



Knowledge Level of *Anganwadi* Workers about Non-Formal Preschool Education of Integrated Child Development Services

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out the knowledge level of 59 *anganwadi* workers (AWWs) about non-formal preschool education of ICDS Urban *anganwadis* of Ludhiana district, Punjab. Almost all *anganwadi* workers were between the ages of 36-45yr, married, and had attended school up to high school. It was interesting to see that 20% of them had postgraduate degrees, and most of them were between 11-15 yr old and had attended 1-3 trainings, while only 5% had attended more than seven trainings. Most of the participants had average level of knowledge about ICDS. For knowledge level, significant difference ($F=10.06$; $p<0.01$), was found in knowledge level of the AWWs. Therefore, need-based training programmes should be designed for *anganwadi* workers in the future to enable them to update their knowledge and provide quality preschool education for *anganwadi* children.

Key Words: *Anganwadi* workers, Knowledge, non-formal preschool education

INTRODUCTION

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program was a centrally sponsored scheme of the Indian government and one of the largest community-based programs in the world. The ICDS programme adopts a multi-sectoral approach to non-formal preschool education, nutrition interventions, provide healthy learning environment for infants and health care services (Arya *et al*, 2018). The main purpose of this programme was to provide to the requirements of the child development in the age group of 0-6 yr. The *anganwadi* worker (AWW) is the ICDS community-based voluntary frontline worker. Selected from the community, she assumes an integral role due to her close and continuous contact with the beneficiaries. She provides the basic health care facilities as well as pre-school education activities. The *anganwadi* worker and helpers are the central functionaries of the ICDS who run the *anganwadi* centre and execute the ICDS scheme, organize with the functionaries of the education, health, rural development and other departments (Arya *et al*, 2018).

Knowledge is familiarity or awareness of something or someone, such as facts (descriptive knowledge), skills (procedural knowledge), or objects (acquaintance knowledge) contributing to one's understanding. The output of ICDS scheme to an enormous scope depends on the profile of the key functionary that is *anganawadi* worker, her educational qualification, working experience, skills, attitude, training etc (Baliga and Walvekar, 2017). ICDS scheme depends on the effective functioning and knowledge of the *anganwadi* workers employed at different centers. They aim to improve the nutritional and health status of vulnerable groups, including preschool education, immunization, health checkups, and referral. *Anganwadi* centres have become everyone's concern, mainly in the context of their vital role in the child's all-round development and with regard to access to elementary education.

The study indicated that pre-schoolers scored significantly higher in pre-reading, early math and language skills than their counterparts who attended local schools (Laosa, 2005). Research studies

have shown that non-formal preschool education enhances the children a better start in life and gives them a chance for advanced accomplishment when they are older. It is essential that a healthy environment is provided for children during this period for their growth and learning (Manhas and Qadiri, 2010). *Anganwadi* centers are largely organized in a play-based manner, which allows children to attend *anganwadi* with interest and develop desirable attitudes by providing intellectual stimulation through non-formal methods rather than involving them in formal learning activities. At *anganwadi* centres, the need of skill-based training of AWWs (*anganwadi* workers), though, is one of the most important disadvantage for successful preschool education (Saini and Chhikara, 1993). There was no prescribed syllabus or course of study in AWC because the non-formal method was used to learn basic concepts, and the duration was completely flexible so that the children got enough exposure to learn and be masters of any activity they chose (Qadiri and Manhas, 2009). It was observed that *anganwadi* workers did not make any attempt to make stronger the preschool component and develop the knowledge in an enhanced manner. Rather than providing non-formal preschool education, their primary focus is on nutrition component (Deulkar, 1990). Efforts by AWWs were not successful to perform preschool education. Thus, the present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge of AWWs about non-formal preschool education of integrated child development services (ICDS), the socio-personal profile of *anganwadi* workers in urban *anganwadi* centres of Ludhiana district.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A proportionate numbers of *anganwadis* from each ICDS project were randomly selected to have a representative sample of 80 *anganwadis*. The present study was conducted in Ludhiana urban were divided into four ICDS projects viz. Urban-1, Urban-2, Urban-3 and Urban-4 during the year of 2021 was using proportionate sampling of *anganwadis* from each ICDS project

were randomly selected to have a representative sample of 59 *anganwadis*. A socio-personal profile of AWWs was recorded such as name of the *anganwadi* centre, district, block, age, marital status, educational qualification, work experience and number of trainings/ refresher courses.

To assess the knowledge level of the *anganwadi* workers used the self-structured knowledge questionnaire about various aspects of non formal preschool education. There were three knowledge levels, high, average, and low, in the total scores obtained. There were subjective and objective questions on the knowledge questionnaire. There were four choices listed next to each objective item in the questionnaire, and a tick (✓) indicated the degree of compliance with an item. The *anganwadi* workers received one mark for every correct item and zero if the item was not able to be performed. In subjective items, there were no right and wrong answer.

