

## **Research Methods in Health Promotion**

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### **Lecture 46: Community-Based Participatory Research in context to Health Promotion (Part I)**

In the series of lectures on research methods in health promotion, we will now deal with community based participatory research in the context of health promotion. We will cover the concepts of what is community based participatory action research, go into the history of it, look into the principles of participatory learning for action which is the principle followed in most CBPAR activities, steps for conducting them and analysis of the findings. So, what is CBPAR or community based participatory action research? It is basically a collaborative approach. Collaboration is a word which is used very often, but in the true sense collaboration requires a lot of planning, a lot of preparation and so this research is apparently a difficult approach to undertake because it has to involve all stakeholders throughout the research process right from formulating the research question to developing data collection tools to analysis and dissemination of findings. Now as we have been trained, we always feel that we know best, but when we are working with community be it the rural community, be it the urban community, be it the ground level population or be it specific communities in the hospitals, health centres, wherever workplaces we always have a feeling that as a particular professional we do know more. So, that approach will not work when we go for collaborations and at a common platform like this.

So, the very first principle in community based participatory action research is collaboration which means giving everybody their due respect and place in this collaborative activity. It is a research framework that aims to address the practical concerns of people in a community. We have long dealt with lot of theoretical approaches, but this framework is basically based on practicality. So, again it is more difficult because it is a very practical approach.

CBPAR it begins with the community's issue. So, the community tells us what is their issue, we do not tell the community that this is your problem, they tell us well this is our problem. The proposed action which they feel would be right, the strategy and then supports or enhances this action with research that is community based and engaged. So, they come up with issues, proposed actions, their recommended strategies, but then you facilitate the research with them with their engagement with their involvement and then this research is shared with them to give them more practical action points. So, this frame of work of research is community based, it is grounded in the needs, issues, concerns and strategies of the communities.

It is participatory directly engages the communities you know this word also community engagement is very loosely used community mobilization, community engagement. It is a

huge spectrum of involvement and of course, community involvement in its truest sense involves the community right from the beginning to the end along with monitoring and evaluation by them and empowering them and enabling them to do what is best for them. So, it involves engaging the communities and improving community knowledge in the research process and its outcome. It is action based and oriented which means it supports and or enhances the strategic actions that lead to community transformation and social change. So, these are words which are very heavily loaded and to really understand it one really has to be going with a very open mind and with the level field as I said.

So, CB power mainly says it is research and action these two words are also important. So, you choose a problem you identify the community resources and solutions, you develop a plan with the and at each stage the community is very integrally involved. Develop a plan implement the plan and evaluate and perhaps again return to step 1 to modify the whole activity cycle. For research we identify the research question, we choose a research methodology, we implement the methodology analyze the results and report on the results. So, having done research we move into action having done action we might need further research in the CBPAR cycle.

So, now participatory action is another word which we are using very frequently. Participatory action the main purpose is to facilitate communities to analyze their own situation. It does not mean as I said going and telling them well this is what data we have and this is what we have found and so we are going to do this for you know. The community has to analyze their own situation understanding analysis and interpretation of collecting data. In fact, there are ways by which lay people can also collect and interpret and analyze their data and that has proved very useful in many parts of the world for many solving many problems in a sustainable manner.

So, here rather than having it analyzed by outsiders we are doing it by the community. So, data has to be collected in a way the tools techniques methods have to be such that it can be collected and analyzed by the community themselves and to ensure that the learning is then translated into action. Community knowledge is irreplaceable and provides key insights that ground truth. Actually administrative data is there, but community knowledge is something different and actually might guide administrative actions in a better direction when they are obtained. So, complex social issues often cannot be well understood or resolved by expert researchers you know because the expert researchers have not really are not really part of the community.

So, they do not add the perspective of the community very difficult to do so. Interventions from outside have often had disappointing results people come do things go away while they are working things happen when they go away it is never sustained. So, CBPR is one way of good sustainability is one way of empowering communities and for better action in future as well. Communities should have equal inclusion and collaboration in the identification research

and resolution as I said this is a very important attitude which has to be inculcated by the researchers who would like to do this type of research. There is value and legitimacy in the knowledge of the individuals families and others in the community.

We feel that just because they are down in the social ladders or rather do not have those exquisite university affiliations they do not know less, but it is not so. It is their knowledge the traditional knowledge which is valuable and which is legitimate as well. So, the participation choice points people can be participating to information to inform the process. That means, the information about the problem or the perspective of the community on the problem is provided to the community first. Then community can be consulted that is the communities ask to give their feedback on this information.

Suppose there is a problem of vaccine acceptance in a particular community first one has to go and tell well this is the problem which we have been informed about. Now, what do you think about it? So, they are consulted they give inputs then involve them. Researchers would be working directly with the community collaborate with them empower them to do things and at each of these stages both designing the research collecting information analyzing it disseminating it acting it acting on it community becomes an integral part. So, this is the participation continuum moving from less to more that is the that is what we usually do is at the less level researchers design the study questions they just go and ask expect the community to answer those, but that is not what we are looking for here. At the next more intense involvement of the community level the community helps identify issues and research questions provides some responses, but still the researchers are conducting the research they are analyzing they are disseminating they are designing interventions.

