

Challenges of Home Nursing Sector: A Kerala Experience

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Abstract:- Home health care service is the most leading services in the present world. Home nurses are the care giving workers and also the non-medical Para professionals. They dedicate their qualitative time and services for the patients. They provide home health aides such as personal care services including Health care, Elderly care, House maid works, child care, pregnancy care services at a homely environment to their clients. They are mainly recruited by the home nursing agencies.

Home nursing was observed to be far more complex and challenging than generally acknowledged. The home nurse plays an important role in patient's response to chronic illness. They have to work around the clock, and spend their valuable time with the patients. Most of the Home nurses are the unskilled and uneducated females. They are vulnerable group among the whole society. They were facing a lot of social and economic issues, especially both in case of their family and working areas. These all creates poor living conditions of home nurses. Caring for increasing number of patients suffering from chronic illness is indeed a prime task, moreover they have to live in a poor socio- economic conditions often. They face various problems in their working areas like low wage rates, insecurity in their working area, heavy burden of their working hours cause mental and physical stress, etc. They also face problems in their society like antisocial elements of gossips about their work ruing their family. Another problem faced by home nurses are the financial problems and most of the unskilled and uneducated workers prefer this work in order to overcome the financial burden of their family. The Low wage rates received by them scarcely meet their financial needs and often find it insufficient for bringing up a family especially education need of their children. Continued isolation and loneliness often put them in a strained mental and physical condition. Though a few take it as a passion, most of them are compelled to take up the services as a means of livelihood as this profession do not demand special skill of any sort.

I. INTRODUCTION

Home nurses are the non para medical professionals who provide multidimensional home care such as home health aides, personal care attendents including childcare, baby care, and pregnancy care. Home health care is considered to be a cost efficient way to deliver quality care at clients home itself. It aides to provide hands on care and assistance with activities of daily living , like bathing ,dressing, feeding ,toileting , grooming , oral care,walking or using a wheelchair with the disabled patients . Home care

services are provided to the individuals, who require regular help and assistance around their home especially in case of elderly old age caring.

The concept of "Home nursing" was originated from European countries. Countries like Cyprus where the aging demographic changes suggest an increased demand on health and social services and elderly people prefer to be in their own homes and communities. Globally speaking, according to the report of WHO, the elderly population constitutes about 11.5 percentage of total population of 7 billion. By 2050 this proportion is projected to increase about 22 percentage. Thus the proportion of elderly population tends to grow faster than global average. Thus in many developing countries their government provide elderly care services to their citizens and promotes skilled training for home care services in order to improve the health quality of their elderly citizens. This led to an increasing demand for elderly home care services in many of the European countries. The majority of elderly people prefer to stay at home for any form of care and home care nursing can undoubtedly meet this need, aiming to improve their quality of life. In many countries the policy makers and the Ministry of Health are recommended to their collaboration and coordination aiming for a better integration of health and social care services in order to meet the needs of their elderly citizens and to improve their quality of life.

According to the census 2011 in India there are nearly 104 million elderly people (aged 60 and above) of which 53 million are females and 51 are males. Both the size and share of elderly population is increasing over time. In India the health care programmes for the elderly is being implemented by the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). This programme aims to provide dedicated home health care facilities to the elderly through primary, secondary, and tertiary health care delivery services .For this purpose, the programme builds capacity of the medical and non-Para medical professionals as well as family based caretakers for providing home health care services to the elderly. While majority of the elderly are still living with their children and most of their children are unable to take much care of their elderly parents due to their heavy work burden or other family engagements. About one fifth either lives alone or the proportion of older persons living alone without spouses (solo living) has increased over time. This led to the dependency of home nurses.

Kerala is in the third stage of demographic transition and hence the proportion of the elderly in Kerala has been increasing steadily over the past decades. Among Indian states Kerala is holding the largest number of elderly population. Declining mortality and fertility rates along with

high life expectancy of the population has increased the demand for home health care services in Kerala. It has been seen that a significant proportion of the elderly suffers from various types of communicable and non-communicable diseases. The morbidity rate of Kerala elderly shows an increase, but the low mortality and high morbidity lead to a burden for entire family for giving care for elderly parents. This led to the dependency on home care nursing.

II. HOME NURSES IN KERALA

According to cyber media research (CMR), India's home health care market is expected to grow to around \$ 4.46 billion by 2018 and \$ 6.21 billion in 2020. Market for home health care services in India is doubling day by day. The demand for at home health care is growing, and this increases the need for Home nurses in India.

