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Training Needs of Field Functionaries Working in the Area of Substance Abuse Prevention and Recovery

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ABSTRACT

Alcohol and drug abuse have emerged as a serious concern in India. Maintaining a check on their use and controlling and curbing the menace is becoming difficult. Substance abuse recovery programmes provide the best chances for a long-term recovery by providing substance abusers with a safe physical and psychological environment. The study titled "Training Needs Of Field Functionaries Working in the Area of Substance Abuse Prevention and Recovery was undertaken to understand what knowledge and skills sets are required by the field functionaries to deal with the clients, to find the source of their knowledge and skills, challenges they face while doing their job and what are their needs in terms of knowledge and skills. In-depth interviews were conducted with the field functionaries, management staff, clients in the substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation centers, as well as the family members of clients. Observation of the infrastructure at the work place was also done as inadequate infrastructure can become a major hurdle and decrease the work performance. The field functionaries received formal and informal pieces of training, both within the organization and from outside agencies, depending on the needs of the functionaries. Most of the field functionaries were found to be multitasking. The key areas identified for further training of the field functionaries were, more information about substance abuse (history, effects, and newer drugs), communication and counseling skills are required to deal with the clients. Other areas included health management, sex education, gender sensitivity, life skills, documentation, and reporting. Infrastructure also needed an up-gradation in almost all the organization. The study highlighted the need for intense training and capacity building of the field functionaries working in the area of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. However, the paucity of training experience, as well as social workers high levels of interest in participating in more training, indicated that these field functionaries were able and motivated to improve their knowledge and skills. The findings of the study can be used to design training modules to improve the work performance of these functionaries.

Key Words : Training need assessment, Field functionaries, Substance abuse, Recovery, Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

The epidemic of substance abuse in the young generation has assumed alarming dimensions in India. Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress and dwindling supportive bonds are leading to initiation into substance use. Today there is no part of the world that is free from the use of drugs. Drug trafficking and drug abuse in India alone is alarming.

Substance abuse :

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after

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repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state (World Drug Report, 2018). Addiction is the continued repetition of a behavior despite adverse consequences or a neurological impairment leading to such behaviors (Angres and Angres, 2008). Addictions can include but are not limited to, drug, exercise, food, computer, gambling. Classic hallmarks of addiction impaired control over substances or behaviors, preoccupation with substance or behavior, continued use despite consequences, and denial (Morse and Flavin, 1992).

According to the UNODC (2003) about 275 million people worldwide, which is roughly 5.6 per cent of the global population aged 15–64 years, used drugs at least once during 2016. Some 31 million people who use drugs suffer from drug use disorders, meaning that their drug use is harmful to the point where they may need treatment. According to WHO, roughly 450,000 people died as a result of drug use in 2015. These deaths, 167,750 were directly associated with drug use disorders (mainly overdoses). The rest were indirectly attributable to drug use and included deaths related to HIV and hepatitis C acquired through unsafe injecting practices (World Drug Report, 2018).

Training :

Training is a procedure with defined parameters. Training is a process of empowerment of the participants. Empowering means fostering a sense of commitment and infusing an urge in the participants for subsequent action, on the basis of learning acquired during the training program (Agochiya, 2002). It has a beginning and definite end, until the procedure starts from the very beginning again at a consequent time and, presumably, in, in some other setting. Activities and events are organized in a way that there is a perceptible forward movement, progression, and growth of the procedure itself. Training activities and events are adhered and mixed amicably. The entire procedure is underpinned by the program and learning goals (Agochiya, 2002).

Needs assessment :

Training need can be defined as the condition having perceived difference between 'what is' and 'what should be' in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that these gaps or needs can be fulfilled, in order to enable the field functionaries to perform their roles more effectively in their work organizations. Needs assessment is a tool for determining valid and useful problems which are philosophically as well as practically sound. It keeps us from running down blinder educational alleys, from using time, dollar and people in attempted solutions which will not work (Tessmer, 2008). Yondeowei and Kwarteng (2006) defined training need as the difference between the required level of individual competence and his present level of competence.

According to Kaufman and Thiagarajan (1987), need is a technical term defined as a gap in the results; it is the difference between what is and what should be (as cited by Richey). These gaps are then analyzed to determine if they can be resolved by training or other organizational interventions. Training need assessment is vital in the training process. Need assessment helps to identify present problems and future challenges to be met through training and development. It is required to find out the needs of individual training on which they should build their professional competencies to carry out the assigned job in their organization.

