

Mental Health Knowledge and Multi-purpose Health Workers

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A study to assess the mental health knowledge practices among multi purposes health workers and their perceived need for community mental health services in selected primary health centers of Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu.

Community Mental Health is the emerging trend in mental health care aiming to integrate mental health components into the stream of general health care approach. Mental health care cannot be ignored if comprehensive health care is to be provided to the population. Integrating mental health into the health care system is accepted as the most important step for extending mental health care to the individuals in the community. The National Mental Health Programme (NMHP – 1982) has emphasized this. The Medical Officers, Public Health Nurses, Health Supervisors, Multi-purpose Health Workers and the other Health Staff of Primary Health Centres have primary responsibility to improve mental health care in the community.

This study attempts to identify the knowledge of multi purpose health workers with regard to identification of mental disorders, available health facilities, referral services and the National Mental Health Programme. An attempt has been made to assess the mental health knowledge, practices and the perceived need for mental health services among the multi purpose health workers who are working in Primary Health Centres.

A descriptive survey was conducted to assess the mental health knowledge, practices of multipur-

pose health workers and their perceived need for community mental health services, in selected primary health centers of Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Science in Nursing at Omayal Achi College of Nursing, The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University.

Objectives of study

- ♦ To assess the mental health knowledge among multi purpose health workers.
- ♦ To identify practices of multi purpose health workers with regard to mental health services.
- ♦ To find out perceived need for mental health services in the community by multi-purpose health workers.
- ♦ To correlate mental health knowledge with practices of multi-purpose health workers.
- ♦ To correlate mental health knowledge with perceived need for community mental health services.
- ♦ To correlate practices and perceived need for community mental health services.
- ♦ To associate demographic variables with mental health knowledge, practices and perceived need for community mental health services of the multi purpose health workers.

A sample size of 60 Multipurpose health workers was selected for the study. A self reporting ques-

tionnaire was prepared and used as the tool which consisted of four parts with Part-I to collect the demographic data, part-II to assess mental health knowledge, part -III to assess practices, part-IV to assess perceived need for community mental health services. Ethical aspects of the research were considered throughout the study.

A pilot study with a sample of 5 multipurpose health workers was earlier conducted to assess the feasibility of the study and the tool in a similar setting. The reliability of the tool was confirmed through test-retest method ($r = 0.7$)

The data was analysed by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The demographic variables were analysed by frequency and percentage. To determine the relationship between mental health knowledge, practices and perceived need for community mental health services, intra correlation co-efficient test was used. Chi square test was used to associate demographic variables with mental health knowledge, practices and perceived need for community mental services.

Major Findings

- ♦ A majority of 78.3% were female multi purpose workers and 71.7% were educated upto 10th standard, 73.3% were not having previous psychiatric exposure.
- ♦ The mean score of mental health knowledge, practices