As per the 2011 census report Kerala's total population is around 3.36 crore out of which 12.6% are aged above 60 years. The population of elderly are increasing rapidly as more are entering the 60 age group while older persons are living longer. It is projected that the population of elderly is going to rise substantially in the coming decades. One of the major concerns of elderly people is the uncertainty. And there is lack of care givers, safety, and security of stay alone and their children are not able to take their parents along with them due to work burden or some family issues. In this extreme, home nurses play an important role in geriatric care. The preference of younger generation to work and settle in foreign countries or in metropolitan cities leads to an increasing demand for home nursing agencies for getting a quality of elderly care services.

Above all the circumstances constitutes the growth of so many home care agencies in Kerala. In Kerala around 600 home nurses are working under several home nursing agencies. They suffer a lot of social and economic problems in their working areas, most of them were recruited by a home nursing agency. Thus they get very low wages after the commission taken by home nursing agency. In Kerala the recent trend of home care services shows an increasing trend, in which elderly care services have more demand. Kerala home nurses have much demand from foreigners for the services of house maids, child care and elderly care. Thus most of the home nurses are migrated to other foreign countries as House maids or Nannies. Home nurses from Kerala where pioneers in opening of a new avenue of employment for migrants in Europe. Christian home nurses from Kerala have been largely recruited to European countries. This shows the growth of home care services in Kerala.

In Kerala as a result of urbanization; in metro politician cities like Ernakulum where most of the couples are fully job engaged and they do not get much time to supervise their elderly parents and children due to certain burden of their work. Now a days there exist a vast demand for pregnancy care services, because in Kerala there is a traditional method of treatment or home care for antenatal and postnatal women. Pregnancy period is the most care required in any women's life, it also affects the nutritional health status of the foetus.

Most of the middle aged home nurses also provide new-born baby care, for which they get remunerations in the form of tips or pocket money from the family members.

III. HOME NURSING SERVICES

The services provided by home nurses include

A. Health care services

Home nursing is confined to home health care. It is the most leading services offered to their clients. Home health care is the basic services provided by home nurses, in which the health care is provided to clients at their home itself, many have the goal of recovery or maintenance as ordered by physicians. In general the goal of home health care is to provide treatment for an illness or injury. The special home care helps the patients to get better independence and become self-sufficient as possible. If a patient has long term health problems the goal of health care service is to maintain the patients at the highest level of ability or health and help the patient to learn to live with their illness or disability. As a result many people of all ages can lead healthier, more independent lives.

B. Geriatric care

Geriatric home health care can be challenging, however, it is preferred choice for many aging seniors who are living alone without any mental and family support. Home is the comfortable places which give them a mental support and easy relief. Geriatric care programme usually includes services that are provided by medical care takers. These services are designed to help the senior live at home and thrive in his or her own environment. A well planned home care services can help improve the client's health and overall well-being of the elderly person.

C. Pregnancy care

Motherhood is the most memorable time in a women's life. But the challenges that come along with motherhood can be quite frightening and worrying especially if the clients do not have adequate nurse care at home. Antenatal period is the period which require more care, it is essential for good growth and development of the foetus and also for the good health of the pregnant women. In the modern society the parents have no adequate knowledge regarding the hereditary care of pregnant women. So they need home nursing services for caring the pregnant women. The home nursing care is also important in the post-natal period. In this period the mother require more attention. There are so many traditional way to care the women after pregnancy. In the modern society the people are unaware of these kinds of post-natal home cares. So, the importance of home care nursing is increasing in our society day by day life.

D. New born care

Taking care of a new born, the right way, will affect the overall development of the baby as he or she grows into a healthy happy person. Nurturing and taking good care of the new born is crucial since baby can't really express their needs. The new born psychological system are still developing and adapting to a strange new external environment and the new born baby is still susceptible to many infections and diseases.

E. Housemaid services

House maids or domestic workers are recruited by the home nursing agencies for doing certain domestic works like cleaning, cooking, washing, vacuuming, these domestic works are tough task for many elderly or seniors due to their illness, under these circumstances, they need part time or full time housemaids.

