
PRACTICAL 2 UNDERSTANDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILY MEMBERS

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Having read the theory Blocks of MCFT-001, you have basic information about human development, family, interpersonal relationships and factors that influence these. You are also aware of the family structures (traditional and alternative), functions and basic processes that determine dynamics among family members and society at large. With the help of this information you are now able to identify the challenges they face and their psycho-social needs.

This particular practical experience has been designed such that you can relate the concepts of family functions, roles, responsibilities and cohesiveness to family life.

To become an effective counsellor and family therapist you must develop skills of communication, analysis and sensitivity to clients from different backgrounds. It is also important for you to develop the ability of objectively reflecting on life events and episodes that influence individuals and families. In order to get an in-depth understanding of these processes, it is of value that you begin with the study of family. It will help you to become aware of roles and responsibilities of the family members and have a better understanding of the same.

The aim of this exercise is to build your competencies such that you understand the family as a functioning unit and take perspectives of the respondent as well as other members involved. You are required to draw from the theoretical concepts discussed in the theory Units and understand the family situations as a professional counsellor and family therapist. This will help you in developing sensitivity to diverse conditions that affect family members and family development.

You may need to refer to the theory course materials intermittently while writing up this exercise.

Objectives:

After undertaking this Practical, you will be able to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in the family members in a family context; and
- Describe one's role in the family with respect to relationships, work allocation and resource sharing.

2.2 PART-1

2.2.1 Planning for the Practicum Activity

Because this exercise is with a family, you have to take prior appointment before starting the practicum activity. Do not begin doing the practical activities before you have finished the theory Blocks of the Course. Remember, this activity has to do with family members and analysis of the family processes. So, the more you think about it consciously and objectively (without any preconceived notions or beliefs) the better will the product be!

2.2.2 Pre-preparation

The Practicum activity is divided into two phases with one task in each phase. As this Practicum activity is interpretive in nature (involving more thinking and organisation of thoughts and ideas), you should begin thinking of all the tasks in advance, at least a week or two before actually executing the tasks.

At the end of each phase, keep in mind that you must have some written record of the whole experience and your thoughts on it. You may jot these down as bullet points also.

Now, we move to how you and the respondent's family should be involved in the tasks.

2.2.3 Your Involvement and Perspective

Start taking information about the respondent's family in terms of the relationships shared, its overall composition, unique aspects and lacunae. You will also need to ask about family member's role and position in the family very consciously. Begin evaluating the respondent's role in the family and start making notes. These will help you write the final report. You may also wish to write down some events and episodes from everyday life that made you think of theoretical concepts in the Course. Try to match your records of events and relationships with the content in the Units. You will be surprised to know how interesting the whole process becomes! Make notes of the similarities of the respondent's family life experiences with the Course content. There may also be differences and you must highlight them in the report. Be sure to refer to theoretical concepts of the Course in the interpretation or analysis parts of your report.

2.2.4 Overview of the Practical

This Practicum activity requires you to carry out tasks in two phases; each phase has one task in it. They are listed below along with the format in which you are required to submit them. Use of these given formats would help you organise your material systematically. Better organisation and clarity definitely fetches more marks.

2.3 PART-2

Activity: Understanding Roles and Responsibilities of Family Members

AIM:

To understand the family as a functioning unit by discovering the roles and responsibilities of family members.

OBJECTIVES:

After undertaking this Practicum activity, you will be able to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in the family members in a family context; and
- Describe one's role in the family with respect to relationships, work allocation and resource sharing.

METHOD:

Materials Required:

Pen, pencil, paper, or tape recorder.

Procedure:

This Practicum activity is divided into two phases:

Phase 1 : Interviewing the Respondent

Phase 2 : Drawing of Venn Diagram

Identify the family and approach the head or any adult member of the family. Ask him or her if he or she would be willing to participate in an interview with you about his or her family. You may wish to assure the respondent that his or her responses or answers in the interview would be kept confidential. Set up a mutually convenient time with the respondent to conduct the interview. Start taking information about the respondent's family in terms of the relationships shared, overall composition, unique aspects and lacunae. You will also need to ask about each family member's roles, responsibilities and position in the family.

PHASE 1: Interview

Tool used : Interview Schedule

You are required to seek the required information and note down each and every word that a respondent will narrate to you. You may also choose to do an audio recording of the interview and later transcribe the same. Do not forget to prepare a set of questions or the interview schedule before hand.

