

A Critical Analysis the Impact of Midwifery and Nursing Assistants on Reducing Maternal Mortality Rates Hospitals

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Abstract

According to the data analyzed, healthcare has recently recorded increased improvement concerning using health assistants to supplement the nursing workers and aid the patients. Qualified or employed to undertake various clerical, technical, and patient care roles, health assistants are steadily incorporated into the nursing team to enhance productivity and effectiveness in presenting quality services to patients. The purpose of this study is to critique the existing literature regarding the effects of health assistants on the productivity of nurses and the quality of patient care. Conducting a literature review, observational study, and analysis of data from health facilities, the study offers a new understanding of how health assistants may contribute to minimizing nurse workload, enhancing patient care status, and supporting the functioning of health systems. The outcomes indicate that health assistants positively impact the efficiency of the nurses they support; however, practical issues should be resolved to enhance the effect: role definition and standardized training.

Keywords: Health Assistants, Nursing Efficiency, Patient Care Quality, Healthcare Systems, Nursing Staff, Workload Reduction, Healthcare Workforce.

Introduction

Nurses in healthcare facilities play a big role in offering quality services to patients. But paradoxically, this, with rising numbers of patients, managerial and technical responsibilities, often associated with increasingly complex medical processes, have created considerable pressure on the nurses. In response to these challenges, many healthcare centers have recruited health assistants. These are/trainees who are expected to reduce nurses' workload by performing non-medical-related duties and some clinical responsibilities. The job of health assistants is especially important, so places like hospitals and clinics are ideal where the time factor is of great importance to receive the best result.

Health assistants help the nurse with documentation of the patient and patient care clinical tasks such as feeding, transferring, and even monitoring the patient's progress, among others. Although those contributions are worthy of appreciation, assessing their influence on increasing the rate of nursing performance and the general outcome of patients' treatment is meaningful. This research aims to examine

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the above dimensions to establish the gains and concerns associated with the shift in the introduction of health assistants in healthcare teams.

Literature Review

Role of Health Assistants in Healthcare

The responsibilities of health assistants vary depending on their setting in the healthcare sector. From the different studies, we find that health assistants enhance the productivity of nurses since they relieve the nurses from performing tasks that may be effectively and efficiently done by other individuals (such as health assistants) (Buchan & Aiken, 2022; Al-Husban et al., 2023). Some tested skills included washing patient rooms, washing and assisting with other routines, and administering, recording, and monitoring vital signs under supervision. These responsibilities ease the nurses' workload and enable them to spend most of their time with the patient, enhancing the health system's productivity.

Health assistants assist in reducing the working burden put on the nurses and support the general functioning of healthcare teams. Depending on the employer, the environment these nurses work in, and the population base they serve, their responsibilities are disparate. For instance, health assistants in a given hospital may be charged with tasks like moving patients from one department to another, and others in a health facility that offers extended care might involve tasks like feeding or bathing the patients. Such abilities help health assistants fit many healthcare settings.

Impact on Nursing Efficiency

Empirical evidence also supports the adoption of health assistants by enhancing the efficiency of the nursing job through the availability of time to work on nursing-sensitive tasks. O'Brien-Pallas et al. (2020) identify that health assistants helped nurses perform 30% of non-clinical tasks, implying that more time would be efficient and less stressed. Consequentially, nurses could save more time to meet their high priorities, which include assessment of patients as well as planning the patient care services, which is directly related to quality patient care. Moreover, organized interviews suggested that nurses indicated better coordination and communication within the team since health assistants perform routine tasks that would overload nurses.

It has also been effective where health assistants have integrated; the physical and emotional burden on the nursing staff has drastically reduced. This, in turn, minimized nurses' workloads, enabled them to handle tasks that necessitate professional nursing skills, and enhanced excellent job satisfaction and the morale of the team. Health assistants meet this gap by shouldering non-clinical responsibilities and thus enhancing patient care delivery and the savings that nurses accrue from time freed from less important tasks.

On the other hand, some scholars still post some problems that health assistants might bring, including a lack of consistency in their training and unclear roles, and their impacts may put pressure on the nurse-patient relationship (Kim et al., 2021; Alsaraireh et al., 2022; Azzam et al., 2023). These concerns can only be eradicated if there is improvement of health assistants in delivering intended results.

