

Demystifying the barriers to health services in rural areas using mixed methods research



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Overview

- Research in Rural Population
- Case Study
- Participatory Rural Appraisal
- Strengths and Challenges
- Summary



Background

- Rural communities and healthcare facilities have limited resources to address many health-related needs.
- Research in rural areas should focus on improving the health of rural populations through better understanding of their needs.
- Understanding the complexities of the problems faced by the rural population requires a combination of research methods



Mixed Methods

A mixed methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research

Creswell, R. (2003). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Why?

Provides a more complete picture of the research problem.

“Reaching the parts other methods cannot reach”

Pope C, and Mays N. (1995)

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Case Study

This case study highlights the use of **participatory rural appraisal** as a first step in involving rural communities in assessing their needs and planning meaningful **community development strategies**.

The crux of the project was to address the **social determinants of health leading to open defecation**.

(Experience from Western Maharashtra, India)





Participatory Rural Appraisal

It is a participatory method to gather/ collect information by involvement of rural/ local communities for decision making and implementation of the development project, “for the Rural community, by the Rural community and with the Rural Community”.

It is a process to involve the community in planning and decision making.



Step 1: Planning & Involvement of local stakeholders

- Establishing rapport with the Anganwadi workers, ANMs (Auxillary nurse midwives), religious leaders, medical social worker, members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions
- The issues were narrowed down to WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) issues.



Step 2: Transect Walk

- Understanding the Village structure, nature of land, water sources and other natural resources, drainage etc
- Based on the interaction with the community members various issues of concern were identified.





Step 3: Social Mapping

- Village map was drawn with the help of the villagers
- Reflects infrastructure and socio-demographic details



Step 4: Problem Inventory

- Some of the major issues noted were of open defecation, absence of a proper waste disposal system, absence of water purification at source including poor water handling techniques, poor connectivity-absence of proper roads & street lighting.

Step 5: Group Discussion on possible solutions.



Post PRA

- Cross-verification and validation of data
- Secondary data analysis from existing sources & triangulation
- Developing an Action Plan



Strengths

- Securing active involvement of the community
- Diversification and appreciation of local knowledge,
- Creating a culture of open learning with each other and with community members
- Setting research priorities

Challenges

- Time consuming (building rapport & trust, cultural differences)
- Poor initial participation in terms of quality and quantity



Summary

- PRA is an effective approach to identify the needs of the community and promote community participation.
- Complex barriers in research cannot always be eliminated but can be moderated

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