

Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers in Delivering Services under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Program in Dhemaji District, Assam

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in delivering services in Dhemaji district, Assam, by identify the factors affecting their ability to deliver services effectively, and suggest recommendations for improvement. A descriptive survey method was employed, using a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyze data. A total of 100 Anganwadi workers were selected from 2 blocks in Dhemaji district. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect data, which was analyzed using percentage analysis. The study reveals that Anganwadi workers face significant challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training and resources, low salaries and delayed payments, high workload and stress, and lack of community support.

Keywords- *Anganwadi workers, ICDS program, challenges, service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training and resources, low salaries and delayed payments, high workload and stress, lack of community support*

Introduction

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program is a government-sponsored initiative aimed at improving the health, nutrition, and education of children under six years of age. Anganwadi workers are the frontline workers responsible for implementing the program at the grassroots level. Despite their critical role, Anganwadi workers face numerous challenges that affect their ability to deliver services effectively.

The ICDS program is a comprehensive initiative that aims to address the nutritional and health needs of children and pregnant women in India. The program provides a range of services, including supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, and education. Anganwadi workers play a vital role in delivering these services and ensuring that they reach the most vulnerable populations.

The Role of Anganwadi Workers

Anganwadi workers are the frontline workers responsible for implementing the ICDS program at the grassroots level. They play a vital role in delivering services to children and pregnant women, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and care to lead healthy and productive lives. Anganwadi workers are responsible for providing a range of services, including :

- **Supplementary nutrition:** Anganwadi workers provide supplementary nutrition to children and pregnant women, helping to address malnutrition and related health problems.
- **Health check-ups:** Anganwadi workers conduct regular health check-ups, monitoring the health and well-being of children and pregnant women.
- **Education:** Anganwadi workers provide education and support to children, helping to promote their cognitive and social development.

Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers

Anganwadi workers play a vital role in delivering essential services to children and pregnant women. However, they face numerous challenges that impact their ability to deliver services effectively. The key challenges include :

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure poses a significant challenge to Anganwadi workers, hindering their ability to deliver essential services like healthcare, nutrition, and education. Limited resources, including inadequate building conditions, lack of clean water facilities, insufficient space for activities, poor sanitation facilities etc. This can compromise the quality of services, limit access to care, and negatively impact the health and well-being of children and pregnant women.
- **Insufficient training and resources:** They often lack adequate training in critical areas such as healthcare, nutrition, and education, which can impact their competence and confidence. Furthermore, Anganwadi workers may not receive necessary support and guidance, leaving them without the supervision and mentoring needed to excel in their roles. Limited access to relevant resources and materials also restricts their capacity to provide accurate information and effective services.
- **Low Salaries and Delayed Payments:** Anganwadi workers often face significant financial challenges due to low salaries and delayed payments.

Their salaries may not adequately reflect their workload and responsibilities, leading to feelings of undervaluation and frustration.

- **High Workload and Stress:** Anganwadi workers often face a high workload and stress due to managing large numbers of children and pregnant women, performing multiple tasks, and meeting targets and deadlines. Their responsibilities can be overwhelming, ranging from providing healthcare and nutrition services to delivering education and meeting programmatic targets.
- **Lack of Community Support:** Limited community awareness and participation can make it difficult for workers to engage with beneficiaries and achieve their goals. Furthermore, a lack of cooperation and support from community members can lead to resistance or apathy, undermining the impact of Anganwadi services.

Significance of the Study

The study on “Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers in Delivering Services under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Program in Dhemaji District, Assam” is significant as it will provide insights into the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in implementing the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program. Despite the crucial role Anganwadi workers play in delivering essential services to children and pregnant women, there is limited research on the challenges they encounter. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in Dhemaji district, Assam, and providing insights that can inform policy makers and program formulators decisions to support them. By understanding these challenges, the study can contribute to improving the effectiveness of the ICDS program and ultimately enhancing the health, nutrition, and education outcomes of vulnerable populations.

Objectives of the study

The study has three primary objectives that aim to explore the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in delivering services in Dhemaji district, Assam.

- To understand the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in delivering services in Dhemaji district, Assam.
- To identify the factors that affect the ability of Anganwadi workers to deliver services effectively.

- To suggest recommendations for improving the delivery of ICDS services by Anganwadi workers in Dhemaji district, Assam.