Quality of Patient Care

The main use of implementing health assistants into nursing teams is to improve the quality of patient care. When health assistants do these tasks well, patients benefit from efficient care from the significant amount of time spent attending to their patients compared to the nurses (Griffiths et al., 2019; Rahamneh et al., 2023). For instance, in cases where health assistants assist patients with movement and personal care, the level of comfort in patients improves, resulting in faster recovery and high patient satisfaction.

Another emergent advantage of health assistants is that they can deliver personalized attentiveness. Since nurses can delegate some of their tasks to health assistants, they can spend an adequate amount of time

listening to patient's concerns and attending to them. This, in turn, increases patient satisfaction since patients are more empowered to get better through their general healthcare journey.

Instead, there is information that problems may arise from a lack of proper training or ambiguous administrative roles of health assistants, including mistakes, such as wrong documentation or failure to notice the patient's status changes—all of which are damaging to patient safety and the quality of care (Van den Broek et al., 2020). Such mistakes have emerged due to variability in the training of health assistants and ambiguity of the roles and responsibilities of the health assistant. Hence, there is a call for a standardized protocol and continued professional development for the health assistant.

Methods

Study Design

To evaluate the effects of health assistants on productivity and the quality of patient care, this research employs both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The quantitative part will provide an assessment of time sheets and performance data before and after implementing health assistants. The quantitative analysis comprises questionnaires administered to nurses, health assistants, and patients to determine their knowledge and perception of the health assistants' roles.

Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected in parallel, so the study will aim to reveal the quantitative possibilities and value of health assistants for defined nursing teams, the quality of patient care, and the qualitative peculiarities of this process. Quantitative data gives results that are structured efficiently, while qualitative data gives perceptions of different people who deliver health care services.

Data Collection

This was done in three different regions where health assistants work within nursing stations. Measures were applied, including the nurse's workload, patient access time, patients' satisfaction rating, and error frequency. A total of 50 quantitative self-administered questionnaires among the sampled 50 nurses, 30 quantitative structured questionnaires among the 30 health assistants, and 100 questionnaires among the patients were completed by the patients. The purpose was to obtain information on GA's impact on workload, nursing tasks, and the quality of care.

Just like in the raw data collection process, the data collection involved observing nurses and health assistants in patient care settings and analyzing performance data of nurses and health assistants for six months. HSAs and nurses were administered questionnaires about the role and the effects of health assistants on their practices, and patients were also made to fill out satisfaction surveys about their healthcare encounters.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing was used to compare the workload, time management, efficiency, and percentage of time spent on patient care between the groups of interest before and after the implementation of health assistants. Such metrics were the time nurses spend on activities other than direct clinical care, the time patients take to react, and the satisfaction scores. To this end, descriptive epidemiological tests were performed on these measures before and after the introduction of health assistants to discover changes that could be deemed significant.

Identified themes of interviews involve role satisfaction, efficiency, and changes for the better in providing patient care in the orthopedic wards. The analysis was to try and look for similarities between nurses, health assistants, and patients that enable one to understand the role of health assistants in health facilities.

Results and Findings

Impact on Nursing Efficiency

According to the data, the nursing workload has decreased by 35% of nurses who stated that the amount of time they spent on non-clinical tasks was decreased due to integrating a health assistant into the team. This assertion was notable in hospitals, especially where health assistants undertook fractional administrative and routine healthcare roles. Also, the study revealed that nurses properly managed more time; thus, they responded more promptly to patients' needs and enhanced coordination in the health facility.



For instance, health assistants were not present previously. Before implementing them, nurses spent approximately 15 hours a week on some non-patient-related duties, including doing charts and preparing the room, among others. Following the widespread adoption of health assistants, this period was reduced to 10 hours per week due to efficient time spent on direct patient contact. This time saving was felt most especially in the emergency departments and the ICUs since these areas have a high turnover and, therefore, need to be very efficient in the time they spend on providing care.