Data collection and analysis: The data were collected personally by making a personal visit to Urban *anganwadi* centres of different blocks in Ludhiana District. The collected data were computed and analyzed by frequency, percentage analysis and suitable statistical tools. The findings were presented as per the expressed responses of the *anganwadi* workers. The following table gives the number of *anganwadi* centres selected from each ICDS projects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age

The data (Table 1) elucidated that 45 per cent of the *anganwadi* workers belonged to the age group of >45yr with 30 per cent of the workers were in the age group of 25-35 yr and only 25 per cent were 36-45 yr in Urban-1. Urban -2 data showed that 38.46 per cent of *anganwadi* workers belonged to the age group of 25-35 yr, while 30.77 per cent of the workers belongs to 36-45 yr as well as >45yr. Data relating to Urban -3 revealed that 46.15 per cent of AWWs were from 36-45 yr and 30.77 per cent were

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Number of *anganwadi* centres selected.

Sr. No	Name of the ICDS projects	Number of selected <i>Anganwadi</i> Centres	Number of selected <i>Anganwadi</i> Workers from <i>Anganwadi</i> Centres
Ludhiana Urban			
1	Urban -1	20	20
2	Urban -2	13	13
3	Urban-3	13	13
4	Urban-4	13	13
Total		59	59

from 25-35 yr. Rest 23.08 per cent belonged to the >45yr of age group. Data about Urban-4 showed that more than half (53.85%) of the AWWS were from 36-45 yr of age while 23.08 per cent of the AWWS belonged to the 25.35 yr as well as >45 yr of the age group. The overview of the data revealed that 37.29 per cent were from 36-45 yr of age followed by 32.20 per cent from >45 yr and 30.51 per cent were from 25.-35 yr of age. The finding of the study suggested that the major portion of *anganwadi* workers belong to the middle-aged group of 36-45 yr, similar findings have also been reported by Arya *et al* (2018) who concluded that 36-45 year is a very suitable age for effective functioning of the *anganwadi* workers at the *anganwadi* centres.

Marital status

With regards to marital status, the data across all of the *anganwadi* centres revealed that the majority of the respondents were married and only 15 per cent were widowed in Urban -1. While, Data of Urban -2 found that 7.69 per cent of the *anganwadi* workers were widowed as well as divorced and unmarried. Similarly, Urban -3 data showed that 23.08 per cent of *anganwadi* workers were widowed, while 15.38 per cent were divorced. In addition, Urban-4 reported that 15.38 per cent were unmarried and 7.69 per cent were divorced. The overview of the marital status data revealed that the majority of the *anganwadi* workers 74.58 per cent were married. The results of the study conformed to the earlier finding Arya *et al* (2018).

Education

Based on the data from Urban-1, 35 percent of *anganwadi* workers completed high school, 30 percent completed graduation, 20 percent studied up to intermediate level, and 15 percent completed postgraduate study. Urban-2 revealed that 61.54 per cent of *anganwadi* workers were in high school and 30.77 per cent had completed their postgraduate degrees while only 7.69 per cent had completed their postgraduate degrees. The Urban-3 data showed that 38.46 per cent of respondents had completed high school and 30.77 per cent had graduated from intermediate or post-secondary school. Urban-4 locale respondents had a combined education level of 30.77 percent high school, intermediate, and graduate whereas only 7.69 percent were post-graduates. Based on the overall data, 40.68 percent of *anganwadi* workers had completed high school, 20.34 percent completed intermediate school as well as post-graduation and 18.64 percent finished their graduation and. The evidence showed that high school graduates scored performed better than other qualified *anganwadi* workers. Similar finding have also been reported by Naveena and Sharma (2017).

Work experience

Urban-1 shows that about half (50%) of the *anganwadi* workers had service experience of 11-15 yr, forty percent had service experience over 15 yr, and only 10 percent of the AWWs had service experience between 5-10 yr. According to Urban-2,

Table 1. Centre-wise percent distribution of *anganwadi* workers as per their personal information. (n= 59)

Age (Yr.)	Urban-1(n ₁ =20)	Urban-2(n ₂ =13)	Urban-3(n ₃ =13)	Urban-4(n ₄ =13)	Overall
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	
25-35	6(30)	5(38.46)	4(30.77)	3(23.08)	18(30.51)
36-45	5(25)	4(30.77)	6(46.15)	7(53.85)	22 (37.29)
>45	9(45)	4(30.77)	3(23.08)	3(23.08)	19 (32.20)
Marital Status					
Unmarried	0	1(7.69)	0	2(15.38)	3(5.08)
Married	17(85%)	10(76.93)	8(61.54)	9(69.23)	44 (74.58)
Divorced	0	1(7.69)	2(15.38)	1(7.69)	4 (6.78)
Widow	3(15%)	1(7.69)	3(23.08)	1(7.69)	8 (13.56)
Education					
High school	7 (35)	8(61. 54)	5(38.46)	4(30.77)	24 (40.68)
Intermediate	4 (20)	0	4(30.77)	4(30.77)	12 (20.34)
Graduation	6 (30)	1(7.69)	0	4(30.77)	11 (18.64)
Post-graduation	3 (15)	4(30.77)	4(30.77)	1(7.69)	12 (20.34)
Work Experience					
Less than 5 yr	0	2(15.38)	0	0	2 (3.39)
5-10 yr	2(10)	4(30.77)	6(46.15)	3(23.08)	15 (25.42)
11-15 yr	10(50)	3(23.08)	4(30.77)	7(53.85)	24 (40.68)
Ore than 15 yr	8(40)	4(30.77)	3(23.08)	3(23.08)	18(30.51)
No. of Training & Refresher Courses Attended					
1-3	15(75)	8 (61.54)	7(53.85)	8(61.54)	38 (64.41)
4-6	4(20)	5(38.46)	6(46.15)	5(38.46)	20 (33.89)
>7	1(5)	0	0	0	1 (1.70)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

