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## ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF ANGANWADI WORKERS FOR CONDUCT OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract:** The present research was carried out to assess the Knowledge and Skills of Anganwadi workers (the key functionary in the ICDS programme for delivery of services) for conduct of preschool education activities in Anganwadi centres. A sample of 105 Anganwadi workers was randomly drawn from three urban blocks of Jammu district. The tools used for collecting information were Observation and Rating scales. Rating scale devised by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) for "Assessment of Preschool Education (PSE) skills of Anganwadi workers" and self devised rating scale for "Assessing knowledge level of Anganwadi workers" were used. The results of the study revealed that majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge regarding their roles and responsibilities in preschool education component of ICDS programme. The conceptual understanding of respondents on the issues related to growth and development of child, age for preschool education, teaching method and language to be used for communication was found to be in accordance with child development theory. On the other hand, knowledge level of Anganwadi workers on the aspect of importance of early childhood, concept and need of preschool education were found inadequate. Regarding the skills of Anganwadi worker, it was found that the Anganwadi worker demonstrated good skills for communication, preparation of teaching aids, motivating and organising PSE activities, while they were optimal in other skills like interaction between Anganwadi worker and helper and several aspects related to knowledge across the selected blocks. Knowledge and skills of Anganwadi workers were found to share high positive correlation (0.75) thus depicting the interdependence of these two factors. The study has important implication for policy makers, trainers and staff of Anganwadi Training Centres (AWTCs) particularly for improvement in knowledge and skills of Anganwadi workers especially in view of large scale expansion of ICDS programme in India.

**Keyword:** Early childhood, ECD, Anganwadi centres, ICDS, Informal Education, Awareness, Expertise, J&K.

### INTRODUCTION:

ICDS is a centrally sponsored scheme, which covers child population of 0-6 years through about 13.17 lakh Anganwadi centres in 28 states and 7 union territories (XII five year plan, 2012-2017) for providing various services. The focal point of delivery of ICDS scheme's services is Anganwadi centres (AWCs) which is operated by community based Anganwadi worker (AWW) and Helper. ICDS is a community based programme and AWW is considered as a key functionary for delivery of services because AWW share a very close relation with community. The productivity of an organisation depend upon employee's job performance and infrastructure, method and job design (Jogi, 2010). In the same way, the success of AWCs depends first and foremost on knowledge and skills of an AWW. Knowledge includes facts, information or skills acquired through expressions or education. A sound knowledge of a subject can strengthen the skills and raise the capabilities. Preschool years are considered as the crucial years of life because they have decisive and lasting influence on child's wellbeing. This is the period when future learning abilities

are determined. A child who fails to acquire early education may suffer emotionally, socially, intellectually and even physically if he is admitted for primary education without any solid foundation of early childhood education (Osakwe, 2009). ICDS is the only large scale programme in India which supports needs of underprivileged children by providing package of various services like supplementary nutrition, immunization and preschool education. Non formal preschool education is very crucial component of ICDS scheme as it seeks to lay foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. The main objective of preschool education component is to stimulate and satisfy the curiosity of the child, rather than follow any rigid learning curriculum. The attainment of ICDS programme's goal depends upon effectiveness of AWW, which in turns, depend upon their knowledge, attitude and practice (Chattoadhyay, 2004). For providing maximum benefits of these services AWWs are required to undergo initial job training and undertake refresher training courses from time to time to keep their

knowledge and skills updated with latest developments. AWWs are provided with hands on experience to handle children and providing learning and stimulating preschool environment. Many researches for e.g. (Sharma and Pandey, 2005 and Davey et al, 2008) found that AWW who had undergone job training had significantly better skills than those AWWs who had not attended any training. Although many studies on ICDS with different aspects such as growth monitoring, immunization, nutritional awareness etc., have been conducted at national and state level, not many studies have been found with respect to preschool education. This study will help to investigate the loopholes in existing knowledge and skills of AWWs and help the training functionaries to focus on the areas which require more attention.

#### OBJECTIVES

The present research was undertaken with the following objectives:

Assessment of the Knowledge of Anganwadi worker about basic principles of child development and concept of Preschool Education.

Assessment of Skills of Anganwadi worker for conduct of preschool education programme in context of ICDS programme.

#### METHODOLOGY

The sample for the present study comprised AWWs. A total of 105 AWWs from three urban blocks of Jammu district were selected. From each block 35 AWCs were selected randomly by using lottery method. Only those AWCs which were operational were included in sample. In order to collect information, rating scales and observation were used as tools. The rating scales used were:

Rating scale for Assessing Skills of Anganwadi workers: This scale was devised by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD). This scale comprised of 10 items pertaining to various skills essential for AWWs for the effective implementation of preschool activities. The investigator visited the selected AWC (without informing the AWW about the visit) and observed the activities conducted during the working period for 2 hours randomly. The rating scale was later filled based on observation conducted. This was done for each AWC under study. On the basis of observation, rating was done according to their skills that varied from low to excellent. It took 2 hours approximately to fill one rating scale.