IV. GENERAL PROBLEMS OF HOME NURSES

Home nurses are the caretaking workers. Most of the home nurses working in Kerala are poor and from other states. The nature of their work remains uncertain and they face a lot of problems which are as follows:

A. Health problems

Home nurses are the caretaking workers. They were faced with many health related issues. Day to day contact with the patients, there exist a broader chance for the spread of communicable diseases. In order to meet the requirements of people in need of care, most of the home care services are provided around the clock. They have to provide 24 –hour care which usually entails the care worker staying overnight at the clients home and ready for services throughout the night. This led to so many health problems like constant and continues headache due to poor sleeping hours. And many of the house maid servants face skin diseases like allergies due to their domestic works like cleaning or washing. Many of the home nursing servants use tobacco in their elderly care taking works which lead to severe health problems. The main reason for this tobacco usage is that, in elderly care services, they has to assist the patients daily living activities like toileting, in

order to avoid these dirty smells they use tobacco which poses severe health issues to home nurses.

B. Low wage rates

A low wage rate is the important problem faced by the Home nurses. Many of them come from other states like Tamilnadu especially in rural areas from poor living conditions, most of them were illiterate and got only primary education, they do not possess any own homes or lands they mainly chose this work for overcoming their financial stringencies.

The recruiting agencies take a proportion of their income as their commission. Out of the income they receive, they have to spend the expenditures like their children’s educational purposes and medical expenditures, repaying the house loans etc. In the case of migrated home servants they have to undergo certain medical check –up, these medical expenditures are to be met by them. No home nursing agencies bear these expenditures.

The study reveals that 75 per cent of home nursing workers are paid between Rs. 10000 – 15000. And 15 per cent of home nurses are come under the salary rate ranging from Rs15000 – 20000 income. The remaining 10 per cent belong to 5000 -10000 income group. This data show that home nurses are not reasonably compensated. Majority of the workers that is 75 per cent who work for wages between Rs.10000-15000 are doing elderly care services, and only 10 per cent home nurses who receives the wages between Rs.5000 -10000 are engaged in house maid services.

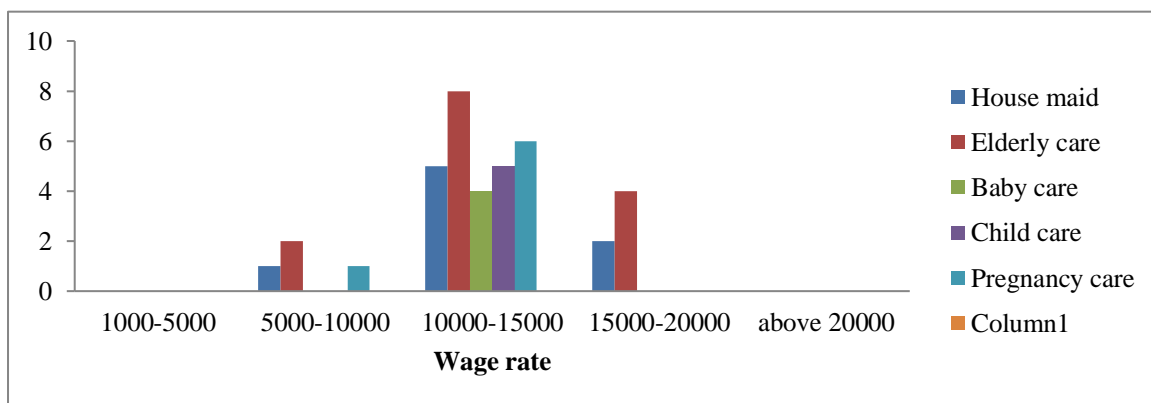


Fig.1: Wage rate of home nursing workers

Source: Sample survey

C. Lack of social security

The concept of social security is derived from the provision of Article 38 of the constitution of India. The home nurse workers are far away from the benefits of social security as well as the labour welfare programmes run by the government. Workers work under conditions like uncertain work, no medical facilities, no pension, unsafe environment

etc. Thus there exists a complete absence of social security. Education is an important factor to determine the socio economic conditions. The education status of home workers is very poor, it is clear from the figure.2. If education is at higher levels there is a chance for better opportunities in labour market that could increasetheir standard of living.

