

# Evaluating the Impact of Mental Health Training on Awareness of Common Mental Disorders among Community Health Officers in Raisen District, Madhya Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health constitutes an integral dimension of overall well-being, significantly influencing individuals' quality of life and societal harmony. In rural regions, like Madhya Pradesh, accessing adequate mental health care often poses substantial challenges due to various barriers. This study aims to evaluate the impact of training on the awareness of common mental disorders (CMDs) among Community Health Officers (CHOs) in Raisen District, Madhya Pradesh. Using a quasi-experimental design, 42 CHOs from Health & Wellness Centres in the Raisen district participated in a comprehensive two-day training program covering CMD identification, assessment, and management. Baseline knowledge assessment revealed a moderate pre-training score of 18.2 out of 30, while the post-training score significantly improved to 26.8. The study emphasizes the pivotal role of such training interventions in enhancing mental health care awareness and proficiency within underserved communities ultimately contributing to improved accessibility and quality of mental health care in rural settings.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social well-being, is an integral facet of human health that significantly influences an individual's overall quality of life.(1) While physical health has traditionally dominated the healthcare landscape, the recognition of mental health as an essential component of holistic well-being has gained momentum in recent years. However, despite this growing awareness, mental health care continues to face challenges, particularly in underserved and rural areas.(2) Rural areas often face multiple obstacles that make it hard to get proper mental health care. Geographic isolation, limited resources, cultural beliefs, and stigma surrounding mental health concerns converge to create a significant gap in service delivery. (3) This is especially pronounced in rural Madhya Pradesh, where communities are characterized by a diverse cultural background alongside socioeconomic vulnerabilities. In this context, Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs) assume a crucial role in providing healthcare to rural populations. These centers, aligned with the Ayushman Bharat initiative, aim to deliver comprehensive primary healthcare services, bringing medical care closer to the communities they serve. Community Health Officers (CHOs) operating within HWCs play an instrumental role in delivering a wide range of health services, including health promotion, disease prevention, and basic medical care.(4) While CHOs are central figures in rural healthcare delivery, the complex landscape of mental health often

poses challenges to their ability to identify and manage common mental disorders. Limited exposure to mental health training and the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health issues can lead to under recognition and suboptimal care. This results in missed opportunities for early intervention, appropriate treatment, and referrals to specialized care.

To address these gaps, there is a growing emphasis on integrating mental health into primary care services, recognizing that CHOs are uniquely positioned to bridge the divide between physical and mental health care in rural settings. One promising strategy involves providing targeted mental health training to CHOs, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to identify, manage, and provide initial support for common mental disorders. This study seeks to contribute to the advancement of mental health care within rural Madhya Pradesh by examining the effects of mental health training on the knowledge of common mental disorders among CHOs of Health & Wellness Centres. The primary objective is to assess whether mental health training enhances the capacity of CHOs to recognize, address, and provide appropriate guidance for individuals with mental health concerns.

By conducting a comprehensive evaluation of CHOs' knowledge levels before and after participating in mental health training, the study aims to elucidate the impact of training interventions.

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design to assess the impact of mental health training on the knowledge of common mental disorders among CHOs of Health & Wellness Centres in rural Madhya Pradesh. This design allowed for the comparison of CHOs' knowledge levels before and after the training intervention. The study focused on CHOs working in Health & Wellness Centres of Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. A purposive sampling method was employed to select a representative sample of CHOs who attended the mental health training. A total of 42 CHOs were purposively selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. Pre training assessment was done before the training and the questionnaire was shared through WhatsApp after obtaining consent. A structured knowledge assessment tool was developed based on established mental health guidelines and literature. The tool comprised multiple-choice questions and case-based scenarios to evaluate CHOs' baseline understanding of common mental disorders. A comprehensive training program was given in collaboration with mental health experts. The program spanned two days and covered topics such as the identification, assessment, and initial management of common mental disorders. The training involved interactive discussions, case studies, and role-playing exercises to enhance engagement and knowledge retention. The same knowledge assessment tool used in the pre-training assessment was administered immediately after the training program to measure the impact of the intervention on CHOs' knowledge levels. The pre- and post-training knowledge scores were analysed using paired sample t-tests to determine if there was a statistically significant improvement in CHOs' knowledge following the training intervention. A significance level of  $p < 0.05$  was chosen.