This interview schedule should be included in your recording of the practicum in the File.

You may rephrase the questions if required during the interview and the same should be noted in your practicum. Also, you can further probe the respondent, if required and the same should also be recorded.

You must include the interview schedule that you prepared and the modifications you brought in during the interview, in the final report of this practicum included in the File.

FINDINGS

- Describe the respondent in the family. Mention the roles the respondent plays and the contributions (material and emotional) he or she makes in the family.
- Introduce other family members and describe some of their characteristics.
- Mention at least two strengths and weaknesses each family member possesses.

Name:

About respondent:

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Age: Sex:

Roles played and relationships shared in the family:

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Respondent's contributions to family:

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Respondent's strengths:

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Respondent’s weaknesses:

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Strengths and weaknesses of other family members:

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Alternative Suggested Formats (choose only one):

- **Family picture book** - with photographs and written descriptions.
- **Drama script** (written) - with introduction and traits of actors (as in family members) and other written descriptions.
- **Talk show introduction** - in the form of a CD (Audio or Video Tape)–

You may introduce respondent and others in the family like a talk show host.

PHASE 2: Venn Diagram

Exercises

- Based on the closeness the respondent experiences in each relationship within the family, draw a diagram with subject in the centre and other members around the subject.
- Identify and explain the strengths and weaknesses of each relationship that the subject shares.

Format:

- Diagram or organisational chart, supported with written descriptions for each relationship (You can also make a soft copy using computers).

INTERPRETATION OF THE VENN DIAGRAM :

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ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

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In this section you have to write down your inferences and analysis regarding the roles and responsibilities played by each family member. This is a combined analysis and discussion of the data and findings of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this Practical. Try to match your records of events and relationships with the content in the Units. You will be surprised to know how interesting the whole process becomes! Make notes of the similarities of the respondent's family life experiences with the Course content. There may also be differences and you must highlight them in the report. Be sure to refer to theoretical concepts of the Course in the interpretation or analysis parts of your report.

CONCLUSIONS:

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In this section, you have to conclude this practicum in about 500-750 words. Here, you have to record the inferences that you have been able to draw on the basis of this practical and write how far you have been able to meet the objectives of this practical activity like identifying strengths and weaknesses in the family members, importance of one's role in the family with respect to relationships, work allocation and resource sharing. Broadly, you need to focus on the findings and the interpretations of the same.

REFLECTIONS:

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In a simple paragraph of about 250 words, reflect on your experience while performing this practicum.

You may state how you went about doing this practical, and how your respondents reacted towards you. You may comment on the behaviour of the participant(s) in the course of this activity. You may state the extent to which the aim and objectives of this practical exercise could be met. Also, write about your inner self experience in the course of this practicum.

2.4 PART-3

Illustration of Written Report of this Practical

AIM:

To understand the family as a functioning unit by discovering the roles and responsibilities of family members.

OBJECTIVES:

After undertaking this Practicum activity, you will be able to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in the family members in a family context; and
- Describe one's role in the family with respect to relationships, work allocation and resource sharing.

METHOD:

Materials Required:

Pen, pencil, paper, or tape recorder.

Procedure:

I had identified Mrs. Meera Iyyar as a respondent for this practicum activity. She is 35 years old. She is married and has two children. She is a housewife and lives with her mother-in-law, husband and two children. I approached her and discussed about her participation in the practicum activity. Firstly, she hesitated, but after seeing my practicum manual and some discussion regarding the programme [M.Sc.(CFT)], she was convinced and gave her consent for this practicum activity. But she did not want to mention her and other family members' name, hence in practicum report I have changed the original name of respondent. We decided Monday 7th June, 2019 for this practicum activity. I reached her place on time. She had done daily household chores and had enough free time to provide me the information required for this activity. After some informal talks, I started asking her questions related to herself, her roles and responsibilities in the house. Then I asked about the other family members, their roles and responsibilities in the family. It took about 90-120 minutes to get whole information. I noted down each and every information on paper. After completion of this activity she offered me tea. I thanked her for her cooperation and hospitality and took her leave.

FINDINGS:

Tool Used and Responses Obtained:

Here you have to write (1) the interview schedule prepared by you, (2) the actual verbatim of the interview - both the questions asked and the answers.

I am presenting the roles and responsibilities of each family member in two ways, these are simply in word format and through Venn diagram. Let us see the first method of presenting the roles and responsibilities of each family member.