Rating Scale for Assessment of PSE Knowledge of AWWs: This scale was self devised which was made with the help of a training manual used by MLTCs for improving job training. This scale comprised of 14 items, each having three options. It was used to assess the knowledge level of AWWs on various issues related to Pre School Education. The rating scale was filled by giving rating scale to Anganwadi workers and asked them to mark (✓) to the appropriate option of the item according to their knowledge.

For both the scales, experts in the field were consulted at the time of selection and pretesting. Inter rater reliability was determined after filling during pretesting stage and only after 94% of consistency was achieved, the

actual data collection was started. The data was collected by visiting the Anganwadi centres. In initial visits rapport was established with the AWWs. Requisite data was collected with the help of various tools which were employed during the field work. The skills assessment rating scale was filled by researcher which was purely based on the observations. The average time taken for data collection in one Anganwadi centres was about 3 hours. The data was collected during January to April, 2011.

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The results of the present study have been discussed under three categories namely Profile, Knowledge and Skills of AWWs.

**Table 1 Profile of sample AWWs**

Category	N	%
<b>Qualification</b>		
Matric	64	60.95
Hr. Secondary	15	14.28
Graduation and above	26	24.75
<b>Experience (yrs)</b>		
Less than- 7	49	46.66
7+ to 14	11	10.47
14+ to 21	29	27.61
More than 21	16	15.23
<b>Age(yrs)</b>		
21-30	25	23.80
31-40	33	31.42
41-50	47	44.76

It can be seen from table 1 that out of total AWWs included as sample, a large number (44.76%) were in the age group of 41-50 years. The qualification of most of the respondents i.e. 64 (60.95%) was Matric and as far experience is concerned, the majority had less than 7 years experience of working as AWW.

**Table 2. Frequency tabulation of level of knowledge of AWWs**

Items	High	Moderate	Low
i. Role of an AWW	34 (32.28)	36 (34.28)	35 (33.33)
ii. Factor influence growth and development	66 (62.85)	21 (20.00)	18 (17.14)
iii. Importance of early childhood	32 (30.47)	62 (59.04)	11 (10.47)
iv. Concept of preschool education	28 (26.66)	67 (63.80)	10 (9.25)
v. Need of preschool education	39 (37.14)	53 (50.47)	13 (12.28)
vi. Objective of PSE in ICDS scheme	38 (36.19)	17 (16.19)	50 (47.61)
vii. Appropriate age for PSE	68 (64.76)	28 (26.66)	9 (8.57)
viii. Ideal teacher child ratio	19 (18.09)	30 (28.57)	56 (53.33)
ix. Language used for communication	69 (65.75)	35 (33.33)	1 (0.95)
x. Appropriate teaching method	99 (94.28)	4 (3.80)	2 (1.90)
xi. Duration of PSE activities	66 (62.85)	36 (34.38)	1 (0.95)
xii. Planning of PSE activities	28 (26.66)	68 (64.76)	9 (8.57)
xiii. Importance of activities conducted in AWCs	38 (36.19)	67 (63.80)	-
xiv. Schedule of play way activities	55 (52.38)	38 (36.19)	12 (11.42)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

ICDS is the only programme which caters to the needs of children in holistic manner with the help of an agent known as AWW. AWW is the main functionary who runs the AWC and provides people the benefits of services provided



under ICDS. All AWWs get job training before they join AWCs. In training they are provided with complete information about ICDS programme, its objectives and various services provided under this scheme. Table 2 depicts the knowledge level of AWWs in these aspects possessed by them at the time of data collection for this research. On analyzing the table, it was found that there is difference in the levels of knowledge of AWWs. In terms of the conceptual understanding on the issues related to importance of early childhood, concept and need of preschool education etc, AWWs had moderate level of knowledge on the other hand, the areas like appropriate age for PSE, language to be used for communication, appropriate teaching method to be used etc, where AWWs practice their knowledge regularly found in higher knowledge level. Regular use of information provided during job training / refresher courses made AWWs more clear and update their existing knowledge. But with regard to teacher child ratio and the objective of PSE in ICDS scheme, AWWs had inadequate knowledge. 50% of the respondents said that the main objective of PSE imparted in ICDS centres is to give formal education so that children can be prepared for next school. As far as importance of activities conducted in AWCs, majority (67%) agreed with the view that 'to enhance intellectual development' of child is the main purpose of activities to be conducted in AWCs. Overall, it was found that AWCs showed a positive inclination towards the awareness on issues related to preschool education but still need improvement in many areas.

