framework**

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Study area**

The study applied data which were collected from April, 2017 to June, 2017 in Kasulu and Uvinza districts of Kigoma region. While the region was picked as it has the most acute shortages of HRH in the country due to failure of not only attracting, but also retaining HRH, the districts were chosen as they have rural characteristics [9].

**Participants**

The data were collected from 121 HRH in Kasulu and Uvinza districts in Kigoma region who were among 230 participants of another study (on attitudes and personal vales which determine retention of HRH in rural areas of Tanzania) which covered other two districts from another region. As reflected in this study, the original study involved 78 participants from Kasulu district and 43 participants from Uvinza district to make a total of 121 participants from the two districts. While sample of the original study was estimated using Yamane’s formula [26]; the participants were obtained through stratified systematic sampling proportionate to staffing levels of HRH from a population of 183 HRH (Kasulu district) and 101 HRH (Uvinza district). Basing on length of service in their current employment, the participants were of two groups. The first group consisted of the participants who have short period of service who were 60, while the second group contained those who have long period of service who were 61.

**Measurement**

The instrument which was used for the study had two parts. The first part captured data on length of service. Length of service was divided into short (0-5 years) and long periods (above 5 years) as it was applied by [17]. The second part of the instrument collected data on attitudes of HRH towards job-related
factors of rural job posts. Attitudes were captured in a 5 dimensions Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to gauge the feelings/thoughts. To obtain data on attitudes with interval-like properties, the rank-based scores which were assigned by the respondents for each job-related factor were picked. Such scores are considered appropriate in healthy tests for differences [27].

Table 2 below presents the statements and scale of measurement as appeared in the questionnaire for capturing the attitudes of the respondents.

### Table 2: Questionnaire and its scale of measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are opportunities to practice a variety of skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are opportunities to advance in your career</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are supportive staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is autonomy in workplace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is enough challenge on the job</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tool of analysis**

This study used Mann Whitney U test in assessing the difference between independent samples. Mann Whitney U test is employed to uncover not only the group with higher mean rank against the one with the lower mean rank, but also the statistical significance of the differences among the samples. In Mann Whitney U test, the group with higher mean rank is the one which has the greatest number of higher scores, while that with lower mean rank is the one with the greatest number of lower scores [28]. The Mann Whitney U test is given by the following formulae;

\[
U_1 = n_1n_2 + \frac{n_1(n_1+1)}{2} - R_1 \quad \text{and} \quad U_2 = n_2n_2 + \frac{n_2(n_2+1)}{2} - R_2
\]

The test was applied as it is the appropriate test for assessing whether two independent samples have the same characteristics as applied by [29]. Despite having large samples >30 for both groups, Mann Whitney U test was found suitable as the study applied Likert scaled data (which are of ordinal type), thus, they can be lacking precision [30]. That is why this test is the most commonly used in behavioral studies [31, 32].

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 3 below summarizes the profile of the respondents on the basis of sex, current district, cadre/position, number of years they have been working in the respective districts and number of years in the current employment (length of service).
Applying Mann Whitney U test and SPSS (version 20) for independent samples, we assessed the differences in attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts between the two independent groups of HRH i.e. those who have short period of service (0-5 years) and those who have long period of service (Above 5 years) as showed in Table 3 above. The group with higher mean rank is considered to have more favourable attitudes towards job-related factors of rural job posts than the group with lower mean rank in the same pair of results. Nevertheless, the difference is only viewed as statistically significant if probability (p) < 0.05.

Tables 4 and 5 below present the results of the test when the attitudes of the respondent towards each job-related factor of rural job posts were treated separately. When an assessment of attitudes of the respondent towards each job-related factor of rural job posts (single factor-based analysis) was made, the results of Mann Whitney U test show that there is a statistically significant difference in attitudes between the two groups of HRH with respect to:

- The opportunity to practice a variety of skills ($Z=-2.796; p=0.005$); attitudes mean rank of 69.02 for HRH who have short period of service and 53.11 for HRH who have long period of service;
- The degree of enjoyment due to relative challenge on the job ($Z=-2.106; p=0.035$); attitudes mean rank of 67.16 for HRH who have short period of service and 54.95 for HRH who have long period of service.