We would like to move to the next step where the community will help to identify the research question they will provide the responses also help generate solutions based on the finding. The researchers they collect and analyze still they at this stage also or at this level of involvement also the researchers collect and analyze the data disseminate the findings and develop interventions, but what we aim to do for sustainable action is this last end of the spectrum community led and controlled research. Community will define the issue will define the research questions will create the data collection tools will recruit the participants will collect data analyze the data disseminate findings generate action plans and carry out the action plan. So, the researcher only acts as a collaborator facilitator a handholder in the entire process. So, this is not something new Kurt Lewin who is considered the founder of action research he lived from 1890 to 1944 was the first and you will find in many references the reference of Lewin who found out some or did implement some very good participatory action research.

He was a Prussian psychologist and a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany he embodied the philosophy that people would be more motivated about their work if they were involved in the decision making who is not each of us are. So, he introduced the term action research as a tactic to studying a social system. He addressed problems of segregation discrimination assimilation

assisted people in resolving issues and initiating change while studying the impact of these. His original ideas continue to influence researchers to organize their work and reports in a cycle of steps which include basically the steps of CBPR are observing reflecting acting evaluating and modifying. So, this is what has been going on ever since Kurt Lewin started looking into it another of his colleagues Paulo Freire he is best known for his influential work pedagogy of the oppressed.

And basically all of them were sociologists and the key principles of PAR there must be commitment to participation of ordinary people as core researchers as I said acceptance of this issue is difficult, but not impossible. Second respect for the knowledge of all participants third mutual learning among participants each one of us become a learner. So, we learn from the community community learns from us attention to the needs of the marginalized or disempowered groups and people. So, when we are involving the community mistake particularly be careful about involving the marginalized or disempowered ones action to promote social justice for those marginalized people and others like them and the key goals as Schneider has put it is to produce practical knowledge to take action and make the knowledge available to be transformative both socially and the individual. So, ultimately its transformation of your research findings into action by the community themselves.

So, the steps it is the flexible method methodology again can be modified as the progress process progresses. So, it is not possible to have a very rigid predetermined methodology. However, what we do is first the goals and objectives need to be clarified and you discuss it with the community get a consensus. Next a set of relevant tools and approaches are selected which can be applied in a participatory manner. So, this means we have a series of field exercises carried out with the help of a trained facilitator.

The community carries it out, but the facilitator just helps. Care should be taken to avoid preconceived ideas and biases all these are barriers of participation and we will give you enough examples later on. All information acquired through the tools and approaches is analyzed, triangulated which basically is cross checking and validated by the community not by the researcher not by the facilitator, but by the community. So, in PLA which is used for PAR data analysis is done in the field by community members and facilitators together. So, there is no specific method for analysis, no computer assisted statistical tools, but simple methods of analysis are chosen.

So, that they can be applied by lay community members. Next step is obviously, no research is complete without a action plan. So, development of a community action plan by the community to take specific action based on the learnings from the analysis. So, this evidence generated needs to be presented in different ways to the different stakeholders. The community is involved for advocacy or placing it to the community leader, the community based organizations and government agencies together they do this advocacy and finding is also used for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

So, this is the CBPAR model in the step 1, you identify research topic, questions, goals and geographic focus. Step 2, one identifies the research partners and invites them to collaborate and by partners I do not mean only the academics or the programmers it is the community. In step 3, choose and implement the research and data collection methodology, analyze the results and report the results. So, this part documentation communication evaluation keeps on happening throughout the process. So, community based participatory action research is something which is being increasingly used because of the felt need to sustain the changes, community action needs to be strengthened, community needs to be involved, community needs to be engaged to understand their problems, to find out strategies from their local resources, the assets available etcetera and the approaches to be chosen to address those problems and they need to be facilitated to implement these actions in order to bring about change.

They also need to be helped to monitor and evaluate actions, modify these strategies, take the programs forward and ultimately achieve the continuum for sustainability. So, CBPAR is a collaborative approach to research that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process. This word throughout is very important we do not go to them with a preformed research design and methodology, we do this with the entire involvement at every stage. CBPAR begins with the community's issue proposed action or strategy and then you enhance this action with research that is community based. So, the research which is undertaken with the help of the researcher only helps in fine-tuning or modifying or enhancing the action which has been actually proposed by the community themselves.

So, CBPAR is community based, it is grounded in the needs, issues, concerns and strategies of the communities, it is participatory word again which is very loaded, it directly engages the communities and community knowledge in the research processes and outcomes and it is action based. So, the strategic action has to be supported and enhanced through research which will ultimately lead to community transformation and social change. At each step there is a choice about the degree of participation, again that depends upon particular members of the community, the assets of the community, the resources particularly the human resources in the community. The main purpose is to facilitate communities to analyse their own situation, they have to learn how to analyse their own situation, they have to understand, they have to analyse, they have to interpret the data which they have collected through participatory methods rather than having it being analysed by others and to ensure that this learning of theirs is translated by them into action. Handholding support and facilitation is all that the outsider does.

Well defined steps outline the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this action plan through participatory processes. We will deal in details about the different participatory methodologies which can be used for CBPR in later lectures. So, these have been the basic references which have been followed for this. Thank you very much.