



# Community Health Workers' Role in Mental Health First Aid Training: An Intervention Study in South African Urban Centers

Zola Ramofana<sup>1,2</sup>, Nontsizi Mohlomi<sup>3,4</sup>, Mpho Motshekga<sup>5</sup>, Siphon Khumalo<sup>6,7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Johannesburg

<sup>2</sup> Department of Pediatrics, Council for Geoscience

<sup>3</sup> Department of Epidemiology, Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Clinical Research, Council for Geoscience

<sup>5</sup> Department of Public Health, University of Johannesburg

<sup>6</sup> University of the Western Cape

<sup>7</sup> Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)

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**Correspondence:** [zramofana@gmail.com](mailto:zramofana@gmail.com)

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## Author notes

*Zola Ramofana is affiliated with University of Johannesburg and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

*Nontsizi Mohlomi is affiliated with Department of Epidemiology, Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

*Mpho Motshekga is affiliated with Department of Public Health, University of Johannesburg and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

*Siphon Khumalo is affiliated with University of the Western Cape and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.*

## Abstract

Community health workers (CHWs) play a crucial role in primary healthcare settings, particularly in underserved urban communities where access to mental health services is limited. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including pre- and post-training assessments with CHWs, focus group discussions, and longitudinal follow-up surveys over two years. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. CHWs showed significant improvement in MHFA knowledge scores from baseline to post-training (mean increase of 52%, CI [40-65],  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a substantial learning effect. Training CHWs in MHFA demonstrated promising results, enhancing their ability to identify and respond to mental health crises within urban communities. Further research should explore the sustainability of these training programmes and their impact on both CHW practice and community mental health outcomes. Community Health Workers, Mental Health First Aid, Urban Settings, Training Effectiveness Treatment effect was estimated with  $\text{logit}(\pi) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i$ , and uncertainty reported using confidence-interval based inference.

**Keywords:** African Geography, Community Health Workers, Mental Health First Aid, Urbanization Impact, Qualitative Research, Theory of Change, Community Engagement

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