Health manpower development and utilization: Perspectives and experience of Primary HealthCare workers in the North-Central State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Manpower otherwise referred to as human resources is cardinal to effective health service delivery. In rendering services of health care to the people, human resource is required to operate the equipment and utilize fund in rendering the services to the people. The quality of manpower is determined by the level of training and motivation of the workers. World-wide, the public health sector has been facing the problems of human resources, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria with high turnover rate of staff, brain-drain to greener pastures, frequent occurrences of strike actions among other challenges. This study assessed the manpower development and utilization in Ilorin West Local Government Area health facilities.

The study was descriptive cross sectional by design involving all consenting, consecutive the primary health care workers in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, North-central, Nigeria. Ninety-four percent of the workers were working within their trained specialty. Many (43%), of the respondents have attended a form of training in the last three years. The majority (86%) of the health workers surveyed reported that the courses attended were relevant to their practice while 83% reported that they benefited from the courses they attended. A quarter of the health workers felt that the courses' content did not justify the cost of organizing the training. There is need to conduct regular training need assessment to identify learning gaps among the primary health care workers in the public sector.

Key words: Manpower, human resources, Training, development, health worker, PHC, local government

Introduction

Public health sector is the employer of larger number of the health workers in Nigeria. The public health sector workers render both preventive and curative health services to a large proportion of the population, particularly the poor citizens and the rural dwellers where the majority of Nigeria population resides. The public health sector render these services in the form of public utility and their clients pay little or no amount of money for the services rendered. The poor citizens and rural dwellers take advantage of this opportunity to promote their health, prevent disease and treat their ailments.

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In rendering these services of health care to the people, the human resources is required to operate the equipment and utilize the fund in rendering the services to the people.[1] Therefore, manpower otherwise referred to as human resources is cardinal to effective health service delivery. The quality of manpower is determined by the level of training and motivation of the workers. This study assessed perspectives and experience of Primary HealthCare (PHC) workers on manpower development and utilization the North-central Nigeria.

World-wide, the public health sector has been facing the problems of human resources, particularly in developing country like Nigeria with high turnover rate of staff, Brain-drain to greener pastures, frequent occurrences of strike actions among other challenges.

Some of the causes of the human resources problems are; poor remuneration of professionals; lack of motivation of staff; non-challant attitude of staff to work, and corruption.[2] All these problems lead to poor performance of the public health sector in rendering service to the people.

However, there are other factors apart from staff development that can enhance staff performance. Furthermore, it is not all areas of a human resources problem that will yield to a training solution. The main goal of any organization is the performance of job in line with the organization objectives and standards. Job performance can be seen as a function of capacity to perform, opportunity to perform and willingness to perform. The capacity to perform relates to the extent to which individual worker possess task relevant skills, abilities, knowledge and experience.[3]The capacity to perform is enhanced through manpower training and development activities. This underscores the importance of the training, retraining, and capacity development of workers in order to ensure satisfactory job performance. Unless the workers know what is supposed to be done, and how the worker is supposed to do it, high level of job performance may not be possible. Manpower utilization involves appropriate placement of staff, provision of appropriate tools and materials to the workers. A well trained worker who is appropriately placed and equipped needs to be motivated to perform as expected (Figure 1).

Manpower development and utilization are two important determinant of job performance. Therefore, it is will be useful for the health managers to understand how manpower training, development and utilization affect job performance.

Training is an attempt by the organization to change the behaviour of its members through the learning process in order to increase effectiveness.[4] In similar way, Stone defined training as any organizationally planned effort to change the behaviour or attitudes of workers so that they can perform to acceptable standards on the job.[5] Therefore, manpower training involves conscious efforts to plan to teach, inform or educate personnel for the purpose of changing their learned behaviour and perception for the overall goal of job enhancement. Furthermore, training can be viewed as organizational effort at helping worker to acquire basic skills required for the efficient execution of the functions for which he was hired.[6]

Training is management's reaction to change such as modifications in equipment, design, new tools and machines. Also, training induces changes such as procurement of new equipment, transfer and placement of staff. Hence, training is both a cause and effect of change.

