

# Associated Factors of Perceived Stress Among ASHA Workers During COVID 19 Pandemic

Ms. Veena V J<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Reena A Thankaraj<sup>2</sup>, Ms. Shija K<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Msc Nursing, Community Health Nursing, Govt. College of Nursing, Alappuzha

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, OBG, Govt. College of Nursing

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Psychiatry, Govt. College Of Nursing

## ABSTRACT

The present study was intended to assess the associated factors of perceived stress among ASHA workers in Alappuzha district during COVID 19 pandemic. The objectives of this study were to find out the associated factors of perceived stress among ASHA workers during COVID 19 pandemic, to find out the association between perceived stress among ASHA workers and associated factors of perceived stress. Descriptive cross-sectional design was used for this study. Betty Neuman's system model was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Based on inclusion criteria, 150 ASHA workers of Alappuzha district were selected by multi stage cluster random sampling technique. The tool used in this study consisted of modified perceived stress scale for assessing perceived stress, socio personal data sheet for assessing the socio personal data and structured questionnaire for assessing associated factors of perceived stress. The findings of the study showed that 64.7% of ASHA workers had moderate stress and 35.3% had severe stress. The result showed that there was an association between perceived stress among ASHA workers and socio personal factors such as age, religion and number of earning members in the family.

**Keywords:** Perceived stress; COVID 19 pandemic; ASHA workers.

## Introduction

COVID-19, which was detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, was subsequently declared a pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, by WHO.<sup>1</sup> Being in the front line of battling the pandemic, health care workers are the most vulnerable to health risks. It was reported from West Africa during the time of Ebola that health workers were 20 to 30 times more likely to get infected than the general population.<sup>(2)</sup> Under the National Rural Health Mission, which was launched in 2005, the Government of India recruited ASHA workers to connect the marginalized communities to health care. ASHA workers act as a bridge between the government and the people.<sup>3</sup> According to Press Information Bureau of the Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (September 2019), there are 1047324 ASHAs working all over India.<sup>4</sup> Around 1 million Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), 2.6 million Anganwadi workers (AWWs) and entire cadre of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) have been at the forefront of COVID-19 response system in India.<sup>5</sup> During COVID-19, additional tasks of monitoring and conducting syndromic surveys, disease surveillance, data reporting, public health messaging, delivering essential food and ration services at the community level. It is evident that India's pandemic response was heavily reliant on the underpaid, undervalued, and invisible labour of its community health care workforce.<sup>6</sup>

## Objectives

- To assess the perceived stress among ASHA workers during COVID 19 pandemic.
- To find out the association between perceived stress among ASHA workers and socio personal variables.

## Materials and methods

The study adopted a quantitative approach and descriptive Cross-sectional design. The study was conducted in Selected health centers of Alappuzha district. In the study, the population consisted of ASHA Workers of Alappuzha district. Sampling technique used in this study was Multi stage cluster random sampling technique. The period of the study was 6 weeks. Formal permission for data collection was obtained from from AMO UHTC Ambalapuzha, AMORHTC Chettikadu, District Program Manager, National Health Mission, Alappuzha .Data collection period was 21<sup>st</sup> March to 30 April2022.ASHA workers were selected based on the inclusion criteria, an informed consent was obtained from ASHA workers who were willing to take part in the study, thereafter socio personal data was collected by socio personal data sheet, perceived stress assessed by modified perceived stress scale-based questionnaire. The total duration of data collection for each ASHA workers was 30-40 minutes. The investigator followed COVID 19 protocol during the administration of tools. The data from 150 ASHA workers were collected, organized, tabulated and subjected to inferential statistics with the help of statistical package for the social science (SPSS), Data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Socio personal variables was analyzed using frequency and percentage. Level of stress among ASHA Workers were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Association between perceived stress and socio Personal variables were analyzed by using chi-square test.

## Result

Result showed that among ASHA workers 32.7% belonged to the age group of 56-65 years and 76 % of ASHA workers belonged to Hindu religion. It was evident that 54% of ASHA workers were educated up to high school and 35.3% were up to higher secondary level. Among the ASHA workers 76.7% were married. The study showed that 78 % of ASHA workers belonged to nuclear family. The study depicted that 86% of ASHA workers had 10 -15 years of experience and 8% of ASHA workers had greater than15 years of experience. 44.7% of ASHA workers had monthly family income between Rs 6175-18496. The study depicted that 72.7 % of ASHA workers had no under five-year children in their family. Among ASHA workers 53.3% had only one earning member in their family. Majority of the ASHA workers (63.3 %) used walking as their mode of conveyance. It was found that all the ASHA workers in this study belonged to Panchayath area. Majority (42%) of ASHA workers had the history of previous COVID 19 infections. Among ASHA workers 50% reported that their family members had COVID 19 infection. In the present study 44.6% of ASHA workers had Chronic diseases. It was evident that among the participants 42% had one chronic disease and 2.7% had more than one chronic disease. The study finding showed that 40.4% of ASHA workers had hypertension and 14.9% had asthma. Among ASHA workers 42% had reported that their family members had chronic diseases.

There was statistically significant association between perceived stress among ASHA workers and insecure environment, difficulty in meeting basic needs, lack of recognition for hard work and services, difficulty to get free Covid test for family members and personal relationship problems due to contact with Covid patients. But there was no statistically significant association between perceived stress among

ASHA workers and other associated factors of perceived stress and  $H_{02}$  was accepted and it can be interpreted that there was no significant association between perceived stress among ASHA workers and associated factors of perceived stress.

The present findings of the study highlight the need for strategies that are to be under taken to reduce stress. and also minimize the associated factors caused by perceived stress. The goal of assessing perceived stress and associated factors will help to identify their stress and factors associated with it, so that they can be empowered by planning further program for manage their stress and other issues. Stress can have a number of impacts on health including mental and behavioural disorders such as exhaustion, burn out, anxiety and depression, as well as other physical impairments such as cardio vascular disease and Musculo skeletal disorders. In addition, stress can result in work absences, higher turnover, early retirement, lower productivity, and lower quality of services or products. The findings of the study help to identify the problems faced by ASHA workers during COVID 19 pandemic. If well-equipped health system exists, family and social support, it can improve the ability of ASHA workers to perform their role effectively and also raise their credibility and trust in the community.