



Impact Of Covid -19 Pandemic On The Intensification Of Work And Its Relation To Economic Status Of ASHA Workers

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Abstract

Major public health emergencies are arised due to the presence of Corona virus that is the pandemic era of COVID-19. At this time public health system and community healthcare workers have an important role in dealing with COVID-19 in rural areas. The aim of this study is to find out the role of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHAs) and various problem faced by them. Under this study we found that ASHAs conduct 'house to house' visit and collecting information, carryout contact tracing, maintaining of documents etc. But ASHA workers are faced a lot problems this time such as over burden, lack of COVID protective equipment, underpaid .thus there seem to be an association of ASHA workers economic status and intensification of work.

Keywords: ASHA workers, National Rural Health Mission, Covid-19 Pandemic, Lockdown, Socio-Economic Status

Introduction

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) are community health workers under the National Rural Health Mission of Government of India. Along with auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and anganwadi (childcare) workers (AWWs), they are among India's frontline health workers. This note describes the situation of ASHAs during the Covid-19 pandemic¹

ASHAs are community health workers under the National Rural Health Mission of Government of India. Along with ANMs and anganwadi (childcare) workers (AWWs), they are among India's frontline health workers. This note describes the situation of ASHAs during the Covid-19 pandemic ¹. ASHAs create awareness on health and other social factors relating to health among public. They provide various services to women healthcare and child healthcare.

They assist women for immunization and nutrition etc.They provide counseling relating to nutritious food and encourage women go to hospital for delivery. At the time of COVID-19 ASHAs have a vital role to resist the spreading the corona virus.²

The all-woman ASHA programme began in 2005. There are some one million ASHAs in India today, and the programme now covers all States except Goa (GoI2020a). According to the National Health Mission (NHM) guidelines, any "woman resident of the village – married/widow/divorced, and preferably in the age group of 25 to 45 years with formal education up to eighth class" can be selected as ASHA (GoI 2005, p. 3).¹ After selection, ASHAs undergo a brief period of training. Their task involve creating health awareness, conducting immunisation

drives, facilitating reproductive and child healthcare, and promoting other healthcare initiatives in their respective States. Along with the local bodies and other peripheral health workers (such as AWWs and ANMs), ASHAs play an essential role in strengthening the primary healthcare system in India. ASHAs are paid a small “honorarium” and some task-based incentive payments. The state does not recognize ASHAs as “workers,” but as “volunteers/activists” and excludes them from the protection offered under various labour laws.^{1,2,4}

ASHA workers ASHA workers are a key link to public health service in villages in India. They are being deployed the central government the NHRM (National Rural Health Mission) for every 1000 in the state to ensure the accessibility of primary care services to the rural people. ASHA workers is a community health workers and is the primary contact for any health related issues especially for women and children in rural area and now in urban area also.^{2,3}

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The COVID-19 virus spreads primary through droplet of saliva or discharge from nose. The current coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pneumonia pandemic, caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is spreading globally at an accelerated rate, with a basic reproduction number (R0) of 2 to 2.5, indicating that 2 to 3 persons will be infected from an index patient. A serious public health emergency, it is particularly deadly in vulnerable populations and communities in which healthcare providers are insufficiently prepared to manage the infection²

The present literature study deals with the Objectives of the studying Role of ASHA workers at the time of COVID-19 2 and Problem faced by ASHA workers at COVID -19.

Rationale of the study:

ASHAs have an important role at the time of COVID-19. They conduct contract tracking, collect information about quarantine people, they provide essential services to these people such as medical services, food facilities. Passengers are restricted at the time lockdown patients face difficulties to get essential medicine. ASHAs made a list of these

patients and provide facilities to get these medicines. At the same time ASHAs faced a lot of challenges at COVID-19 such as increased workload that is their working time is increased by 3-4 hours than normal time, unavailability of protective COVID-19 equipment, underpaid etc. ASHAs act as a link between quarantine people and society and health departments. To deal the situation of COVID -19 in India, the ASHA workers responsibilities were elaborated^{2,4,5}

Objectives: To critically review the role of ASHA workers at the time of COVID-19 pandemic.

Also to evaluate the association of problems faced by ASHA workers and the impact of Covid-19 on their social and economic status

Methodology

Eligibility criteria: the following inclusion criteria were applied during literature search on 2 source engine: pub med, goggle scholar.

- a. English language
- b. Interventional studies(randomized controlled trials)
- c. Review articles.
- d. Role of ASHA and their intensification of work in covid 19 pandemic.

Exclusion criteria:

- a. Studies not meeting inclusion criteria

Information sources: Internet.

Search strategy: an electronic search without date or language was performed in Pub med eligibility criteria.

