

Assessing Competency of Community Healthcare Workers

A.S. Princy, M. Rajeswari



Abstract: *Background: Community healthcare workers (CHW) play an important role in preventive healthcare system in India. CHW link the community to the health system of the country. As the population in India covers majorly in village, community healthcare workers are the face of the healthcare. These CHW competencies are yet to be ascertained. Objectives: To determine standardized framework for competency of the Community healthcare workers in India. Methods: By using structured questionnaire with 5 point Likert scale is implemented to evaluate the competency of CHW. Respondents are 35 participants including Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Medical social worker and diabetes educator in and around Chennai. Findings: Suggested that community health workers are highly competent. More clarity in role of community healthcare workers is required. Government should initiate program to nurture the service quality of primary centers, equipment, manpower facility in health centers, etc Training regarding the maternity care and communication skills are core competency required for a CHW to perform his/her role properly. Conclusions: The results of the study show that CHW of India is also competent. Community healthcare workers are contributing more in maternal care and preventive care. They put more effort in health education and sanitation in rural areas.*

Index Terms: Competency, Indian Community healthcare workers, Preventive care, Role

I. INTRODUCTION

The main role of CHW are to emphasize the healthcare like services in maternal and child health, family planning, immunization vaccines, nutrition, basic water and sanitation, control of communicable diseases, and simple curative care for some frequent illnesses. Majority CHW are females as most of the focus is for the maternal health and child welfare activities, but males are also there. As per World Health Organization CHWs are mostly the workers from the same community they work and support the healthcare needs of the community, so they need less training than the professional CHWs. CHWs programmes differs across the states in India. The performance of the CHWs depends up on the level of satisfaction in job. CHWs are concerned with the improvement of the health of communities. These include community-based rehabilitation therapies, home-based care workers and ASHA worker.

Competency assessment is different from other healthcare workers on these grounds: a) CHWs are

volunteers and pay scale varies as per the role and job responsibilities. b) CHW is not having any prior formal training related to this job. c) CHWs are the healthcare workers who are directly linking to the community.

Definition

The American Public Health Association (APHA) establishes CHWs “a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A CHW develop individual and community capacity by improving health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.” The competency should have the end result, should reflect the learned programs, should quantify, standardized to measure and expected outcome to be informed to the learners.

A. Accredited Social Health Workers (ASHAs)

ASHAs are voluntary healthcare workers in the society, who used to support and implement National Health Programmes. They acts as health counselors to the community they live in and supply healthcare essentials and referrals.

B. Diabetes Educator

Diabetes Educator helps people who are affected by diabetes. They help by promotion, maintenance and improvement of health of diabetes people and to adopt a healthy life style. They educate the people about the ways to prevent the disease by alerting them to do exercise proper nutrition, habits and behaviour to control sugar. They require a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree in health or life sciences.

C. Health Educator

Health educators help to educate the individuals and communities about the healthy life styles, balanced nutrition, the importance of exercise, good habit necessary to avoid illness. They require Master’s degree for positions in public health.

D. Sanitary Inspector

A sanitary inspector’s profile is based on the health and environmental conditions filled with the field work and research based. They usually have a diploma or completed a certificate course.

E. Competencies of CHWs

Core competencies of Community Health Workers are adopted from “community health workers competency domains and definitions: United States, 2017”

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Domain	Definition
Assessment	“Apply assessment data to community health actions at client and community levels.”
Community health practice	“Implement health promotion strategies within communities.”
Communication	“Gather and exchange information with clients and community stakeholders.”
Diversity and inclusion	“Respect the range of differences among individuals and communities.”
Professional practice	“Perform within an organization”.
Disease prevention and management	“Implement strategies to reduce the burden of preventable disease”.

Table 1: Community health workers competency domains and definitions: United States, 2017

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the competency of CHW
- To measure the current level of competency
- To understand their role clearly

III. METHODOLOGY

This study selected randomly the groups for study from the public health centers in and around Chennai. Respondents include Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Medical social worker, sanitary inspectors and diabetes educator from the hospitals and primary health centers in and around Chennai.

A. Data Collection Method

Respondents were interviewed and discussed about their knowledge, skills and attributes. Structured questionnaires were given and collected the information. CHWs educational background, gender, experience, and other factors have been taken. With the participant consent to face to face interviews has been done and marked in the questionnaire.

B. Data analysis

Data analysis has been done with the competencies defined by World Health Organisation. The elements in the questionnaire covered the characteristics of CHWs like knowledge, array of skills like, technical, interpersonal and cognitive, and their personal attributes like age, gender, education, and personality.

