

The role of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) in preventing and managing COVID-19 pandemic in rural western Maharashtra, India

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Statement of Problem: Health is a pre-requisite component of well-being and development of any individual as well society. Health should be considered a fundamental human right and attainment of highest level of health is a most important social goal. The Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) are the one important community health workers under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). There are about 846,309 ASHAs in the country and approximately one ASHA per 1000 population in the rural areas. India including all over World is facing the pandemic COVID-19 and virus spreading throughout the World and changes entire social system.

In India COVID-19 warriors doctors, nurses, health care takers and ASHAs are fighting the day and night against this pandemic. In rural India ASHAs are frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19 in the national capital. In this pandemic situation they are taking personal risk to prevent COVID-19. ASHAs are conducting door to door survey to screen people for COVID-19 symptoms during a nation-wide lockdown. It is very important to understand their role in preventing and managing pandemic as frontline workers. So the present study lights their role and problems they are facing in this time of pandemic.

Theoretical Orientation: The objectives of study are to under the role of ASHAs in preventing and managing the COVID-19 pandemic and to study the problems faced by ASHAs while preventing and managing the COVID. The Hypothesis of study are due to overloaded ASHAs are facing health problems and COVID-19 pandemic had adversely effects on family. The present study is based on empirical data collected from field work. Empirical cum descriptive research design was used for the present study. Data was collected from interview schedule and informal discussion with ASHAs and key informants. There are total ASHAs are working in western Maharashtra. Out of total ASHAs, 1229 forty percentage (40%) ASHAs i.e. 493 were selected for present study by using random sampling technique.

Conclusion and Significance: ASHAs are particularly known for maternal health care in rural india but now they had become the front warriors in the fight of covid-19 and with taking risk they are working for day and nights but still they are giving meager payment and non-cooperation with community. They are also one of important vulnerable human resource in health work force. We should know that they are paraprofessional and filling the gap of shortage of health force. These issues are addressed in this present study.

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Biography

Pratibha. B. Desai, M.A. (Sociology), UGC-NET (Sociology), SET (Sociology) and Ph.D. (Sociology) is working as Assistant Professor in Department of Sociology, Shivaji University, and Kolhapur. (Maharashtra State, India). Specializations of author are Gender and Society, Sociology of Development, Health, Population and Rural Sociology. She has 15 yrs of teaching and research experience. She has guided PG research projects. She has recognition to guide for doctoral students of Sociology of Shivaji University, Kolhapur and three research students are awarded and four are working for doctoral thesis.

She has completed twelve research projects of funding agencies such as UGC, ICSSR and State Women Commission more than 60 and presented more than 55 papers at various National and International workshops, seminars and conferences and published 37 research papers/ articles in journals, E-journals, proceedings and books of repute with ISBN and ISSN number at national and international level. She also published four books with ISBN number.

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