

Capturing the perceived outcomes of a Competency training program of ICDS staff working in informal settlements of Mumbai: A qualitative study

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Background

SNEHA in collaboration with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme, Government of India conducted a Competency training program for enhancing interpersonal communication and functionality skills of ICDS staff from December 2021 – November 2022. The training borrowing from behavior model of team effectiveness covered topics - empathy, managing commitments, accountability, ownership, communication, trust, managing self, understanding team dysfunctions, understanding conflict, and focus on results and growth mindset (Lencioni P, 2002).

The objective of the exploratory study was to investigate the perceived outcomes of the training including changes at work practices.

Source: https://www.hrsource.org/MAIMIS/HRS/Training/The_Five_Behaviors.aspx
[The Five Behaviors \(hrsource.org\)](https://www.hrsource.org/MAIMIS/HRS/Training/The_Five_Behaviors.aspx)

Methodology

From March to May 2023, an exploratory study designed on qualitative framework was conducted to understand the perceived outcomes of the competency training. Purposive sampling was used and primary data sources consisted of 3 focus group discussions involving 30 Anganwadi workers and 4 in-depth interviews conducted with supervisory cadres including the Child development Project Officer from 300 Anganwadi centers covered under the training program. Interactions with SNEHA training team was carried out through on-site and telephonic interviews. Secondary data sources included observation reports of the training team and analysis of session pre and post test scores. Recorded data was transcribed and content analysis was done for broader themes to emerge.

Data Analysis

Informed consent from the respondents was obtained prior to the data collection process. Content analysis was done of the primary data to allow for major themes to emerge. Secondary data was used to corroborate the findings and draw the conclusions. Study findings were reviewed with the research team followed drawing out the final analysis and conclusions. Draft report was shared with the SNEHA team followed by the final report of the study.

Results

- The recipients of the Competency training noted a significant shift in their approach towards community engagement post using interpersonal communication techniques like empathy, active listening.
- More professional interactions with stakeholders marked by a non-judgmental attitude, upholding of client confidentiality and effective conflict management.
- The Anganwadi workers reported a heightened self-confidence despite working in challenging conditions.
- The supervisors reported that their capacity for managing manpower (anganwadi workers) has grown which can be attributed to their improved communication skills.

Perceived Outcomes for Anganwadi workers

- **More effective beneficiary engagement:** First listen, put themselves in beneficiary's shoes i.e. empathize, then respond. Active realization of need to maintain beneficiary confidentiality, non-judgmental attitude, not offering advice, not taking offense at personal level.]
- **Follow up of reluctant cases:** More professional stance of rapport building with beneficiaries, repeated follow ups and explaining the benefits of availing services at Anganwadi center.
- **More affirmative interactions leading to increased trust among the beneficiaries:** Increased awareness of nuances of professional interactions with beneficiaries leading to mutual trust and professional stance in work commitments.
- **Increased preparedness for work completion:** Planning for work activities be it classroom teaching or community engagement. Maintaining diary to track work on daily/monthly basis.
- **Increased self confidence:** Training sub themes focused on behavior changes with experiential sharing, peer learnings has provided space for self reflection and improving skill sets. Thus increased confidence in self in dealing with challenges in community.
- **Perceived changes in personal lives:** Use of techniques in their personal lives to put across their personal needs to family members.

Perceived Outcomes for Anganwadi Supervisors

- **Augment capacities for manpower management:** Supervisors shared an increased self awareness and empathetic approach in management of the frontline workers i.e. Anganwadi workers.
- **Improved communication with Anganwadi workers:** Active listening and responding leading to improved relationships.

Quotations as shared during stakeholder interactions

“Before training, I used to be very hyper for small things also. When someone will talk to me, I will react immediately.” (AWW)

“I think the other person is telling me her problem because she trusts me. I need to listen to them...This is the skill I learnt.” (AWW)

“They (community members) entrust their children with us. So when the women tell us something we should not tell others. We used to do the same but not consciously.” (AWW)

“If we have to teach a topic, we should revise...when we have to do any work, we should prepare first...then only go in the area.” (AWW)

“There is a gradual change in the way they respond to work issues such as reporting and follow ups. Post training there has been a shift in perception of work and better understanding of completing work in time.” (Supervisor)

“Competency training is necessary life-skill training. As there has been no capacity building for last two years, their skill building for intercommunication skills and more professional approach has been a gap area. They may not remember the technical language but when faced with critical situation, they have learnt skills to deal with it. Changes can happen only within oneself.” (CDPO)

Implications

- Competency training provided by SNEHA for the anganwadi workers was first of its kind. The frontline workers who are local recruits operate under challenging conditions – both structural and functional face increased expectations in terms of their work roles. However there is a marked gap in their skill set to meet these expectations, hence need for more trainings.
- SNEHA's capacity building on competency skill set has inculcated a more professional approach and augmented their interpersonal communication and conflict management skills.
- Refresher courses are required to strengthen and convert the learnings to protocolized practiced techniques to be followed by the ICDS staff.
- Systems support is essential in terms of buy-in from ICDS management and active participation by supervisors for long term periodic engagement leading to increase in training participants and ownership of training program.

Poster information is sourced from Evaluation Report: ICDS Competency Training by Aahar Program (2021-22), SNEHA