Consequently, development can be defined as the activities undertaken to expose worker to perform additional duties and assume positions of importance in the organizations hierarchy.[6] Also, development is form of training that serves to prepare workers for future positions in the organization. Furthermore, development activity prepares people to do better in existing jobs and prepares them for greater responsibility in the future.[7]

Development usually suggests a broad view of knowledge and skills acquisition than training; it is therefore less job oriented than career oriented; concerned more with worker potential than with immediate skill and sees workers as adaptable resources.[8]This study assessed the perception of the health workers toward manpower development and utilization.

Materials and Methods

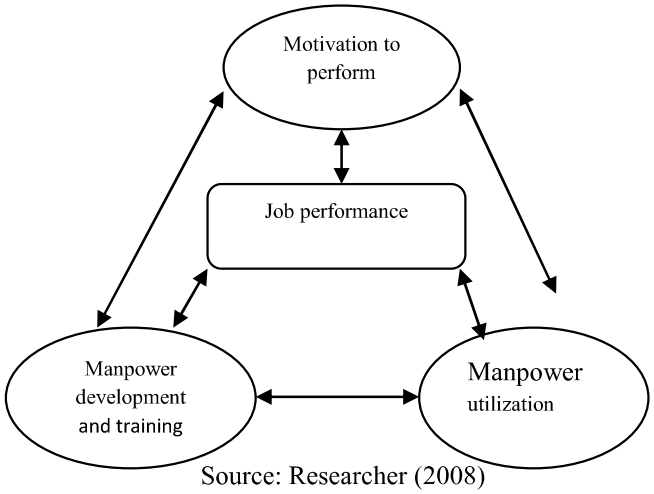
The study was descriptive cross sectional by design involving the primary health care workers. The study was carried out in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, North-central, Nigeria. There were 37 Health facilities in the local Government; 20 private; 17 public out of which 14 are local government owned primary health care (PHC) facilities distributed across all the political wards, two state government owned health facilities and a federal government owned university teaching hospital. The study was carried out among the health workers in the local government owned PHC facilities. The local government area is divided into 11 political wards. Only Warrah/Osin/Egbejila ward was classified as rural area.[9]

All consenting consecutive health worker present at the time of the study were interviewed using pretested questionnaire. A total of 148 participants were

recruited into the study. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 16.

Results

The majority of the respondents, 77 (52.00%) belong to nursing profession followed by community health officers which accounted for 57 (38.5%) of the respondents. Laboratory technicians were eight (5.40%), pharmacy technicians accounted for four (2.7%), while others were two (1.4%). (Figure 2).



Source: Researcher (2008)

Figure 1: Determinants of job performance

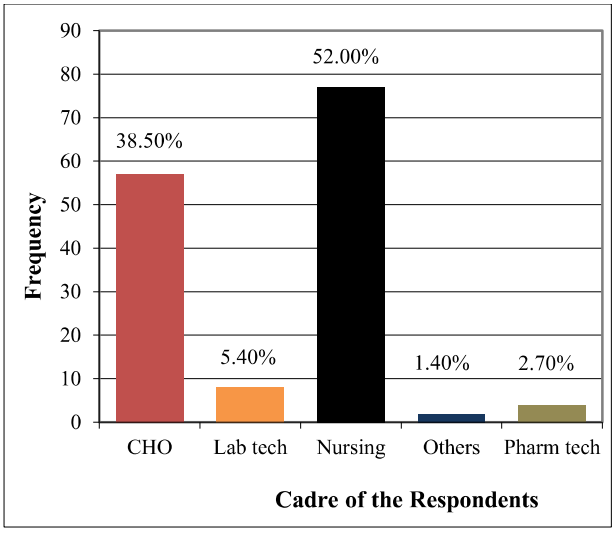


Figure 2: Cadre of the Respondents

The majority of the respondents, 136 (92.0%) were senior staff grade levels 8 to 15. (Figure 3).The majority of the health workers studied accepted that their job is related to their trained specialty accounting for 94 percent of the respondents while 6 percent of the respondents are not working in their specialty.(Figure 4).