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

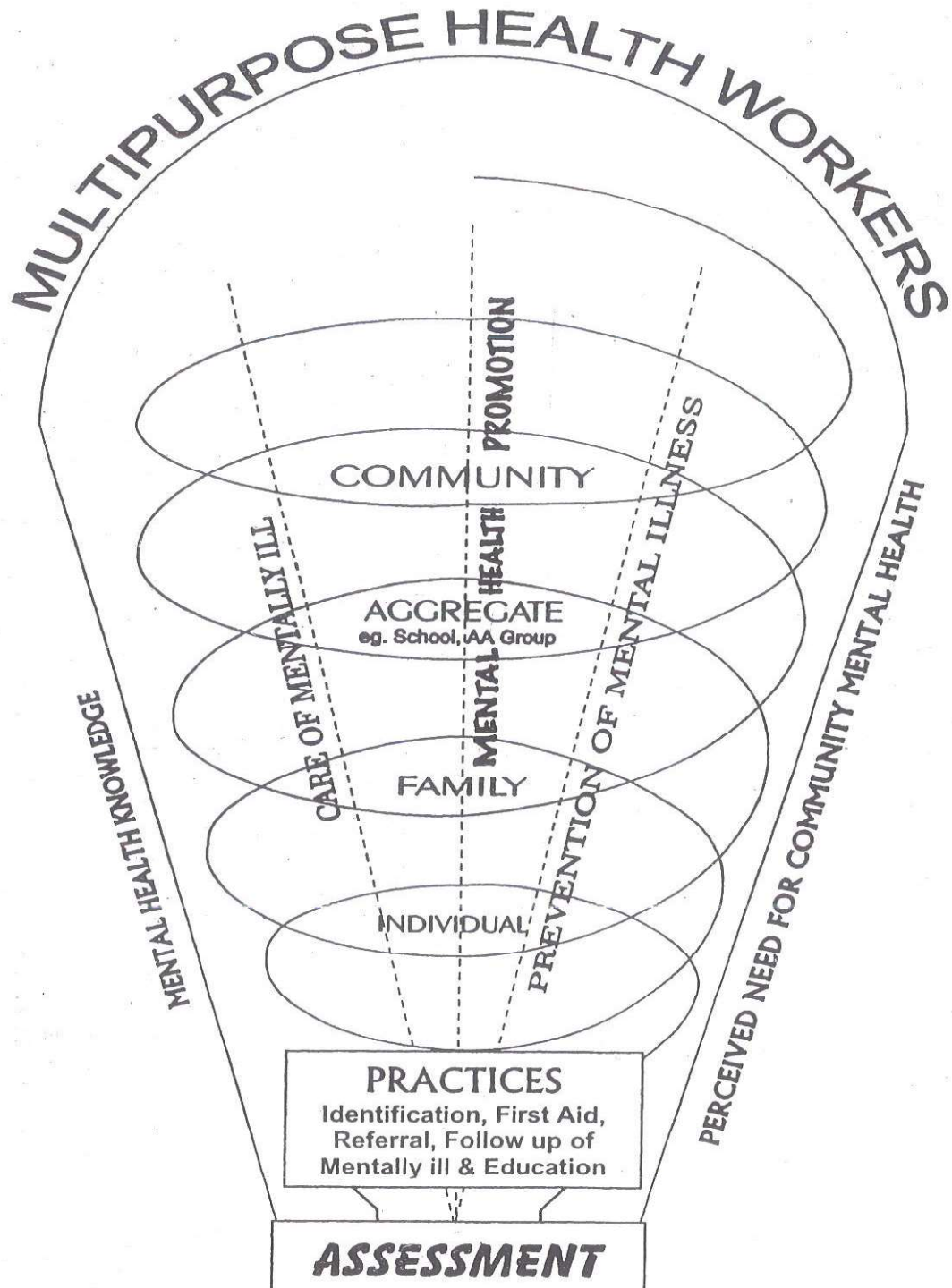


Figure : 1 Community mental health promotion model based on LAFFERY & KULBOK'S Community Health Promotion Model

and perceived need for community mental services were 74.39, 78.67, 78.25 respectively. This indicates that the MPHWs have moderately adequate mental health knowledge and aware of their practices and there is a high level of perceived need for Community Mental Health Services.

- ♦ The co-relation between mental health knowledge practices and perceived need for Community Mental Health Services of Multi-purpose Health Workers showed that there is a positive correlation between mental health knowledge and perceived need for community mental health services ($r = 0.2082, P < 0.05$). There is a positive correlation between practices and perceived need for community mental health services ($r = 0.2187, P < 0.05$) and also there is a very low Negative correlation between mental health knowledge and practices ($r = -0.0988, P < 0.05$). This suggests that the multipurpose health workers are ready to take up the responsibility though they have moderately adequate mental health knowledge.
- ♦ Chi square test revealed that there is no significant association between the Mental Health knowledge, practices, perceived need for the Community Mental Health Services with any of the demographic variables such as age, sex, education, year of working experience and previous exposure in psychiatry of Multipurpose Health Workers.

Based on the findings, the following implications have been drawn which are of vital concern for the field of nursing practices, administration, education and re-

search:

- ♦ The community mental health administrators should consider the clear job description of the multipurpose health workers and their services must be coordinated through qualified, community mental health nurses at Primary Health Centre level, block level and district levels.
- ♦ There should be a continuing education programme for the multipurpose health workers with regard to community mental health services.
- ♦ The nurse educators should consider the curricula modification and importance of teaching community mental health services to the multipurpose health workers and other categories. At masters' level there could be super specialty in community mental health nursing which would enhance education and administration in this field.
- ♦ There is a great need for research activities in the field of community mental health nursing which can be done in different regions so as to generalize the results and a broad-based study can be conducted after training the multipurpose health workers to analyze the effectiveness in the implementation of NMHP and the constraints in achieving this.

Conclusion

The multipurpose health workers have moderate mental health knowledge and they are capable to practice their requirement. Their perceived need for community mental health services is high. These findings reveal that constant efforts by multipurpose health workers are needed to improve the community mental health services

through the National Mental Health Programme.

Explanation of the Conceptual Frame Work

This conceptual Frame Work is based on the **LAFFERY and KULBOK** Health Promotion Model (1995). This model has two major dimensions. 1. Client System, 2. Focus of care.

The **Client system** refers to the recipient of the care, which is conceptualized from its narrow, most delimited target, the individual in which the environment is principally the family and extends to the population group and community. So the client system shall be the individual, the family, aggregate (collection of similar members – for example school, alcoholic anonymous group), and the total community.

The **Focus of care** in the model is illness care, illness or disease prevention, which contributes to health promotion.

The health promotion variables have been modified into mental health variables so as to fit into community mental health promotion model. Fig 1 depicts that the Multipurpose Health Workers identify, render first aid, refer and follow up mentally ill and educate them. These activities are the practices with regard to community mental health services and encompass the individual, the family, the aggregate group and the community as a whole (from the narrow end to the broader end) with the main components like care of mentally ill and prevention of mental illness which leads to the mental health promotion. For this reason the **MPHWs** should have the basic mental health knowledge and perceived need for community mental health services to achieve mental health for all.