PHASE 1: Meet the Respondent's Family

Name: Meera

About Meera: Meera has short height and dark complexion. She is a very helpful person. She is hardworking and intelligent. She is very sensitive and gets hurt easily. She also gets angry very easily.

Age: 35 years **Sex:** Female

Roles played and relationships shared in the family: She is a housewife, mother and daughter-in-law in her family of procreation. She has two children. She is married to a businessman; he has a shop of his own. They have their own house in Patna. In her family of procreation, she is the eldest daughter-in-law. She has one younger brother-in-law who got married last year and lives separately.

Sometimes, she also helps her husband in his shop. She has two children; eldest is daughter, who is 10 years of age named Shyama and a 3 year old son named Abhishek. Her daughter goes to school and her son is at home yet.

Contributions to family: She provides emotional support to her family and responds to their needs, for example when children need to share something with her, she gives them time and a patient hearing. She also contributes to the family by helping her husband in his business so she gives some financial support also.

She has a lot of responsibilities at home (like child care, kitchen chores, managing finances etc.) and executing them properly is a goal for her.

Her strengths: She has the ability to motivate and care for others, like her children and other family members, e.g. her mother-in-law. She is also good at managing finances and family income. She keeps all the expenses in check and uses the money after planning for the future. She emphasises discipline with children.

Her weaknesses: She can get upset easily over petty matters, is short tempered, and often cannot communicate her worries frankly.

Her mother-in-law's strength: She has kept the family together, has foresight.

Her mother-in-law's weaknesses: If she gets annoyed, it is difficult to please her. She is not willing to accommodate newer views of younger members.

Shyama's strength: Her daughter is very beautiful, as she has taken on her 'Dadi' (grandmother). She is very helpful and responsible. She does her homework independently and on time. She likes to play outdoor games.

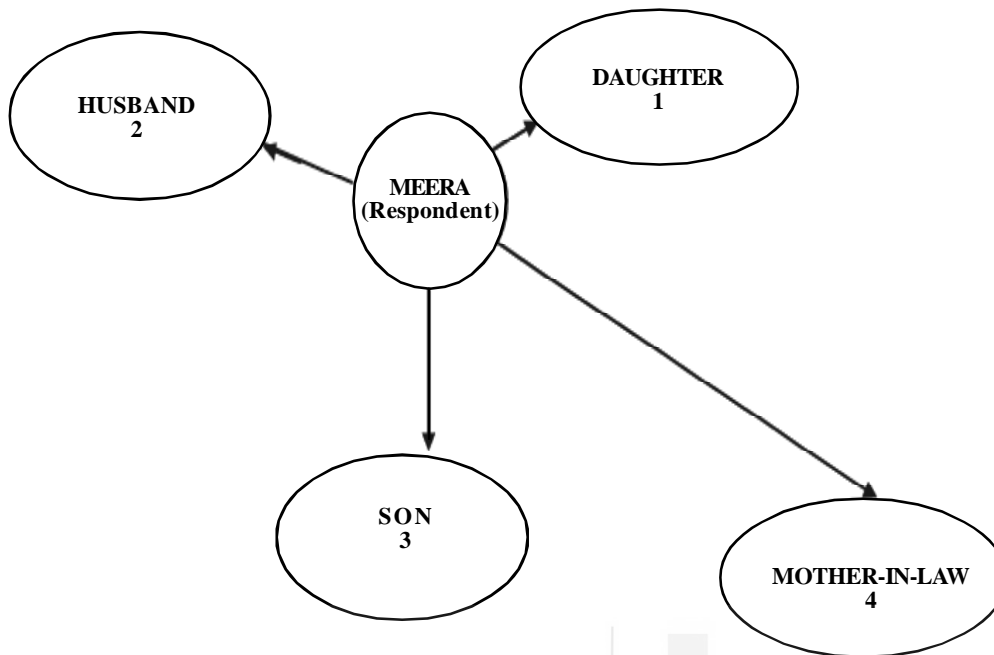
Shyama's weaknesses: She has to be coaxed to eat, is very fussy in eating... especially fruits and vegetables. She hates drinking milk!!

Abhishek's strengths: He is not a very demanding child, very playful. He can be taken care of by anyone in the family.

Abhishek's weakness: He can be very adamant (*ziddi*) at times.

Similarly, you have to write for all the other family members.

