

RESEARCH QUESTION

If and how a labor union's organizational strategies affect home care workers' job crafting (workers' proactive changes in work environments and their meaning of the job).

RESEARCH BACKGROUNDS

Precarious Working Conditions of Homecare workers

Home care workers are mostly women of color and immigrant women who have low power and earn low pay. Their job qualities are notoriously poor with persistent low wages, lack of benefits, unsafe working conditions, emotional and physical drains, and career advancement. Many home care workers do not have guaranteed full-time hours of work, and when they work, they earn, on average, around \$10-11 per hour with inconsistent hours. Nearly 50% of home care workers were reported to live in household (PHI, 2018). Many home care workers are employed directly by individuals or families. It is common for them to work without a contract, without workers' compensation, and without disability or unemployment insurance.

Impacts on Quality of Care

This all, in turn, risks the quality of services for older adults, people with disabilities, and other service users. The median caregiver turnover rate across the industry was 82% in 2018 (Holly, 2018). This high turnover rate among home care workers creates a significant service gap. The shift to home and community-based care more than doubled the size of the home care workforce from nearly 840,000 in 2007 to over two million in 2017 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). In many states, the projected supply of home care workers will be unable to fill demand – with each state facing a likely gap of 2,000 workers on average by 2025 (Mercer, 2017).

Union Approach for Home Care Workers

Labor and community movement groups have tried to establish home care worker cooperatives and develop labor union strategies for the last three decades. They target improving the job quality of home care workers as well as the quality of care for service users by providing skill and knowledge training to workers. However, there is little research that provides evidence to understand the impacts of these approaches on home care workers' job quality. It limits our ability to establish alternative strategies to improve job and care quality of the home care sector.

RESEARCH SAMPLE & METHOD

1199 SEIU in NYC

1199 SEIU is the largest healthcare union in the U.S. It organizes frontline caregivers such as home care workers, nurses, nurse aides, technicians, lab workers, clerks, housekeepers, dietary workers, transporters, pharmacists, social workers, and many other types of medical professionals (over 450,000 members).

1199 SEIU provides collective bargaining, job training, scholarships, career advancement programs, and advocacy opportunities to its members to improve the job quality of frontline health care workers.

Sample and Method

In-depth Interviews with five home care workers of 1199 SEIU.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMWORK: JOB CRAFTING

Job crafting recognizes that workers proactively create, alter, and reshape their job in order to fit it to their values, abilities, and needs instead of following a top-down job design fashioned by managers.

Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001)

Positive Psychology Model

Task Crafting

Adding, dropping, and redesigning tasks.

Relational Crafting

Creating, sustaining, or avoiding relationships with others at work.

Cognitive Crafting

reframing how one sees the significance of the job in order to enhance the meaning of work

Tims et al. (2012)

Job Demand-Resource Model

Seeking Resources

Seeking out resources available at work, like trying to get emotional support by talking with colleagues

Seeking Challenges

Seeking out challenges to achieve more, like volunteering Interesting project group

Reducing Hindering Job Demands

Reducing the number of interactions with demanding customers or colleagues.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Educational Program

1199 SEIU provides home care workers with English, career advancement, job training, computer literacy programs.

Task crafting

"They give lessons about our jobs and I'm not a professional home health aid and sometimes I don't know how to do it. For example if I have a person with Alzheimer's and their behavior is unusual and they teach you what is better and safety for them and I try to take any new trainings. (Interviewee 1)"

Cognitive crafting

"Because your job is an extension of you and a lot of people don't realize when were home health aids that were just doing a job but no, the job is not who you are the job is an extension of who you are and what 1199 does it gives you wings and you feel so important because you can do anything you wanna do they let you take any step you want. (4)"

Increasing job resources

"I go to English class which is ESL and last year I applied for my citizenship through 1199 and for that I had to take 3 classes about history, government and now since September. (2)"

Leadership Opportunities

1199 SEIU provides home care workers with leadership training and positions.

Cognitive crafting

"Of course in any field that you work in, you need a positive atmosphere and feel that your voice is being heard. That's why I became a delegate. (1)"

Task crafting

"I became a delegate, and all I wanna do is that I make other people be delegates too...my colleague said "I have to train you to do that" and I said "please" because I'm want to make everyone that I meet become a delegate because when you are a delegate, you hear stories that make your heart really shine like really really shine.(4)"

Metal Health Clinic Services

1199 SEIU provides home care workers with mental health clinic services to help them deal with work stress.

Decreasing Hindering Job Demands

"1199 is so helpful to all of us there's counselors that we can talk to if we need grief counselling.(3)"

Conflict Resolution Process

1199 SEIU provides home care workers with supervision, mediation btw members' agencies and members, collective bargaining, etc.

Decreasing hindering job demands

"But at your agency you're working for all these hours and you're working overtime and you're not getting time and a half. If you were with 1199 we would make sure you got your time and a half. (5)"

"They help me with everything. I talked to the supervisor and to the union. I say please check on this client, please check this out. They start calling home aids. I say that the client is not so happy with this, please check it out. (2)"

Relationship Building Opportunity

1199 SEIU provides home care workers with diverse meeting opportunities such as birthday/ holiday party, monthly meetings, delegate meetings, etc.

Cognitive crafting

"What if I don't have this union, I always connect with people and always work with people but with the union they give me the power to introduce more power and to speak for the community and we have to understand the people and what they need.(2)"

Relational Crafting

"Because we are delegates, we get to meet once a month. We have meetings and we go on rallies for those two different things...My community is my 1199 family (1)"

Increasing job resources (Social)

"I could depend on them (1199 members) for any problems at work. I can call one of my organizers or one of my co-workers on the job, I know a lot of them. They are always there for us, if someone doesn't have the answers to something then someone else does. (1)"

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

- This study found that 1199 SEIU's approaches focusing on providing diverse resources to workers, such as educational program, leadership opportunities, mental health clinic services, conflict resolution process, and relationship building opportunities, contributed to promoting home care workers' job crafting. This job crafting process seems to be beneficial for home care workers in terms of helping them develop a new meaning of the job, deeper relationships with coworkers, increase job resources and decrease hindering job demands.
- Labor union's support can be important for precarious workers who lack individual resources and power to proactively change their work environment and meaning of their job.