Substance abuse recovery programmes provide the best chances for long-term recovery by providing substance abusers with a safe physical and psychological assistance. However, compared to the number of functionaries into this field and a vast amount of skills they require, there are only a limited number of institutions in Delhi that provide training to various categories of field functionaries working in the area of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. These training can last from one day to a few months.

Research questions :

– What knowledge and skills are required by field functionaries working in the area of substance abuse prevention, recovery, and rehabilitation?

– What challenges do the field functionaries face while performing their duties?

– What strategies can be planned to facilitate the work of the field functionaries?

– What opportunities are there for training these field functionaries?

Objectives of the study :

1. To identify the knowledge, skills, and support

needed by field functionaries working in the area of substance abuse to improve services rendered by them.

2. To enlist the challenges experienced by these field functionaries in performing their duties.

3. To determine the opinion of the management and clients regarding the services rendered by these field functionaries and the scope for improvement in the same.

4. To suggest areas for training and capacity building of these field functionaries to improve the services rendered by them.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Delhi in various organizations working in the area of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. Total 65 respondents from 9 organizations were selected for this study. It was exploratory research and the study is based exclusively on the primary data collected through direct personal interview of the respondents. The study employed an in-depth interview and observation method of data collection and purposive sampling technique is used for selecting the sample. After the collection of data, it was systematically arranged and tabulated for further analysis and tabulated for further analysis and meaningful interpretation of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings based on the analysis of results are presented herewith through different tables and figures.

Profile of the respondents :

It can be seen from Table 1, that (73 %) respondents were below 40 years of age and were comparatively newer in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. Only 10 per cent respondents were above 50 years and two of these functionaries had the maximum experience in their field.

Table 1 : Age of field functionaries

Age (Years)	Percentage
20-30	43
30-40	30
40-50	17
50-60	7
>60	3
Total	100

The ratio of male to female functionaries was 60:40 with the majority of the women being either teachers or counselors. 60 per cent of respondents had been in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation for less than 5 years. They had also received the least number of training.

Reason(s) for working in the area of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation :

It can be seen from the Fig. 1 that majority of the respondents 43 per cent were ex-addicts who had recovered from the same organization and wanted to carry on in the field either due to further strengthen their will or to compensate for the harm they might have caused to the society and to help other people who were going through the same tough time. The study also showed that an increasing number of people were developing an interest in the field of substance abuse. For women, especially it is a huge achievement to be able to work in this field due to the stigma and misconceptions attached with this field.

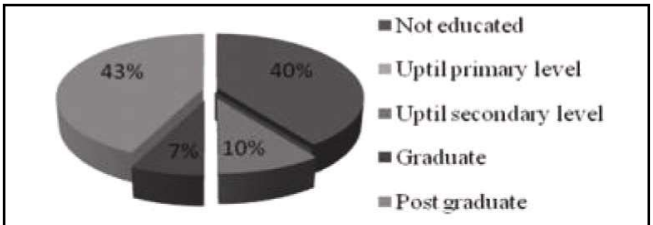

Fig. 1 : Educational qualification of field functionaries

Work schedule and nature of field functionaries :

Nearly all the field functionaries reported no fixed schedule to carry out their activities on a daily basis. Also, except for teachers, all the other categories of respondents reported of multitasking, with the majority of the functionaries performing various kinds of tasks both within and outside the organization. It was also found that different organizations had a different routine to be followed, usually depending on the treatment model it

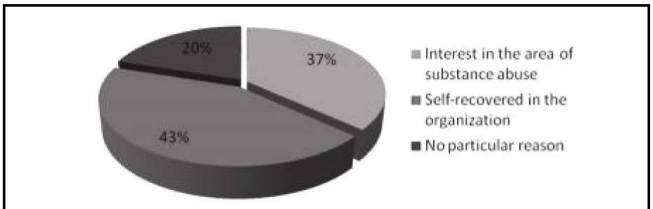

Fig. 2 : Reason(s) for working in the area of substance abuse

followed. Also, none of the respondents gave a fixed monthly or yearly schedule. Preparing files, documents, attending meetings, giving reports, etc. are some of the weekly tasks they performed. Training was the only special things that came up surprisingly (Fig. 2).