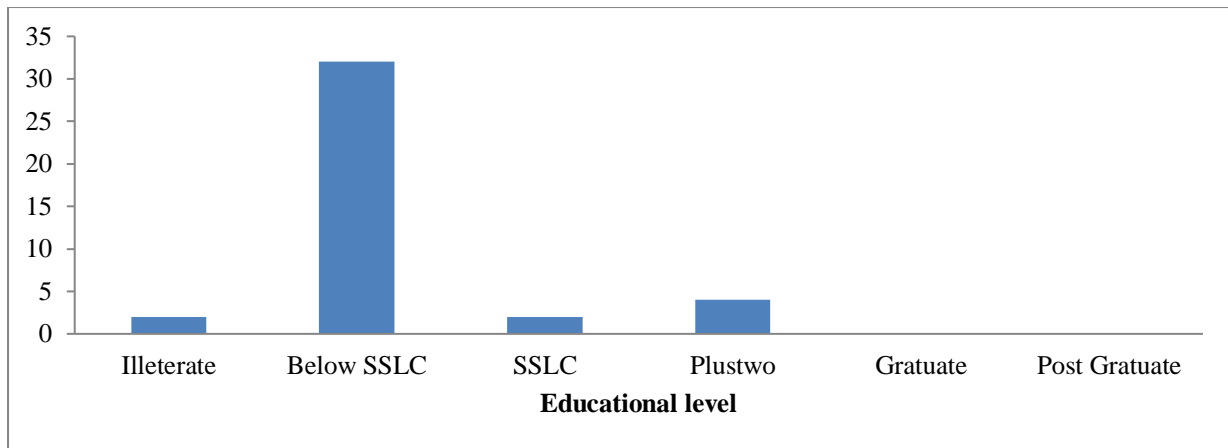


Fig. 2 : Educational level of home nurses

Source: Sample survey

D. Occupational diseases

Home nurses are nursing the patients in a homely environment. They have to be with the patients throughout a day to assist and care them, which make them prone to communicable diseases and body ache, allergies, Asthma. In this way most of them were suffering from various occupational diseases.

E. No Holidays

Home nurses have to work continuously in order to assist the patients. There is no provision for holiday and payment of holiday. Thus they are not getting any holiday for work relief and entertainment. The working time of sample respondents shows that they had to work for a major time and it leads to so many social problems. The study reveals that majority of the home nurses are working for 17 – 23 hours. That is 72.5 per cent of home nurses are working long hours in a day, and 20 per cent are working for 10 – 16 hours, and 7.5 per cent are working for 3-9 hours.

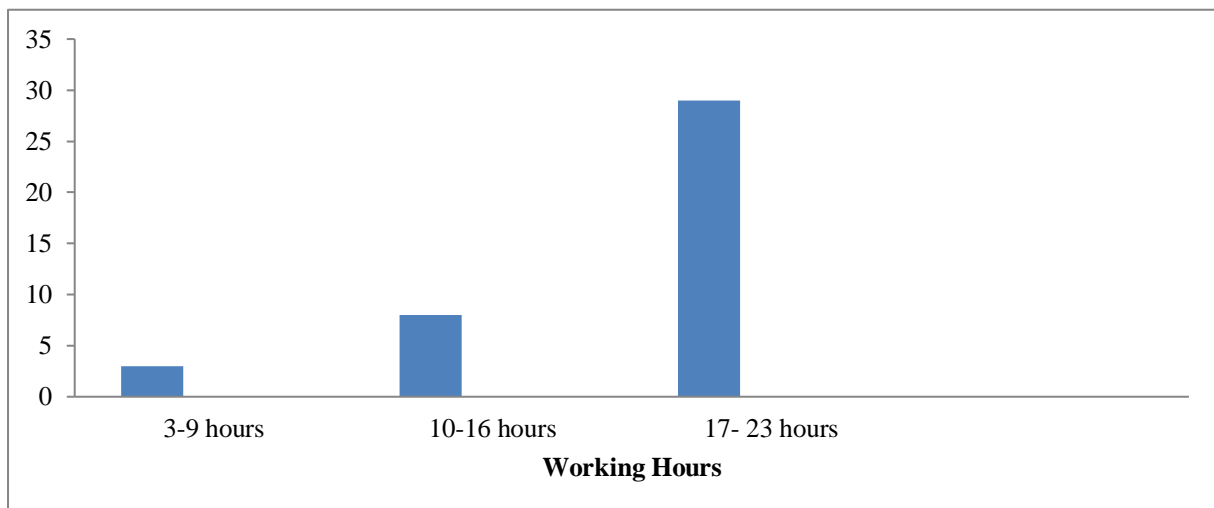


Fig.3 - Working hours of Home nurses

Source: Sample survey

F. Family issues

Home nursing is considered as one of the most important economic activities in the informal sector, it is mainly undertaken as an occupation by people belonging to weaker sections of society as a means of livelihood.

