

Shift has a high
likelihood of
negatively affecting



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Shift work is a practice involving various individuals working at designated hours outside of established circadian rhythms (Golubic, 2009). In essence, it is a work practice that involves unconventional hours for workers for the benefit of the general public (Winston, 2007). This benefit takes the form of 24 hour services or longer working hours for businesses enabling the public to utilize services at longer periods during the day or night. These particular types of services are often seen in utility companies such as electric, gas and water companies where ensuring services continue to run at each 24 hour cycle is an integral part of their operational structure.

Other examples take the form of longer operational hours at malls, 24 hour convenience stores, hospitals and various call centers and back office departments which need to employ certain types of shift work in order to meet deadlines and service requests (Winston, 2007). While such an employment practice is inherently beneficial to the community the fact remains that its utilization does pose certain physical, mental and social problems for workers due to the “unnatural” hours that are utilized (Twarog, 2005). What must be understood is that by nature humans are day oriented creatures; this means that our internal clock (circadian rhythm) is oriented towards daytime activities with a period of rest at night. This regular variation in the 24 hour cycle of human activity actually affects factors such as blood pressure, body temperature, heart rate and even the respiration rate of a particular individual (Szosland, 2010).

This is due to the fact that the body is so used to the variation of the 24 hour cycle that increases or decreases in body functions are already predisposed towards a particular cycle. By changing the cycle that the body is normally

used to this in effect causes a destabilization in alertness, health, reaction time and even a person's mental capacity as the body forces itself to adapt to a new rhythm (Twarog, 2005). As it can be seen from the enumerated effects of changes to the body's circadian rhythm, shift work has a high likelihood of negatively affecting a person's physical and mental capacity. It must also be noted that not all individuals can successfully adapt to shift work, studies show that a large percentage of individuals show a distinctive clinical intolerance to shift work as showed by symptoms ranging from persistent fatigue and digestive problems to progressive negative changes in behavior and poor sleeping habits (Cotter, 2011). This particular form of intolerance, labeled as SMS or Shift work Mal-adaption Syndrome, is progressive and actually gets more pronounced and worse the longer a person is exposed to a particular shift work schedule.

The resulting negative manifestations of SMS usually take the form of negative work behaviors such as increased absenteeism, the propensity to be careless in doing their job and various other negative work related behaviors that can actually result in a person getting fired or dismissed from their position. Another factor to take note of when examining the effect of shift work in various individuals is the fact that the unusual hours required in these particular work schedules in effect isolates a person from normal social interaction. This is due to the fact that when a person with a shift work schedule is working others are asleep and vice versa.

The problem with this situation is the fact that humans are inherently social creatures with the need to interact socially on a regular level. Increased social isolation through shift work has been shown to increase the propensity

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for depression and other forms of psychiatric disturbances which are definitely detrimental to an employee's mental well being. It is based on the data presented that this paper will attempt to determine if shift work contributes to high absenteeism, physical, mental and social degradation of employees at the immigration department in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the belief of this study that by examining the contributing factors of Shift work Mal-adaption Syndrome and comparing them to the case of the immigration department at Trinidad and Tobago this study will be able to see to whether the type of shift work adapted in their case creates negative effects for both the department and it's employees and if so will recommend possible factors that can be changed in order to improve it.

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