**Table 3. Skills of Anganwadi Workers**

S. no.	Category	Score range for category	L		M		H	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Communication skills of AWWs with children	Low (18-23) Med. (24-29) High (30-33)	36	34.28	56	53.33	13	12.38
2	Skills pertaining to preparation of teaching aids	Low (3-6) Med. (7-10) High (11-14)	23	21.90	57	54.28	25	23.80
3	Skills of getting children participation in PSE	Low (4-7) Med. (8-11) High (12-15)	32	30.47	58	55.23	15	14.28
4	Skills of organising PSE activities	Low (4-8) Med. (9-13) High (14-18)	34	32.38	62	59.04	09	08.57
5	Skills pertaining to the use of teaching aids in PSE activities	Low (5-9) Med. (10-14) High (15-19)	58	55.23	36	34.28	11	10.47
6	Children's participation in PSE activities	Low (4-7) Med. (8-11) High (12-15)	66	62.85	31	29.57	08	07.61
7	Socio/emotional traits of AWWs	Low (19-23) Med. (24-28) High (29-33)	34	32.38	61	58.09	10	9.52
8	Interaction between AWWs and Helpers	Low (10-12) Med. (13-15) High (16-18)	15	14.28	20	19.04	70	66.66
9	Extent of liberty given by AWWs to children	Low (3-4) Med. (5-6) High (7-8)	24	22.85	76	72.38	05	04.76
10	Maintenance of PSE records and registers	Low (2-3) Med. (3-4) High (5-7)	07	6.66	14	13.33	84	80.00

Skills are considered as the ability of a person to carry out complex task in simple and easy way. The output of the ICDS scheme depend upon attitude, experience and skills of AWW(Thakare etal, 2011). AWW who is considered as key person to deliver services of ICDS should possess the required skills for efficient function of AWCs. It can be seen from table 3 that majority of the respondents scored medium on skills pertaining to preparation of teaching aid, communication, getting children participation in the preschool education and organising preschool education activities. Further, it was found that majority of the respondents scored low on skills pertaining to the use of teaching aids, as most of the Anganwadi workers used verbal method of teaching because of the non availability of teaching aids and preschool education kits. 66% of the respondents scored low in skills of motivating children to participate in preschool education activities due to lack of teaching material and repetition of same activities. Maruthilatha (1998) also studied the communication skills of the Anganwadi workers and found the AWWs possessed adequate knowledge of communication skills but they were found poor in practicing those skills. Results also shows that there was high interaction between Anganwadi workers and helper, as most of them were from the same locality and had very cooperative attitude towards each other. Regarding the extent of liberty given by Anganwadi workers to children and socio/emotional traits of the Anganwadi workers, majority (76%) and (61%) of the respondents scored medium. It was found that majority of respondents (84%) had maintained good preschool education records and registers because most of them had received training regarding this aspect. A study conducted by Bhadwal (2009) in Kathua district of J&K state also shows similar results.

**Table 4: Correlation between the various dimensions of Knowledge assessment and Skill assessment rating scale**

	Knowledge	Skills
Age	+ 0.28	+ 0.45
Experience	+ 0.18	+ 0.29
Qualification	+ 0.12	+ 0.03
Knowledge		+ 0.75

Table 4 depicts that all the dimensions i.e. age, experience, knowledge and skills of Anganwadi workers show a positive correlation with each other. Age and experience of AWW showed low positive correlation with knowledge and moderate correlation with skills. Qualification was less associated with knowledge and skills as compared to age and experience. It was also seen that knowledge and skills of Anganwadi workers also showed high positive correlation (0.75) with each other.

#### CONCLUSION

The results of the present study conducted in urban blocks of Jammu district revealed that AWWs had adequate knowledge about their role as an AWW. The areas of PSE component in which AWWs were found highly aware included duration of preschool activities and appropriate

teaching method to be used. They were found in favour of using local language while conducting PSE activities. However, it was also noted that AWWs were less aware about appropriate age and need of preschool education for children as prescribed by ICDS scheme. Regarding the skills, AWWs scored medium in most of the categories. AWWs were found highly skilled in maintaining records of AWCs. The present study also unveils the areas pertaining to the skills, where AWWs score low and need improvement which include making use of teaching aids and motivating children to participate in PSE activities carried out in AWCs. This provided preschoolers ample opportunities to unleash their creative abilities and also enhance physical and social development. The correlation analysis of attributes of AWWs shows positive relation with dimensions of Knowledge and skills assessment rating scale. Awareness of the conceptual aspects of preschool education and development of skills for transfer of educational contents to stakeholders are essential elements for success of a preschool education programme at the grassroots levels. Keeping in view the expansion taking up in ICDS programme, these elements need to be actively reviewed and strengthened. Data from the present research has identified key areas that can be considered by training functionaries and planners for inclusion in future programmes.

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