Source of acquiring knowledge and skills :

Majority of the learning's of the field functionaries were experience based. They got this experience from the formal training they received as well as the informal training the discussions that they had with the other staff where they discussed and shared their problems and experiences on a daily or weekly basis (Fig. 3).

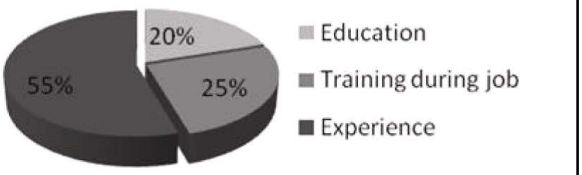

Fig. 3 : Source of acquiring knowledge and skills

Only 47 per cent respondents of the various organizations had received some sort of formal training. The ones with formal education were teachers, clinical counselors or welfare officer. However, being educated did not mean that they had all the knowledge and skills required to work in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. They, too, had acquired the majority of their skills through experience and training.

Preparedness to deal with clients with special needs:

Majority of the respondents said that they did not have/keep such people. Out of these, some respondents said that they purposely did not keep such people due to the special requirements they had, the different kind of "environment" they created and the difficulty in handling them. Other functionaries, especially dealing with night shelters and IDUs reported of taking care of the clients as per their requirements especially the ones with HIV.

Satisfaction with current skills to work in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation :

Majority of the field functionaries were satisfied with their emotional skills and their commitment and willingness to continue working in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation because these were either the ex-addicts who wanted to further help people to overcome this menace or the ones who were genuinely interested in working in this field or the new ones who were developing interest. 40 per cent of respondents were not confident with their communication skills and needed more training on counseling, mostly family counseling.

Areas for further training and capacity building :

All the respondents acknowledged the fact that the more knowledge they received the better it would help them to build upon their skills and knowledge. Some wanted to be able to change their behavior towards the clients, especially anger management. Others wanted to improve upon their communication and counseling skills, sex education and life skills. Many of the functionaries wanted to know more about the field of drugs, their history, effects on the physical, social and mental wellbeing of a human as well as the new kinds of drugs coming up in the market, especially synthetic ones.

Conclusion :

The results of this study revealed that the majority of the private organizations had been opened by recovered addicts who lacked proper knowledge and technical know-how about substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation themselves. The clients got into drug addiction at an early stage. The factors responsible for instigating them into drug addiction were supportive peer group, personal and family reasons and easy access to drugs. The clients abused a wide variety of drugs in various forms. The functionaries in most of the organizations worked on low salary purely because of self-motivation and their willingness to do social good.

Majority of the field functionaries were in the field of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation either because they were ex-addicts or because of genuine interest. While almost all the ex-addicts were uneducated, the ones who were in the field because due to self-interest (usually teachers and clinical counselors) were educated in their own field. The field functionaries received formal and informal training, both within the organization and from outside agencies, depending on the needs of the functionaries. All the functionaries expressed a need for training. However, the older functionaries wanted training to update and upgrade their existing knowledge and skills while the ones who had joined recently had fewer opportunities for training than the older ones. This meant

that the knowledge and skills the older functionaries received got filtered and then passed on to others.

Majority of the functionaries wanted to further change their behavior and attitude toward clients into substance abuse, to improve their communication and counseling skills and to learn more about the various aspects of substance abuse.

Recommendations :

- Capacity building and training programmes should be provided to the field functionaries working in the area of substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation. The training can be of two types: orientation training and on the job training.
- On the job training can be done to provide specific knowledge and skills in the following areas: communication and counseling, changing behavior of functionaries towards clients (anger management, emotional control and sensitivity towards needs of the clients), professionalism, medical management, sex education, gender sensitivity, life skills, documentation, and reporting.
- The infrastructure of the organizations should be improved manifold to increase the working capacity of functionaries. The infrastructure should become more disabled friendly. The safety and security norms practiced in the organizations should also be monitored.
- NGOs should have robust Management Information Systems (MIS) to monitor and evaluate the performance of the field functionaries and management staff. Performance appraisal exercises should be carried out regularly to assess achievements and outcomes of the field functionaries. Appraisal feedback can be offered to bridge the knowledge and skill gap of the field functionaries.

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