Discussion :

ASHA Workers playing an important role in realizing the objectives of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Their role is remarkable during the situations like Covid-19 pandemic. As found in the present study, out of 250 ASHA Workers selected, 200 of them frequently felt it was tough to work during Covid-19 lockdown situation still they performed their duties properly, The present study also discusses the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, 200 respondents frequently felt the problem of the fulfillment of basic needs during the

Covid-19 pandemic, all most all respondents felt financial difficulty during the pandemic situation and said that this situation had also impacted their savings, regular expenditure and jobs of their family members³

Based on telephone interviews of ASHAs in six States, the main findings are the following. Firstly, their work has intensified because of the additional tasks and longer commutes. Secondly, their remuneration was low and irregular, and they have also lost earnings because of the suspension of their usual incentive-based payments. Thirdly, their health was endangered because they were provided inadequate safety gear and insufficient training. Despite their essential role in delivering primary healthcare services, they had no social security benefits and were not recognised officially as health workers. A few of our respondents reported caste- and genderbased discrimination while performing

Covid-19-related duties in the village. Finally, the loss of employment and earnings of their household members caused severe economic distress for ASHAs. Along with an increased work burden, they also shoulder an increased burden in domestic care work.¹

The study we found that ASHAs have an important role at the time of COVID-19. They conduct contract tracking, collect information about quarantine people, they provide essential services to these people such as medical services, food facilities. Passengers are restricted at the time lockdown patients face difficulties to get essential medicine. ASHAs made a list of these patients and provide facilities to get these medicines. At the same time ASHAs faced a lot of challenges at COVID-19 such as increased workload that is their working time is increased by 3- 4 hours than normal time, unavailability of protective COVID-19 equipment, underpaid etc²

Data collection process:

Table 1: Social impact of covid-19 pandemic

Particulars	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rarely	Never	Mean Score
Did you felt the corona outbreak harmed your relationship	0 (0)	0 (0)	160 (64)	30 (12)	40 (16)	20 (8)	3.32
Did you experience any kind of domestic violence during the pandemic period	0 (0)	190 (75)	40 (16)	10 (4)	10 (4)	0 (0)	4.64
Did you experienced any kind of domestic violence during pandemic period	40 (16)	180 (72)	30 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5.04

Did your work nature ever caused frustrations among your family members	100 (40)	150 (60)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5.4
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Discusses the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on ASHA workers. The study found that the majority 160 (64%) of the respondents occasionally felt the corona outbreak harmed their relationships, while 40 (16%) and 20 (8%) very rarely and never felt the same respectively. The study also focuses on the issue of domestic violence experienced by ASHA workers, in this regard 190 (76%) of the respondents frequently experienced an issue of domestic violence during the pandemic period, 40 (16%) of them rarely experienced such problems. The question had been asked regarding the adverse effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the upbringing of children of their family, the study found that 180 (72%) frequently, 40 (16%) very frequently and 30 (12%) occasionally felt covid-19 pandemic harmed the upbringing of their children. 150 (60%) of the respondents opine that their work nature frequently caused frustrations among the family members.³

Table 2: Impact of Covid-19 on Economic Status of ASHA workers:

Particulars	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rarely	Never	Mean Score
Did you felt the problem of the fulfilment of basic needs during the Covid-19 pandemic	0 (0)	200 (80)	50 (20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.8
Did you felt any financial difficulty during the covid-19 pandemic	0 (0)	250 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0(0)	0 (0)	5
Did this pandemic affect your on savings	50 (20)	200 (80)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5.2
Did this pandemic effect on regular expenditure)	70 (28)	160 (64)	20 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5.2
Did this pandemic	50 (20)	200 (80)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)) 0 (0)	5.2

effect on job of your family members							
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Table No 2 represents economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic on ASHA workers, the majority 200 (80%) of the respondents frequently felt problem of the fulfillment of basic needs during the covid-19 pandemic. It is evident from the above study that all respondents 250 (100%) frequently felt some sort of financial difficulty during the Covid-19 pandemic. Information was also collected regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the savings of the respondents, as per this, results showed that 200 (80%) of the respondents opine that the Covid-19 pandemic has frequently affected their savings⁶

Table 3: Details of payment, earnings, and pending months of payment State Remuneration (in Rupees) Earnings per month (in Rupees) Number of months for which payment is pending Andhra Pradesh 10,000 10,000 0 Assam 3,000 + incentives 4,000–4,500 1–2 Haryana 4,000 + incentives 7,000–7,500 2 Tamil Nadu 2,000 + incentives 3,000–3,500 4–5 Telangana 3,000 + incentives 5,000–6,000 1 West Bengal 3,500 + incentives 4,200–5,500 1–2 ASHAs have not been adequately compensated for the loss of usual earnings and additional Covid-19 related tasks. The remuneration of an ASHA comprises a fixed honorarium plus task-based incentives.⁴ The fixed amount is paid by the State Government, and incentive payments are shared by State and Central Governments. Although the incentive amount for specific tasks does not vary, the fixed component varies across States, from Rs 2,000 in Tamil Nadu to Rs 10,000 in Andhra Pradesh.⁵ Many respondents complained about irregularity in payments. In extreme cases, four to five months of payments were pending.¹

Conclusion:

ASHA Workers playing an important role in realizing the objectives of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Their role is remarkable during the situations like Covid-19 pandemic. it is suggested the Government take some steps to improve the conditions of the ASHA Workers by the means of enhancing their socio-economic status other initiatives. Challenges at COVID-19 such as

increased workload that is their working time is increased by 3- 4 hours than normal time, unavailability of protective COVID-19 equipment, underpaid etc. ASHAs act as a link between quarantine people and society and health departments.

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