Impact on Patient Care Quality

Another area that received positive change from using health assistants was the quality of patient care. Hospitals with health assistants saw a 20 percent improvement in patient satisfaction measures of perceived access to nurses and overall hospital climate. In other findings, about 85 percent of the patients interviewed said they felt more comfortable and supported during their hospital stay when health assistants were involved. The patients mentioned that they got the impression that their needs were being met faster and that they perceived they were receiving more personalized care from the RNs.

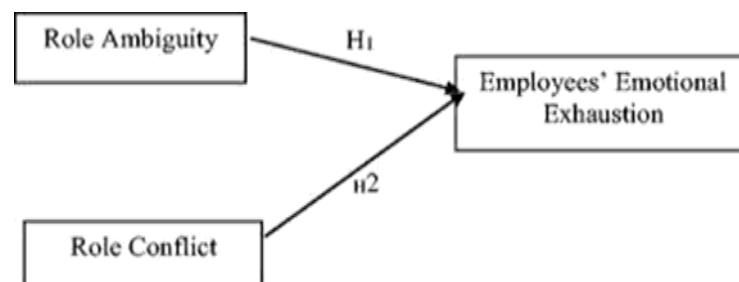


The authors suggest that this increase in patient satisfaction results from "augmenting basic patient needs attending, thus freeing up the nursing staff's time." Most patients noted the benefits of getting more comprehensive attention from health assistants than other health care helpers.

Nevertheless, some of the interviewed nurses also reported on certain drawbacks arising from the mentioned health assistant training and employment model, the major of which relates to the inconsistency of training of some of the health assistants, which they claimed occasionally results in errors in documenting minor details and performing minor tasks. Such problems were worst felt in places where training programs were poorly developed and, therefore, inconsistent across different organizations.

Role Ambiguity and Communication Issues

Another impediment to effective healthcare management mentioned in the study was role ambiguity. Sometimes, there were disagreements between health assistants and nurses regarding the tasks assigned to health assistants, which sometimes resulted in misunderstandings. Some nurses commented that health assistants intruded into decision-making spheres, while scores of health assistants raised questions concerning their status in the nursing team. These communication problems were attributed to the absence of professional growth and identity in which the health assistants and the nurses lacked a clear perception of their comprehensive responsibilities.



These challenges show the importance of establishing clear guidelines for the health assistant's roles and subsequent training to bring the health assistant into compliance with the client's healthcare team.

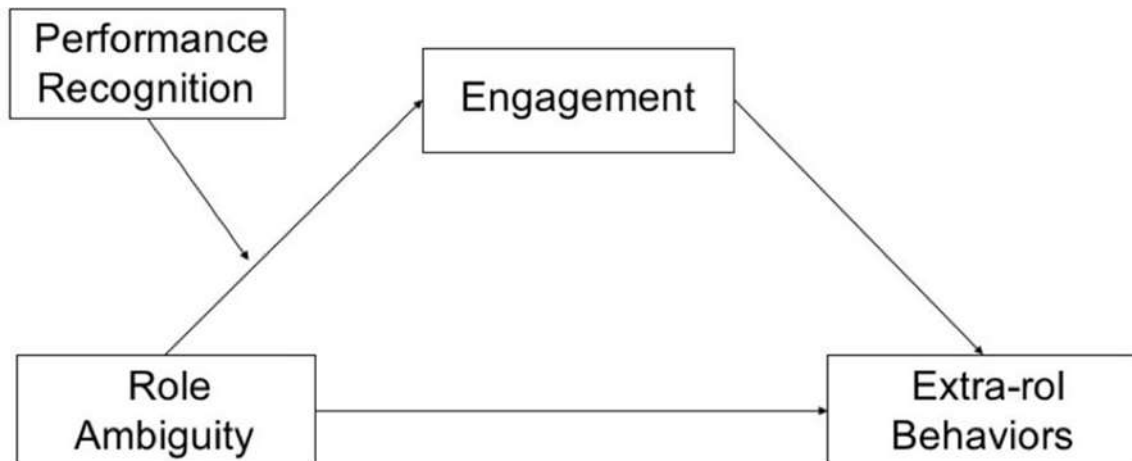
Discussion

The establishment of health assistants within the nurse staffing model reveals a positive occurrence in improving the productivity of the nursing workforce by addressing several constraints regarding the delivery of high-quality patient care. The paper has shown that by delegating nonclinical or routine work experiences, health assistants have enabled AN Ms to focus much of their working hours on assignments of more significant value, like assessing and treating patients. Not only does this alteration increase the organizational efficiency of the nursing workforce, but it is also a paramount aid to enhancing patient care. For this reason, circumstances that allow nurses to attend to clinical activities and think through clinical decisions are more likely to produce accurate assessment, timely and appropriate intervention, and comprehensiveness in care planning (Al-Oraini et al., 2024; Mohammad et al., 2024).