The objectives of the study are to contribute to the improvement of the ICDS program in Dhemaji district, Assam, by identifying the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers and providing recommendations for improvement. By achieving this goal, the study aims to ultimately benefit the children and pregnant women served by the program and improve their health, nutrition, and education outcomes.

Design of the Study

- **Methodology:** Descriptive survey method was used for carried out the current study, as its primary objective was to explore the challenges of Anganwadi Workers that served as providers of ECCE in the Dhemaji District.
- **Population:** All the Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) under ICDS of Dhemaji District were taken as population. This district comprises 2 sub-divisions and 4 blocks.
- **Sample and Sampling technique:** The researcher selected a total of 100 AWWs from 2 blocks under the Dhemaji District, Assam. The Sample was selected through a combination of Multistage Random sampling and Purposive sampling technique.
- **Statistical analysis:** This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges of Anganwadi Workers in Dhemaji District. The study was analysed using percentage analysis only. No hypotheses were formulated.
- **Tool used:** The survey was administered through face-to-face interviews with Anganwadi workers and helpers, ensuring a high response rate and accurate data collection. The survey instrument was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, with questions focused on challenges of Anganwadi Workers in Dhemaji District.

Delimitation of the study

1. The study confined to Dhemaji district only.
2. The study delimited in 100 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Objective (I) : To Explore the Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers in Delivering Services

Table - 1
Demographic Information of Surveyed Anganwadi Workers

Demographic Variable	Percentage	Total
Gender		
Female	100%	100
Age		
20-30 years	20%	20
31-40 years	60%	60
41-50 years	10%	10
Above 50 years	10%	10
Education level		
H.S.L.C	40%	40
H.S.	40%	40
Graduation	20%	20

The survey provides valuable insights into the demographic profile of Anganwadi workers who participated in the study. The respondents were all women, reflecting the predominantly female workforce in this sector.

Age Distribution : The age distribution of Anganwadi workers reveals that -

- 20% of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old, indicating a relatively young segment of the workforce.
- 60% of respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, suggesting that the majority of Anganwadi workers are in their middle age.
- 10% of respondents were between 41 and 50 years old, indicating a smaller proportion of workers in this age group.
- 10% of respondents were over 50 years old, highlighting the presence of experienced and mature workers in the sector.

Educational Qualifications : The educational qualifications of Anganwadi workers show that:

- 40% of respondents had completed Higher Secondary Leaving Certificate (H.S.L.C.), indicating a basic level of education.
- 40% of respondents had passed Higher Secondary, suggesting a slightly higher level of education.
- 20% of respondents had pursued further education beyond Higher Secondary, indicating a smaller proportion of workers with advanced educational qualifications.

Implications: The demographic profile of Anganwadi workers has implications for their effectiveness in delivering services. For instance -

- The age distribution suggests that Anganwadi workers may have varying levels of experience and maturity, which can impact their ability to deliver services.
- The educational qualifications indicate that Anganwadi workers may require additional training and support to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The demographic profile of Anganwadi workers provides valuable insights into their characteristics and background. Understanding these demographics can help policymakers and program managers design targeted interventions to support Anganwadi workers and improve the delivery of services under the ICDS program.

Table-2
Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers

Sl. No.	Challenge	Percentage	Total
1	Inadequate Infrastructure	70%	70
2	Insufficient Training and Resources	80%	80
3	Low Salaries and Delayed Payments	60%	60
4	High Workload and Stress	50%	50
5	Lack of Community Support	40%	40

Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers in Dhemaji District

The survey highlights the significant challenges faced by Anganwadi workers in Dhemaji District, which can be broadly categorized into five key areas:

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** 70% of Anganwadi workers cited inadequate infrastructure as a major challenge. This includes poor condition of Anganwadi buildings, lack of equipment, and insufficient supplies, which can hinder the delivery of services.
- **Insufficient Training and Resources:** A staggering 80% of Anganwadi workers reported that they lack sufficient training and resources to perform their duties effectively. This suggests that workers may not have the necessary skills, knowledge, or tools to deliver high-quality services.
- **Low Salaries and Delayed Payments:** 60% of Anganwadi workers reported that low salaries and delayed payments are significant challenges. This can lead to financial stress, demotivation, and decreased job satisfaction among workers.
- **High Workload and Stress:** 50% of Anganwadi workers reported that high workload and stress are major concerns. Managing large numbers of children and pregnant women, performing multiple tasks, and meeting targets can be overwhelming for workers.
- **Lack of Community Support:** 40% of Anganwadi workers struggle with lack of community support, which makes it difficult for them to deliver services effectively. Community awareness and participation are crucial for the success of ICDS programs.