30.77 percent of AWWs had service experience between 5-10 yr, as well as more than 15 yr, while 23.08 percent had experience between 11-15 yr, and 15.38 percent had experience below 5 yr. According to the data related to Urban-3, 46.15 percent had experience between 5 -10 yr, 30.77 percent had experience between 11-15 yr, and 23.08 percent with more than 15 yr of experience. None of them were under five yr of experience. On the other hand, Urban-4 has found that 53.85% of *anganwadi* workers had experience between 11-15 yr and 22.8% had experience between 5-10 yr and above 15 yr and none of them were less than five yr

of experience. In a summary of the overall data for the working experience of *anganwadi* workers, it was found that 40.68 per cent worked between 11-15 yr and 30.51 % worked above 15 yr. Twenty per cent worked between 5-10 yr and only 3.39 per cent had served for less than five yr.

Number of training and refresher courses

In terms of training courses, the study shows that the majority of *anganwadi* workers received 1-3 training sessions. The findings in this study were consistent with the findings from Akshatha and Sankangouda (2019).

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Table 2. Percent distribution of knowledge of *anganwadi* workers across different centres. (n= 59)

Levels of knowledge of work life	Urban-1(n ₁ =20)	Urban-2(n ₂ =13)	Urban-3(n ₃ =13)	Urban-4(n ₄ =13)	Overall(n _o =80)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
High	2(10)	3(23.08)	0	0	5(8.47)
Average	14(70)	9(69.23)	11(84.62)	7(53.85)	41(69.49)
Low	4(20)	1(7.69)	2(15.38)	6(46.15)	13(20.03)

The findings (Table 3) elucidate the percentage distribution of knowledge level of the AWWs. In Urban -1 showed that a major proportion of the AWWs (70%) were at average level of “knowledge” followed by (20%) of AWWs at low level and only (10%) at high level of the AWWs in knowledge level. Similarly in the Urban-2 observed that majority (69.23%) of the AWWs were at average level with (23.08%) at high and rest (7.69%) were at low level of the AWWs in the knowledge. Whereas, in Urban-3 major proportion (84.62%) of AWWs at average level of the knowledge followed by (15.38%) of the AWWs were found at low level and none of the AWWs at high level of knowledge. Furthermore Urban-4, data illustrated that more than half of the AWWs were at average (53.85%) level with (46.15%) were at low level and none of the AWWs at high level of AWWs in the knowledge. In the present study, it can be inferred that AWWs have inadequate knowledge about preschool education, government schemes, plans and basic about the ICDS. The overall data divulged that majority (69.49%) of the AWWs at average level and (20.03%) were at low level and merely (8.47%) at high level of the AWWs in knowledge. It concluded

that *anganwadi* workers have adequate and proper knowledge about the government schemes, plans and their job responsibility so that they can provide their job responsibilities in a positive and better way. Similar finding have also been reported by Sandhyarani and Rao (2013).

The data revealed the centre-wise mean scores (\pm SD) of knowledge level of *anganwadi* workers. For knowledge level, significant difference ($F=10.06$; $p<0.01$), was found in knowledge level of the AWWs. The data regarding ‘knowledge level’ of the AWWs revealed that from Urban-2 (29.40 ± 4.97) had higher mean scores as compared from other three *anganwadi* centres zone viz. Urban-1 (23.94 ± 5.43), Urban-3 (21.82 ± 3.69) and Urban-4 (19.30 ± 4.96). In the present study it can be inferred that *anganwadi* workers have satisfied knowledge about school readiness, immunization, children growth chart and other developmental activities. Similar finding have also been reported by Akshatha and Sankangouda (2019).

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that in order to improve the overall quality of preschool education, the

Table 3. Centre-wise difference in mean score (\pm SD) of knowledge level of *anganwadi* workers.

Knowledge level	Urban-1(n ₁ =20)	Urban-2(n ₂ =13)	Urban-3(n ₃ =13)	Urban-4(n ₄ =13)	F-Value
	Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD	
	23.94 \pm 5.43	29.40 \pm 4.97	21.80 \pm 3.69	19.30 \pm 4.96	10.06**

**Significant at 1%

concerned department must organize orientation courses for *anganwadi* workers in order to provide scientific knowledge regarding the non-formal preschool education of the children. Despite having a better understanding of the services and their work, *anganwadi* workers were unable to answer the basic questions about ICDS scheme, which shows the need for regular supervision and training.

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