This is because patient involvement empowers the nurses to interact more directly with the patients, thus increasing patient satisfaction and credibility and ultimately improving one-on-one time with patients. From a social support perspective, patients can feel valued (Hijjawi et al., 2023). On the other hand, from a comfort point of view, health assistants attend to patients' immediate needs during a treatment session. For this reason, various healthcare settings that employ health assistants may record higher patient satisfaction and shorter recovery periods since almost all the needs of the patient may be attended to by health assistants instead of docketed healthcare professionals.

Challenges of Role Ambiguity and Inconsistent Training

Despite the identified opportunities in developing the health assistant profession, effectiveness in generating the best results depends on several important tasks (Zuhri et al., 2023). However, role ambiguity continues to be a significant concern in the overall performance of healthcare teams. Sometimes, health assistants are not well defined at their workplace, hence the growing rift between nurses and health assistants. This will cause a conflict of roles and responsibilities and stress working relations beneath the nursing occupation; health assistants may feel that nurses encroach on their territory, and vice versa. Meanwhile, health assistants may need more clarification about their work. Clear role definitions help create lines of duty to implement the project goals so everyone knows what to do.



This is compounded by the fact that training programs are also inconsistent. Inexperienced and inadequate training methodologies influence variations in competency tests (Al-Zyadat et al., 2022; Al-Nawafah et al., 2022). In contrast, the absence of necessary competency tests and training programs for health assistants results in variability in their competency levels. Lack of proper knowledge and experience of health assistants can lead to poor important areas like surveillance or documentation, which puts patients at risk and results in inadequate health care quality. At times, healthcare teams may worsen since nurses as principals would have to carry the load in the event that health assistants need to be more adequately trained. To minimize these risks, healthcare institutions must invest in adequate measures focusing on creating proper training policies for health assistants and providing the necessary knowledge and confidence for working in this position.

Proposals for Enhancement

Based on the health assistants adoption model, it is recommended that healthcare institutions exercise a systematized approach to the training and specify the roles played by health assistants. They found that competency-based training programs should be institutionalized across different facilities and include academic content and the assessment of practical skills. Such should be accompanied by assessment tests to check on the performance of the health assistants and changes in health care systems. Furthermore, designing specific regulations about the particular area of working responsibilities for the health assistants minimizes the possibility of role confusion to improve team morale.

Altogether, using health assistants is favorable for both the quantity of nursing and patient care. The possibility of solving ambiguities of the role and inconsistencies of training is critical to the optimal organizational benefits. Thus, if the objectives of transforming the health care system and improving the results of patients' treatment are to be achieved, health assistants must retain the necessary potential for independent action.

Conclusion

The nursing workplace is important in enhancing the efficiency of nurses while at the same time improving patients' care. It relieves the pressure on more specialized nursing staff to ensure nurses are free to deliver their best in clinical activities and enhance patients' general health. Despite these positive effects, health assistants face several issues in the health system, including role confusion and uneven training. Thus, a need to formulate ways of improving the quality of health assistant services in the future on behalf of the health sector.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are viable to help enhance the positive impact of health assistants.

Standardized Training Programs: Standardize the training of health assistant employees with adequate objectives, guidelines, policies, or achievable procedures, coordinated and shared between the health assistants and the employer.

Clear Role Definitions: Identify the scope of responsibilities of the health assistants, analyze the extent of confusion concerning roles, and assign the tasks as appropriate.

Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation: Health assistants should be frequently assessed and appraised to determine their effectiveness in the nursing team.

Promote Collaboration and Communication: Nurses and health assistants should be engaged in periodic communication to prevent disparaging attitudes due to misunderstandings over responsibilities.

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