IV. RESULTS

The data was collected between April –May 2019. 35 participants were interviewed. The participants are informed in advance about the survey details through the hospitals and primary health centers and got prior consent. All the participants were briefed about the aim of the study. Demographic details of respondents are given below in the table.

Characteristics	No. of respondents (n=35)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	33	94
Male	2	6
Age (years)		
25–30	7	20
31–35	7	20
36–40	15	43
>41	6	17
Education (years)		
5–7	3	9
8–10	30	86
UG	1	3
PG	1	3
Marital status		
Married	25	71
Widowed	5	14
Separated	2	6
Unmarried	1	3
Divorced	2	6
Poverty level		
Below the poverty level	31	89
Above the poverty level	4	11
Monthly income (INR)		
1000–2000	13	37
2001–3000	18	51
>3000	4	11
Caste		
Scheduled caste	33	94
Scheduled tribe	0	0
Others	2	6
Monthly income as CHW (INR)		
<500	20	57
500–1000	10	29
1001–1500	5	14
Source of Income		
Working as CHW	33	94
Income from other resources	2	6
Experience as CHWs (years)		
less than 2	2	6
2–5	33	94
Number of trainings undergone		
<5	29	83
6–10	6	17

Table 2: Demographic details of CHWs



Core Competency	Mean	SD
Assessment		
Maintain records and registration	4.2	0.8
Ensure availability of medical and diagnostic supplies	3.9	1.1
Community health practice		
Supply medicines for minor injuries and give first aid care	4.05	0.95
Inform about primary curative properties of common drugs of AYUSH	4.4	0.6
Constructing household toilets	4.55	0.45
Communication		
Able to adapt teaching style as per needs.	4.8	0.2
Advise women about the nutritional values and healthy way for young children	4.03	0.97
Provide antenatal and post-natal Counseling	4.32	0.68
Professional practice		
Adapt to multiple responsibilities	3.6	1.4
Identify the role of CHWs and healthcare workers	3.02	1.98
Apply continuing education to work responsibilities	3.4	1.6
Follow ethical standards in communicating with all groups like communities people and organizations	3.22	1.78
Disease prevention and management		
Inform Primary Health Centre of disease outbreaks	3.9	1.1
Conducting programmes on personal hygiene in different areas	3.56	1.44
Arranging first-aid treatment in case of an emergency	3.52	1.48

Table 3: Total Mean scores of Community Health Workers Competencies

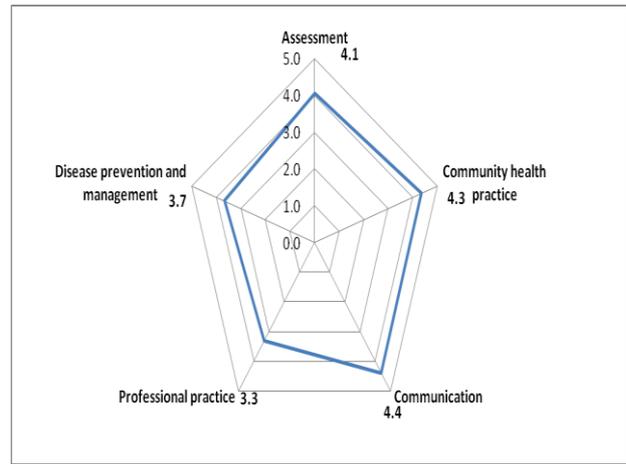


Figure 1: Competency of CHW

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Table 2 shows that the survey comprises of 35CHWs. CHWs participated in the interview are mostly females (94%), majority are 36-40 years (43%), education 8-10 years (86%), married (71%), Below poverty line (89%), household income between 2001-3000 (51%), Scheduled caste (94%), Monthly income as CHW in INR 500-1000 (57%), Source of income Only as CHW (94%), Years of experience as CHWs 2-5 years (94%), Number of trainings undergone less than 5 (83%).
2. Table 3 shows total Mean scores and standard deviation of Community Health Workers Competencies.
3. Inferences from Table 3 show that out of 15 parameters, Able to adapt teaching style as per needs shows the highest 4.8 and standard deviation of 0.355. This is important competency of CHWs. The lowest score is 3.02 Identify the role of CHWs and healthcare workers and standard deviation of 1.98.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited only few hospitals and primary health center located in Chennai, India.
2. There may be chances of personal biases in the data collection.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the present study few general recommendations are Government can improve the service quality provided by primary healthcare centers, equipment and manpower facility in health centers. Training regarding the maternity care and communication skills are core competency required for a CHW to perform his/her role properly.

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