Implications: These challenges have significant implications for the effectiveness of Anganwadi workers and the overall success of ICDS programs. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that Anganwadi workers can deliver high-quality services and support the health and well-being of children and pregnant women.

Objective (II) : To Identify the Factors that Affect the Ability of Anganwadi Workers to Deliver Services Effectively

1. Infrastructure Problems Faced by Anganwadi Workers:

Table - 3
Infrastructure Challenges

Infrastructure Challenge	Percentage	Total
Inadequate Building Conditions	50%	50
Lack of Clean Water Facilities	40%	40
Insufficient Space for Activities	60%	60
Poor Sanitation Facilities	30%	30

The survey highlights the significant infrastructure problems faced by Anganwadi workers, which can impact their ability to deliver services effectively. The key infrastructure challenges reported by workers include:

- **Poor Condition of Buildings:** 50% of Anganwadi workers reported that their buildings were in poor shape, which can compromise the safety and quality of services delivered.
- **Lack of Clean Water:** 40% of workers cited the absence of clean water, which is essential for maintaining hygiene and providing quality services, particularly for children and pregnant women.
- **Insufficient Space:** 60% of workers reported that they didn't have enough room for activities, which can limit the number of children and pregnant women that can be served and compromise the quality of services delivered.
- **Poor Sanitation Facilities:** 30% of workers reported having bad sanitation facilities, which can compromise the health and hygiene of children and pregnant women.

Implications : These infrastructure problems have significant implications for the health, safety, and well-being of children and pregnant women served by Anganwadi workers. Poor infrastructure can:

- Compromise the quality of services delivered
- Increase the risk of water-borne and sanitation-related diseases

- Limit the accessibility and utilization of services

2. Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers: Training and Resources

Table 4
Training and Resource Challenges

Training and Resource Challenge	Percentage	Total
Lack of Medical Supplies and Equipment	60%	60
Insufficient Educational Materials	60%	60
Limited Training on Health Care Practices	80%	80
Inadequate Support from Supervisors	40%	40

The survey highlights significant challenges faced by Anganwadi workers related to training and resources, which are essential for delivering effective healthcare services. The key findings include:

- **Insufficient Medical Supplies and Equipment:** 60% of Anganwadi workers reported that they lacked sufficient medical supplies and equipment, which can compromise the quality of healthcare services provided.
- **Limited Educational Materials:** 60% of workers cited a lack of proper educational materials, which are crucial for promoting health awareness and education among children and caregivers.
- **Need for Additional Training:** 80% of Anganwadi workers felt that they required more training on healthcare practices, which suggests that existing training programs may not be adequate or comprehensive enough.
- **Inadequate Supervisory Support:** 40% of workers mentioned that they did not receive sufficient support from their supervisors, which can impact their ability to deliver services effectively and address challenges.

Implications: These challenges have significant implications for the effectiveness of Anganwadi services and the health outcomes of children and caregivers. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that Anganwadi workers can provide high-quality services.

3. Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers: Salaries and Payments

Table - 5
Salary and Payment Challenges

Salary and Payment Challenge	Percentage	Total
Low Salaries	80%	80
Delayed Salary Payments	40%	40
Lack of Benefits	40%	40
Wage Disparities among Workers	30%	30

The survey highlights significant challenges faced by Anganwadi workers related to salaries and payments, which can impact their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. The key findings include:

- **Low Salaries:** 80% of Anganwadi workers reported that they receive low salaries, which can make it difficult for them to sustain themselves financially and may lead to dissatisfaction with their job.
- **Delays in Payments:** 40% of workers faced delays in getting paid, which can cause financial stress and uncertainty, making it challenging for them to manage their personal and professional lives.
- **Lack of Benefits:** 40% of workers pointed out that they do not receive benefits, which can further exacerbate their financial struggles and reduce their job satisfaction.
- **Unequal Pay:** 30% of workers mentioned unequal pay among workers, which can lead to feelings of unfairness, demotivation, and dissatisfaction among workers.

