

Associations of part-time work with sickness absence and turnover in public social and healthcare in Finland – a longitudinal work-unit level study

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Abstract

Background: The heavy burden in the 24/7 healthcare sector needs solutions to ensure work participation in terms of reducing sickness absence (SA) or turnover. The aim was to investigate the associations of part-time work, SA, and turnover at the work-unit level among a large cohort of Finnish healthcare sector employees.

Methods: Employer-owned register data on working hours, SA, and turnover from 2008 to 2020 for 5933 work units (with ≥ 10 employees) in the Finnish healthcare sector were used. At the work-unit level, the part-time % $\leq$ or $>$ the annual median of the hospital districts was assessed to estimate associations with the mean annual SA days in a work unit, and with internal and external turnover rates, split by the median as above. Longitudinal fixed effects (FE) time-dependent logistic regression modeling was used to obtain odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI).

Results: The prevalence of part-time work increased from 9% in 2008 to 14% in 2020. The higher-than-median part-time work % in a work unit was associated with a higher likelihood of a high number of SA days among shift working employees (OR 1.13, 95%CI 1.01, 1.27). In contrast, the association was opposite, towards a lower likelihood for high internal and external turnover.

Conclusions: At the work unit level, part-time work was associated with a lower likelihood of turnover but with a higher likelihood of SA. Overall, in the healthcare sector, part-time work may help adapt jobs to employees' health needs and support staff retention.