However, in single factor-based analysis, the results of Mann Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of HRH who have short period of service and those who have long period of service with reference to:

- The opportunity of career advancement ($Z=-1.074; p=0.283$);
- The extent of support from other staff ($Z=-1.266; p=0.205$) and
- The amount of autonomy at workplace ($Z=-1.026; p=0.305$).
Table-4: Results of Mann Whitney U test on mean ranks of attitudes of HRH of the two groups towards job-related factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job-related factors</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to practice a variety of skills</td>
<td>HRH with short period of service 69.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRH with long period of service 53.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 57.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to advance in your career</td>
<td>HRH with short period of service 64.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRH with long period of service 57.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 54.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive staff</td>
<td>HRH with short period of service 64.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRH with long period of service 58.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 57.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy in workplace</td>
<td>HRH with short period of service 63.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRH with long period of service 58.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 57.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable job</td>
<td>HRH with short period of service 67.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRH with long period of service 54.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 54.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-5: Results of Mann Whitney U test on the significance of the difference between attitudes of HRH of the two groups towards job-related factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Opportunity to practice a variety of skills</th>
<th>Opportunity of career advancement</th>
<th>Support from other staff</th>
<th>Autonomy at workplace</th>
<th>Enjoyable job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>1349.000</td>
<td>1634.000</td>
<td>1611.500</td>
<td>1652.000</td>
<td>1460.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>3240.000</td>
<td>3525.000</td>
<td>3502.500</td>
<td>3543.000</td>
<td>3351.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-2.796</td>
<td>-1.074</td>
<td>-1.266</td>
<td>-1.026</td>
<td>-2.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the study show statistically significant differences between HRH who have short period of service and those who have long period of service with respect to their attitudes towards the availability of opportunities to practice a variety of skills and the extent to which the job is enjoyable due to being reasonably challenging. Specifically, the results indicate that HRH who have short period of service have more favourable attitudes towards those job-related factors of rural job posts than do the HRH who have long period of service.

The influence of length of service on attitudes of HRH towards availability of opportunities to practice a variety of skills has two explanations. Firstly, due to the acute shortage of HRH in rural areas, contrary to inexperienced HRH, most of experienced HRH spend less of their time on professional tasks due to having administrative roles [23]. Professional inactiveness among HRH who have long period of service potentially inhibits their involvement in a wider range of professional tasks. That potentially gives them a view of having less chance to apply a wide range of their skills in their jobs compared to their counterparts.

Secondly, application of a variety of skills involves aspects of learning on the job which is a source of positive feelings about the job itself [33]. Thus, application of a variety of skills is potentially more meaningful to inexperienced HRH than to their counterparts as it involves more learning to inexperienced HRH than it does to the experienced ones. Inexperienced HRH have a chance to learn more on their jobs as they are not fully used to their job tasks in such a way that they may need to make references for professional support on some regulations and procedures from either written sources or their superiors [15].

Again, length of service potentially influences the attitudes of HRH on the extent to which their jobs are enjoyable in two ways. Initially, a job is said to be enjoyable when it presents a relative difficulty [34, 35]. Thus, HRH with little experience are likely to view their jobs as more interesting due to the relative difficulties which they may be facing on their jobs compared to the experienced HRH. Again that is potentially true as the inexperienced HRH are likely to be not as used to their jobs as the experienced ones. Additionally, being professional workers, HRH tend to view their jobs as more enjoyable when they are actively involved in the technical aspects of the job [36]. In that respect, as most experienced HRH, especially in rural health facilities are less involved in the technical parts of their jobs due to having administrative roles, they potentially perceive their jobs as less enjoyable than do their equals.
Nonetheless, the study was limited to two districts in one region; thus a wider ranged research would present a more complete picture of phenomenon so as to allow for more informed conclusions. Additionally, failure to retain of HRH in rural areas being an alarming concern, there is a need of further researches on the influence of such stable personal and psychological factors like personal values on the attitudes of HRH in both rural and urban areas towards job-related factors of rural job posts.

CONCLUSION
Central to retention of HRH in rural areas is the attitudes of HRH towards job-related factors of rural job posts [7, 8]. From this study, HRH with short period of service are found out to have more favourable attitudes towards their jobs with respect opportunity to practice a variety of skills and degree of enjoyment in their jobs than those who have long period of service. HRH with short period of service being the most likely to quit rural service [36]; there is a need to foster favourable attitudes towards rural jobs posts among them by focusing on the job-related factors of rural job posts to which they have more positive attitudes.

In enhancing the attitudes of HRH who have short period of service towards rural job posts, based on the study findings, we recommend the following:

- Broadening, developing and keeping up to date the technical skills of HRH who have short period of service. That will improve their ability to apply a wider variety of skills in carrying out a broader array of tasks from which they derive a positive view towards their jobs.

- To the possible extent, HRH who have short period of service are to be allowed to undertake challenging task. That may require minimal supervision and close professional support from the experienced HRH due to the sensitive nature of medical related tasks.

REFERENCES

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