Apart from doing all domestic works, they have little time to manage their families. This causes poor family

background of home nurses. Moreover, they do not get much time to spend with their children, husband and other family members, which adversely affect the educational and health status of their children .and make a detachment in their relations. Another challenge is that, majority of them have chosen this field due to their financial problems. But they do not get adequate wages for their work. Apart from this, home nurses experiences so many stress namely financial stress,

family pressure, and mental and physical stress due to the heavy burden of their work. The study also incorporate the positive side of home nursing like employment creation, women empowerment etc.

V. CONCLUSION

The major problems faced by the home nursing workers are depicted in figure.4. The main problem faced by most of the respondents are low wage rate, that is out of the sample 90 per cent of them faced the problem of low wage rate. 85

per cent of home nurses are facing the problem of uncertain working hours and 80 per cent of them facing the problem of lack of social security. Another important problem faced by them were lack of stability in their works, about 42 per cent of home nurses come under this category. 32 per cent of workers face the problem of work place scatteredness. 22.5 per cent face the problem of diseases like allergies, skin diseases, back pain etc. due to their stress in their working area. 17 per cent face the problem of shortage of water facility.

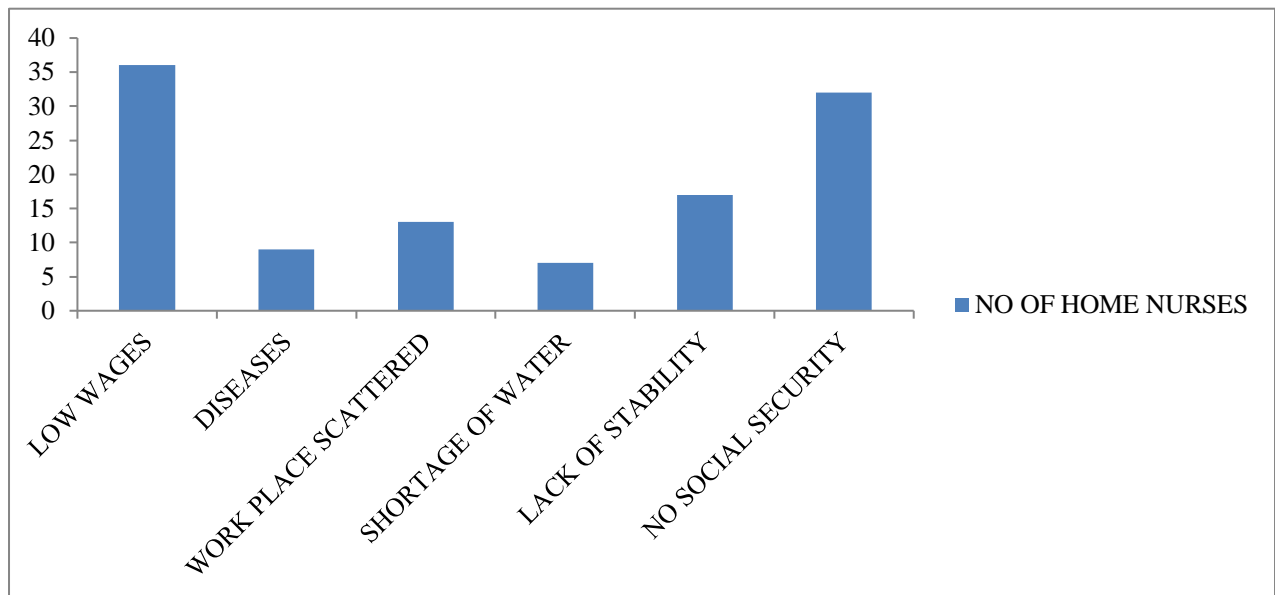


Fig.4 - Various problem faced by Home nurses

Source: Sample survey

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The home nurses should build their own organisation and committees in local level and which will be helpful for them to solve and share their occupational problems.
- Definition of non- medical Para professionals including the home nurses should be made clearly so that the special scheme for them can be beneficially provided.
- The government should implement programme for the betterments of home nursing workers. A comprehensive central legislation specifically designs to meet the working condition of home nurses.
- Ensure adequate job security to the female home nurses especially those working abroad
- Provide stability in their working hours especially in the case of full time home nursing workers.
- The home nursing agencies should ensure the safety of their workers in the working place and they should bear whole medical expenses, especially in case of foreign home nurses, as foreign home nurses have to make a lot of medical check-up. Such expenses should be borne by the home nursing agencies.

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