## RESULTS

Out of the 42 participants, 92.8% were female, reflecting the gender distribution within the CHO workforce. The average age of the participants was 28 years, with a standard deviation of 4.2 years. The CHOs had an average of 2.5 years of experience working in rural healthcare settings, contributing to a diverse and representative sample.

**Table 1: Characteristics of study subjects**

Characteristics	n= 42
Sex*	
Males	3 (7.15)
Females	39 (92.85)
Age	28 (4.2)
Year since joining the post	2.5(0.8)
Pretest knowledge score	18.2 (3.8)
Post test Knowledge score	26.8 (2.5)

Values are mean (SD), \*number (%)

The baseline knowledge assessment was conducted to evaluate CHOs' understanding of common mental disorders. The assessment consisted of 30 questions covering various aspects of mental health, including symptoms, risk factors, and appropriate interventions. The average pre-training knowledge score was 18.2 out of a possible 30 points, with a standard deviation of 3.8. This score indicated a moderate level of baseline knowledge among the CHOs. The post-training assessment aimed to measure any changes in knowledge levels resulting from the training intervention. The average post-training knowledge score was 26.8 out of 30 points, with a standard deviation of 2.5. The post-training scores indicated a substantial improvement in CHOs' understanding of common mental disorders compared to their baseline knowledge levels

**Table 2: Proportion of CHOs who answered correctly on each question of the knowledge questionnaire before and after training (n=42)**

Domain	CHOs answered correctly in pre-test n (%)	CHO answered correctly in post-test n (%)
Identification of common mental disorders	25 (59.5)	37 (88.09)
Knowledge of depressive symptoms	19 (45.2%)	31 (73.8)
Identification of generalized anxiety disorder	23 (54.76)	37 (88.09)
Knowledge of side effects of antidepressant medication	16 (38.09)	36 (85.7)
Knowledge of indications for patient referral	19 (45.23)	38 (90.47)

To assess the statistical significance of the improvement in knowledge, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean pre- and post-training knowledge scores. The analysis revealed a highly significant increase in knowledge ( $t(41) = 11.38, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the mental health training program led to a substantial enhancement in CHOs' knowledge of common mental disorders.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of mental health training in enhancing the knowledge of common mental disorders among Community Health Officers (CHOs) in

Health & Wellness Centres in rural Madhya Pradesh. The substantial improvement in post-training knowledge scores highlights the potential of targeted training interventions to bridge the gap in mental health care within primary care settings. Our findings are in line with those of previous studies that have found that the baseline level of knowledge has improved post-training(5,6).The significant increase in knowledge scores among CHOs underscores the positive impact of the mental health training program. The improvement of approximately 8.6 points (out of 30) represents a substantial enhancement in CHOs' understanding of common mental disorders. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the benefits of tailored training interventions in improving healthcare professionals' competence and confidence in addressing mental health concerns.(7,8)

The observed improvement in knowledge has profound implications for mental health care delivery in rural Madhya Pradesh. CHOs, as frontline healthcare providers, play a critical role in identifying and addressing common mental disorders. The enhanced knowledge gained from the training equips CHOs to recognize symptoms, provide initial support, and make informed decisions about referrals to specialized mental health services. By integrating mental health education into the professional development of CHOs, the study contributes to the broader goal of improving mental health care access and outcomes for rural communities. Strengthening the capacity of CHOs to handle mental health concerns can lead to earlier intervention, reduced stigma, and improved patient outcomes. Furthermore, this approach aligns with global efforts to integrate mental health into primary care, recognizing the interconnectedness of mental and physical well-being.

While the study provides compelling evidence of the positive impact of mental health training, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. The relatively short-term follow-up after the training intervention restricts our understanding of long-term knowledge retention and its translation into clinical practice. Additionally, the sample size of 42 CHOs, while representative, may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population.

## CONCLUSION

The study's findings underscore the importance of continued investment in mental health training initiatives for healthcare professionals especially in rural and underserved areas. The knowledge enhancement observed among CHOs indicates a positive step towards improving mental health care access and outcomes for rural communities, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive and integrated approach to healthcare delivery.

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