

Job Satisfaction among Brigadista in Nicaragua: A Lesson to Be Considered for Task-Shifting

Authors : Rashed Shah, Jeanne Koepsell, Dixmer Rivera, Eric Swedberg, David Marsh

Abstract : Success of primary health care goals of health promotion and disease prevention may well be determined by community based health workers' overall job satisfaction. It is also important to understand the ways community health workers perceive their jobs and the importance they give to the various factors influencing their job satisfaction, which is critical before making a decision for task-shifting and for expanding their scope of work. Although brigadistas are unpaid volunteers, they are formally recognized and receive support and supervision from the Ministry of Health in Nicaragua. Brigadistas are responsible for classifying and diagnosing illnesses, administering treatment, counseling mothers and care givers within the community, encouraging referral in case of serious illness and making follow-up visits at home. Some brigadistas provide more technically advanced services, including treatment for pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and tuberculosis and/or distribution of contraceptives. Expanding brigadistas' duties could threaten their heretofore 'job satisfaction'. This study primarily aims to report on job satisfaction of brigadistas in Nicaragua before expanding the scope of their work by adding more responsibilities. The study was guided by the following research questions: 1) What aspects of their job made the brigadistas satisfied or dissatisfied? 2) What is the job satisfaction level of brigadistas in Nicaragua? This cross-sectional study was conducted during March - July 2014, to assess brigadistas' job satisfaction, prior to deciding on inclusion of care for sick newborns and young infants (<2 months of age) to brigadistas' existing service package of community case management for children of 2-59 months of age. Following stratified random sampling strategy, 15 brigadistas were randomly selected from each of the following four strata: [(1) females under 25 years of age, (2) females over 30 years of age, (3) males under 25 years of age, and (4) males over 30 years of age. Out of 45 completed in-person interview with eligible and available brigadistas, 20 (44.4%) were with female and 25 (55.6%) were with male respondents; the mean age (\pm sd) was found as 32.0 (\pm 3.2) years. About 53% (24/45) brigadista mentioned "Training" as the most helpful for performing their job. Another 31% (14/45) mentioned that "feeling of doing good, supporting community, women and children" was helpful to perform their job well. When asked about difficulty, about 35.5% (16/45) brigadistas mentioned about "Lack of time" due to their responsibilities in family, farm, other work places, study and such time constraint made their job performance difficult. Measured on a 0-5 scale, estimated average job satisfaction was 4.2. Current trends in task-shifting and integrated program delivery require community health workers (like the brigadistas) to deliver several essential services, including maternal, newborn and child health, and family planning, and thereby increasing their responsibilities. Given the reported level of job satisfaction among brigadistas (4.2 out of 5), and the mentioned difficulty in performing their current job (as 'Lack of Time') in this study results, the policy makers and program managers in MOH should be cautious enough before making a decision to expand current scope of work for brigadistas in Nicaragua.

Keywords : Brigadista, job satisfaction, Nicaragua, task-shifting

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