

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTERS IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR: A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the health care delivery system of Primary Health Care facilities in district Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan

Material and Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the conveniently selected four primary healthcare facilities in district Peshawar. The participants' responses were recorded via structured questionnaires. The participants were selected through non-probability convenient sampling techniques. Written informed consent was obtained from each study participant.

Results: All participants indicated that the Basic Health Units (BHUs) were generally functioning efficiently. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with several aspects of the services provided. Specifically, there were concerns regarding the field visits conducted by Lady Health Visitors (LHVs), with participants feeling that these visits were insufficient or lacked proper guidance, particularly about antenatal and postnatal care, as well as family planning services. Additionally, the availability of essential resources such as ambulances and basic laboratory facilities was also a point of concern, as these were either inadequate or not easily accessible, hindering the overall effectiveness of the healthcare services at the BHUs.

Conclusion: This study results revealed that the performance was overall satisfactory at the PHC level except for a few areas including family planning services, ambulatory services, and availability of laboratory facilities which need improvement.

Keywords: Primary Health Care, Essential Services, Immunization, Health Systems, Maternal and Child Healthcare.

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INTRODUCTION

A Better Health system is required for the progression and maintenance of health, management, and prevention of diseases and to reduce unnecessary disabilities and premature deaths.^{1,2} A health system or health care system is defined as the alliance of people, resources, and institutions that are accountable for delivering health care services to convene the health requirements of the target population.³ The public health measures and primary health care are being considered as the common

constituents in all health systems.⁴ The goals of the health care system according to WHO are to provide good health to all citizens, respond to the expectations of the population, and reasonable ways of funding operations. The achievement of these goals depends upon how systems carry out the subsequent four fundamental functions i.e., stewardship, financing, provision of health care services, and resource generation.⁵

Provision of Primary Health Care facilities is the basic component of a responsive health system.⁶ It is defined as "A set of universally accessible first-level services that promote health, prevent diseases and provide diagnostic, curative, rehabilitative, supportive, and palliative services".⁷ The provision of primary healthcare facilities has emerged as a global challenge in providing first-level healthcare facilities along with the selective packages of health to economically unstable populations.⁸

Multiple factors have been reported to be responsible for the low coverage of healthcare facilities.⁹ For ex-

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ample; inefficiency and incompetency seen in antenatal care in Pakistan are the major contributors to the high mortality rate of mothers and infants.¹⁰ But during the recent decades, substantial improvements have been recorded due to the quality and efficient delivery of healthcare services.¹¹ According to a study in India, it was recorded that intervention in the medical care centers of the hospital that included focused training, skilled personnel, better quality drugs, and availability of better equipment showed an increase in the testing and treatment quality.¹²

According to the literature search, most of the evidences prove that it is unanimously accepted that PHC plays a crucial role in achieving social goals. With the development, proper accountability and checks and balances are required to assess the relation between the planned and accepted health reforms and the actual activity of government departments to benefit the citizens of its society.¹³

The assessment and provision of primary health-care facilities, which has become a global dilemma needs efficient and competent strategies to be taken. This will help in minimizing the barriers that the masses face during their access to basic healthcare means. The health care system in Pakistan is in progress and is making improvements in the health care delivery system.¹⁴ Being a developing country, the achievement of a competitive health-care system is a great issue for Pakistan. The government has taken steps to reach the goals of "HEALTH FOR ALL" and has joined hands with other organizations to guarantee the provision of facilities including preventive, rehabilitative, and curative services.¹⁵ This study is aimed to assess the healthcare delivery system of Primary Health Care facilities in the capital district i.e., Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study Design was selected for this study. The study was carried out from January 2021 to June 2021 in the provincial capital district Peshawar. District Peshawar is divided into 4 towns and 279 moazas (revenue villages). After approval from the ethical committee of the institution and individual health centers, the data was collected from 04 Primary health care facilities situated in rural villages i.e., BHU Jhagra, BHU Chamkani, BHU Palosi, and RHC Regi of district Peshawar selected through non-probability convenient sampling technique. Data from 120 study participants was collected by using a structured questionnaire. There were three main sections of the questionnaire: Mother & child health, essential health care services, and routine immunization. Data was collected by four teams each comprising of one male and one female member. The data collected was entered and analyzed in SPSS software version 20. All the data was coded and kept confidential.

RESULTS

After obtaining informed consent, data was collected from 120 participants (30 from each PHC) with a mean age of 32 years \pm 2 Standard Deviation by using a structured questionnaire. The respondents were asked about their satisfaction with EPI services and the results revealed that 90% of respondents were satisfied with the services provided in all four health facilities as shown in Figure 1.

Similarly, the study participants also enquired about services provided for mother and child health care including the availability of trained health person, their behavior, and the availability of essential health services. Their responses are shown in Figure 2.

More than half of the study respondents revealed that the health staff does not provide any guidance about antenatal and postnatal checkups. The responses are shown in Figure 3.

The participants' responses regarding the availability of essential drugs, provision of proper guidance regarding the use of prescribed drugs by the doctor, and availability of essential drugs were satisfactory. While the majority of respondents were not satisfied with the availability of ambulatory and laboratory services.