PHASE 2 : Venn Diagram



INTERPRETATION OF THE VENN DIAGRAM

For ease in interpretation, the family members are given numbers which are denoting the closest relationship and moving on to the farthest. The distance is indicated from the length of the arrows. The above diagram shows that Meera is emotionally closest to her daughter. This is followed by her husband. She does not experience too much emotional closeness to her mother-in-law.

Reasons for closeness or distance

Daughter: Meera as a mother knows her very well. She understands her perfectly like no one else can. She comes to know of her needs even before she tells her. There is a strong bond between them. She is extremely caring and protective.

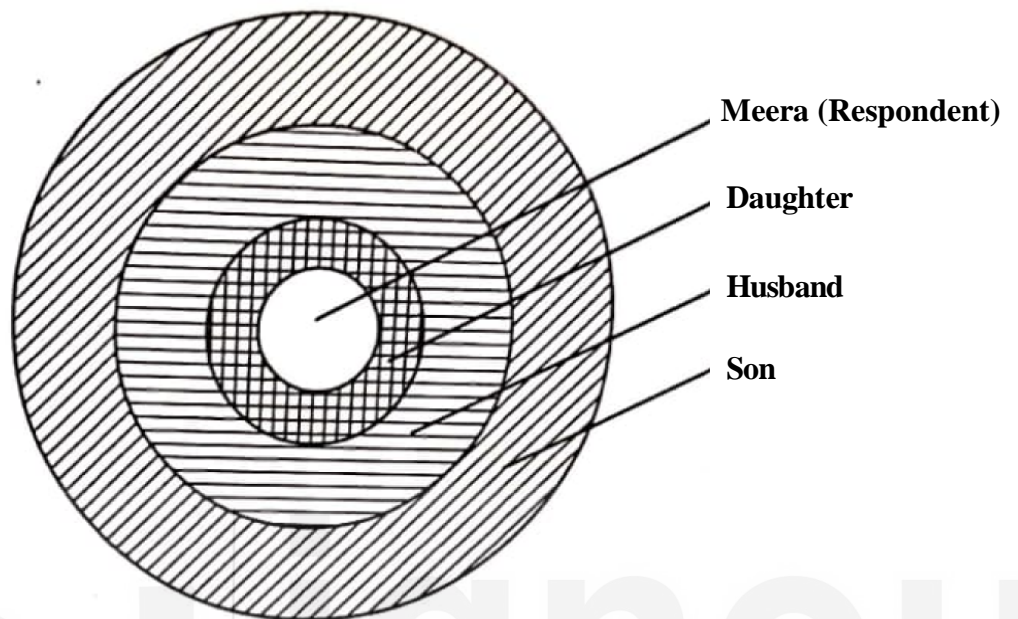
Husband: They are almost of the same age and earlier were in college together. They are almost like friends. Meera shares everything about herself with him. He understands Meera very well and is extremely helpful during any crisis situation.

Son: Meera's son is very adamant. He often stays with his *dadi* (paternal grandmother). He loves his mother but does not express it often. At times Meera cannot judge what his reactions would be to Meera's behaviours.

Mother-in-law: Meera's mother-in-law and Meera do not get along too well. They are pleasant to each other but she does not approve of many things Meera does. On occasion, she complains about Meera to her mother and compares Meera with her daughter.

Note: You can add concentric circles to the family relationships also. The first circle in the middle indicating the closest relationship followed by other, wider circles encompassing the one in the centre.

Example of concentric circles



INTERPRETATION: *Interpretation can be similar to the above example.*

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION; CONCLUSIONS:

These are to be written as explained in the description of the Practical (Part-2)

REFLECTIONS:

This practicum activity is aimed at understanding the family as a functioning unit by discovering the roles and responsibilities of family members. I selected a family in my neighbourhood to get the information needed in this practicum activity. I approached Mrs. Meera and after some hesitation she agreed to become a part of this activity. We fixed a date and time. I reached at her place on time and gathered all the information that was required for the completion of this activity. Mrs. Meera is very co-operative and humble lady. I have presented the information given by her in two methods. I simply noted down the roles and responsibilities of each family member and then drew a Venn diagram on the basis of the information. It is found that Mrs. Meera is very close to her daughter and husband. She didn't like her mother-in-law, as she always compared her (Meera) with her own daughter. I found this activity very interesting and acquired a better understanding of roles and responsibilities of family members... *(You would write your experience here.)*