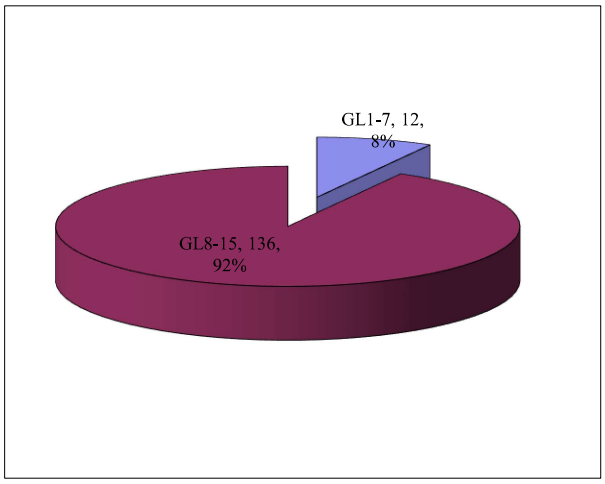


Figure 3: Distribution of the Respondents by the Grade level

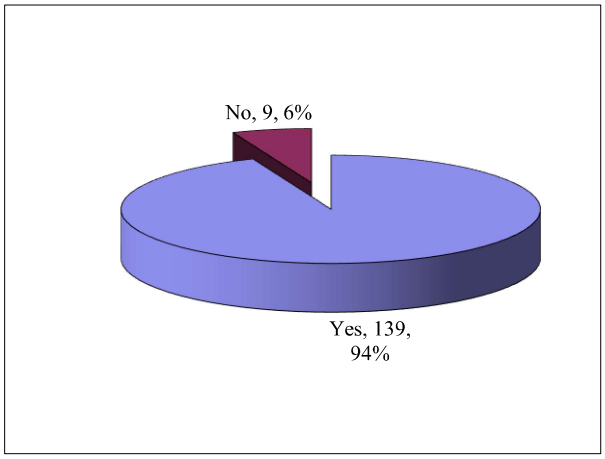


Figure 4: Health workers' Job related to the Specialty N=148

About 2 out of 5 health workers, 43%, have attended a form of training in the past three years. Less than half of the health workers surveyed have had the benefit of training and development in the past there years. Highest proportion of the worker, 43% attended a short course while long course, in-house workshop/seminar, out-door workshop/seminar and on the job training accounted for 41%, 40%, 39% and 37% respectively. Table1.

The majority (86%) of the health workers surveyed reported that the courses attended were relevant to their practice while 83% reported that they benefited

from the courses they attended. About 85% workers were able to apply the content of the course at work. Three quarters (76%) of the workers, reported that the application of the course has enhanced their job performance. However, the courses attended necessitated changing job schedule in nearly a third, 32% of the health workers surveyed. A quarter of the health workers felt that the courses' content did not justify the cost of organizing the training. Table 2

Table1: Health worker capacity development in the last 3 years

Course	Frequency	(%)
Short Course (≥ 2weeks)	**63**	**(43)**
Long Course (≥ 3Months)	**61**	**(41)**
In house Workshop/ Seminar	**59**	**(40)**
Outdoor Workshop/ Seminar	**57**	**(39)**
On the job Training	**55**	**(37)**

Table 2: Health workers' perception toward manpower development.

Perception	Frequency (%)
Course Relevant to Job	**127 (86)**
Benefited from Course	**123 (83)**
Able to apply the Course to Job	**126 (85)**
Course Enhanced the job	**113 (76)**
Necessitated Changing Job	**48 (32)**
Feel benefit of the Course justifies the cost	**92 (62)**

Discussion

Manpower otherwise referred to as human resources is cardinal to effective health service delivery. The quality of manpower is determined by the level of training and motivation of the workers. The majority of the workers are appropriately placed in their trained specialty. More than half of the workers have not been trained in the past three years. This is in conformity with a reported non-adherence of government authorities to the recommendations of the 1988 and 1998 civil service reform which stipulate that ten percent (10%) of the total annual personnel emolument be set aside for staff training and development.[10]However, the majority of workers trained accepted that the trainings were relevant to their job and they were able to apply the lessons learnt. The training necessitated changing job schedule in only about a third of the workers. The implication of this results in poor utilization of the trained employees due to bureaucratic rigidity of the system or unwillingness to change on the parts of both the employees and the employers as reported in a study.[11] Despite the relevance and the appropriateness of the trainings received by the workers, a quarter of the health workers felt that the courses' content did not justify the cost of organizing the training. This affirms that some level of corruption exist in organizing training for workers, as similar factor was reported elsewhere in Lagos.[10]

There is need to conduct regular training need assessment to identify learning gaps. There should be increase the proportion of the workers trained in the Public Health Sector so as to improve the capacity of the workers to perform their jobs as required of them. Also, there is need to evaluate the cost analysis of the training programmes so as to adopt more cost effective training methods and strategies.

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