DISCUSSION

Primary Health Care facilities play a pivotal role in providing essential services including EPI, mother and child health, family planning, and providing services for

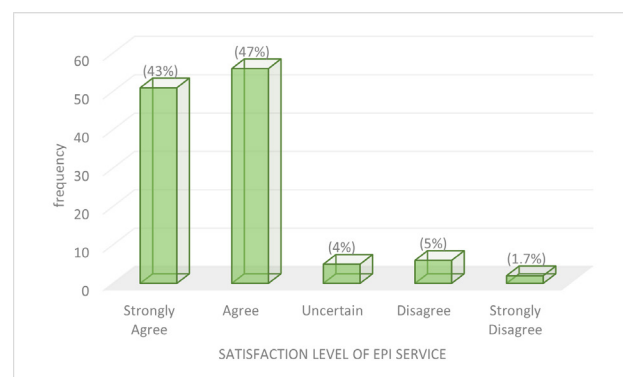


Fig 1: satisfaction level with EPI services

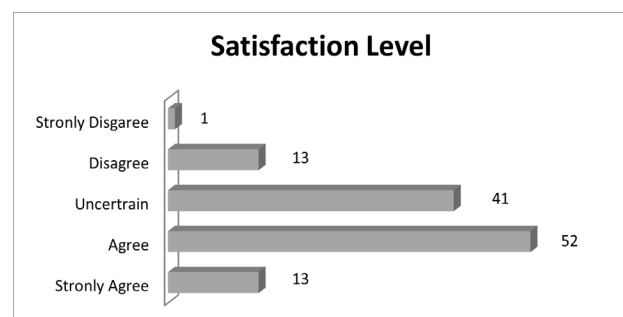


Fig 2: Satisfaction with LHW behavior

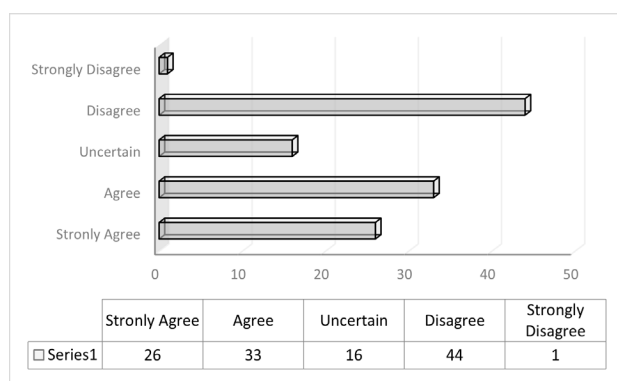


Fig 3: Provision of guidance regarding medical check-ups

normal ailments in the community especially in rural areas. Maternal and child health care (MCH) is an essential component of PHC. The availability, behavior, and response to the questions of participants by a health worker play an essential role in achieving the targets of MCH. A study conducted at selected primary health care centers of Gurugram city of Indian Haryana state showed that educating mothers regarding water-borne diseases and their prevention helps in reducing the cases of diarrhea and other water-borne diseases in children below 5 years of age.¹⁶

Provision of antenatal and postnatal checkups and care has been an essential component of MCH. The results showed that antenatal/postnatal checkups were also poor. In Punjab, only 53% of pregnant women have access to ANC services from medical professionals at least once during their pregnancies, and only 41% have access to postnatal care.¹⁷ In a rural setting of Sindh, Pakistan, 29.3% of women utilized ANC, of those, 72.3% received ANC services from government healthcare providers.¹⁸ This reflects the low level of seeking antenatal and postnatal services in Peshawar, due to religious, cultural, and low levels of education as compared to Punjab, where it's comparatively higher.

Similarly, in our study, participants were asked whether the drugs were available free of cost or not. The majority of them (i.e., 101/120) said that drugs were free of charge and 10/120 said that drugs were not available freely. A study conducted in 2007 in Peshawar, Pakistan concluded that a low percentage of respondents received free medicines from healthcare centers which reflects that the conditions have improved over time and we are heading towards achieving the goals of providing quality health services to the citizens.¹⁹

Our study findings revealed that the general facilities including proper waiting area and availability of separate toilets for male and female visitors were either not available or in very bad condition. Similar findings were also revealed by a study conducted in Ethiopia.²⁰ When it was asked about ambulance services, 19/120 said that

there were services available, 35/120 (29%) were uncertain and 66/120 disagreed. A research project conducted about primary health facility assessment in Enugu State, Nigeria accessed the infrastructure of various primary health care centers by judging ambulance and access to a computer with internet on the day of the assessment. It concluded that none of the centers had a functional ambulance.²¹

Similarly, the research conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria concluded that nearly 46.7% of participants said that laboratory technicians were available.²²

CONCLUSION

This study results revealed that the performance was overall satisfactory at the PHC level except for a few areas including family planning services, ambulatory services, and availability of laboratory facilities which need improvement.

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Authors Contribution:

Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under

Authors	Conceived & designed the analysis	Collected the data	Contributed data or analysis tools	Performed the analysis	Wrote the paper	Other contribution
Shah SM	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×
Ahsan MH	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Saqib M	×	✓	×	×	✓	×
Mahsud A	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
Nazir S	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Himanshi	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Yousaf S	×	✓	×	×	✓	×
Marwat MI	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.



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