Implications: These challenges have significant implications for the job satisfaction, motivation, and retention of Anganwadi workers. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that workers are fairly compensated and supported.

4. Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers: Workload and Stress

Table-6
Workload and Stress Challenges

Workload and Stress Challenge	Percentage	Total
Overwhelming Workload	60%	60
Lack of Time for Administrative Tasks	50%	50
Emotional Stress and Burnout	40%	40
Inadequate Support for Mental Health	20%	20

The survey highlights significant challenges faced by Anganwadi workers related to workload and stress, which can impact their well-being and job performance. The key findings include:

- **Overwhelming Workload:** 60% of Anganwadi workers felt overwhelmed by their work, which can lead to decreased productivity, increased errors, and burnout.
- **Insufficient Time for Paperwork:** 50% of workers reported not having enough time to complete paperwork, which can lead to administrative delays, inefficiencies, and potential errors.
- **Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion:** 40% of workers felt drained and burnt out, which can impact their physical and mental health, job satisfaction, and ability to provide quality services.
- **Lack of Mental Health Support:** 20% of workers mentioned not receiving enough help for their mental health, which can exacerbate stress, burnout, and other mental health issues.

Implications : These challenges have significant implications for the well-being and job performance of Anganwadi workers. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that workers can manage their workload effectively, maintain their physical and mental health, and provide high-quality services.

5. Challenges Faced by Anganwadi Workers: Community Support

Table - 7
Community Support Challenges

Community Support Challenge	Percentage	Total
Lack of Parental Involvement	30%	30
Limited Cooperation from Local Authorities	30%	30
Insufficient Support from Community Leaders	30%	30
Resistance to Health Programs	20%	20

The survey highlights significant challenges faced by Anganwadi workers related to community support, which can impact their ability to deliver effective services. The key findings include:

- **Limited Parental Involvement:** 30% of Anganwadi workers reported that parents weren't involved enough, which can hinder the effectiveness of programs and services.
- **Poor Collaboration with Local Authorities:** 30% of workers mentioned that local authorities weren't working well with them, which can limit access to resources, support, and services.
- **Insufficient Support from Community Leaders:** 30% of workers felt that community leaders didn't provide enough help, which can impact the credibility and reach of Anganwadi programs.
- **Resistance from Community Members:** 20% of workers reported encountering resistance from community members who opposed health programs, which can create challenges for workers and limit the impact of their efforts.

Implications: These challenges have significant implications for the effectiveness of Anganwadi services and the health outcomes of children and families. Addressing these challenges is essential to build trust, foster collaboration, and promote community engagement

Objective (III): To Suggest Recommendations for Improving the Delivery of ICDS Services

Based on the challenges faced by Anganwadi workers and the factors that affect their ability to deliver services effectively, the following recommendations are suggested:

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Providing adequate infrastructure, such as well-maintained buildings, equipment, and supplies, to support Anganwadi workers in delivering services effectively.
- **Comprehensive Training:** Offering regular training and capacity-building programs to enhance Anganwadi workers' skills and knowledge in areas such as healthcare, nutrition, and education.
- **Supportive Supervision:** Ensuring regular supportive supervision and monitoring to provide Anganwadi workers with guidance, feedback, and encouragement.
- **Worker Welfare:** Addressing issues related to low salaries, delayed payments, and workload to improve Anganwadi workers' job satisfaction and well-being.
- **Community Engagement:** Fostering community awareness and participation through outreach activities to promote the importance of ICDS services.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocating sufficient resources, including funds and personnel, to support the effective delivery of ICDS services.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions.

By implementing these recommendations, ICDS services can be strengthened, and Anganwadi workers can deliver high-quality services to children and pregnant women, ultimately improving their health, nutrition, and education outcomes.

Conclusion

The Anganwadi workers face significant challenges in delivering services under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program, including inadequate infrastructure, limited training and support, high workload, and

community resistance. The study's findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to address these challenges and improve the delivery of ICDS services. The study's recommendations, including capacity building, infrastructure support, regular supervision and support, and community awareness and participation, can help enhance the skills and knowledge of Anganwadi workers, improve infrastructure and resources, and increase community awareness and cooperation. Ultimately, the study's findings and recommendations can inform policy and programmatic decisions aimed at improving the delivery of ICDS services and promoting better health and nutrition outcomes for children and pregnant women.

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