

The Role of Community Work in Promoting Health Cultur - A Sociological Perspective-

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the role of community work in promoting health culture from a sociological perspective by analyzing the social context that explains its impact on shaping health awareness within societies. The study will adopt the social role approach to understand how health culture emerges and evolves and how community initiatives influence these processes through interaction with individuals and institutions. Additionally, it will highlight the challenges facing health culture promotion through community work, such as adopting new health concepts, overcoming cultural barriers, and achieving a lasting impact in socially and culturally diverse communities. Finally, the study will explore how community work contributes to enhancing public health by spreading health awareness and fostering preventive practices that improve overall well-being.

Keywords : Role, Community Work, Health Culture, Sociological Perspective, Public Health

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Introduction :

In an era of multiculturalism and rapid social transformations, the role of community work has become vital in promoting health awareness and disseminating health culture. This requires a deep understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that influence our perceptions and behaviors regarding health and medical care.

Amid increasing complexity and ongoing health challenges, community work emerges as a key factor in shaping and spreading health culture within societies. This study aims to explore how community work influences health awareness and behavioral change through an analytical sociological lens that focuses on social interactions and relationships within the cultural environment.

Health culture is one of the fundamental pillars for achieving health and well-being in societies, as social and cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping health concepts and guiding health-related behaviors. Community work serves as an effective means to promote and disseminate health culture by engaging individuals and activating their role as mediators in transferring health knowledge and encouraging preventive health practices.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the sociological factors that influence the formation of health culture and analyze the role of community work in enhancing this culture from a sociological perspective. We will focus on how health beliefs and practices are formed within societies and how community work can contribute to changing and reinforcing these concepts and behaviors.

By examining social relationships and cultural dynamics within communities, we will investigate how environmental and social factors shape the concept of health and health practices. We will discuss the impact of social factors such as education, community, and culture in directing health trends and determining future steps to enhance health culture.

Based on a deep understanding of the role of community work in shaping health culture, health officials and local communities will be able to direct their efforts towards achieving health education goals and promoting health awareness, ultimately contributing to improved health and well-being on a broader societal level.

Additionally, community work plays a crucial role in reducing the gap between different social groups by promoting health equity and ensuring access to health information and services for vulnerable and marginalized populations. It provides platforms for dialogue and

collaboration among health professionals, researchers, and decision-makers, contributing to the development of comprehensive health policies that meet societal needs and are based on clear scientific and sociological foundations.

Furthermore, community work complements the efforts of official health institutions by supporting and enhancing government and health organization initiatives. It provides primary healthcare services, raises awareness about chronic diseases, and promotes healthy practices. Through health education programs, positive health behaviors such as proper nutrition, regular physical activity, and the prevention of infectious diseases are encouraged, ultimately benefiting public health.

Moreover, volunteering in community work is a fundamental element in building individuals' capacities and fostering a sense of social responsibility. Participants in these initiatives acquire communication, planning, and project management skills, enhancing their ability to influence their surroundings and spread health awareness on a broader scale. Additionally, community work helps build trust between individuals and health institutions, strengthening positive interactions between society and the healthcare system.

From this perspective, community work serves as a driving force for improving public health and achieving sustainable development in societies. By fostering partnerships across different sectors and efficiently utilizing available resources, it can enhance the quality of life and raise health awareness, contributing to the creation of healthier and more prosperous communities.

Based on this, the present study aims to examine the role of community work in promoting health culture from a sociological perspective by analyzing the social context that explains its impact on shaping health awareness within societies. The study will adopt the social role approach to understand how health culture emerges and evolves and how community initiatives influence these processes through interaction with individuals and institutions. Additionally, it will highlight the challenges facing health culture promotion through community work, such as adopting new health concepts, overcoming cultural barriers, and achieving a lasting impact in socially and culturally diverse communities. Finally, the study will explore how community work contributes to enhancing public health by spreading health awareness and fostering preventive practices that improve overall well-being.

I. The Sociological Context Explaining the Role of Community Work in Promoting Health Culture

Sociologists and social psychologists have observed that social life can often be divided into observable roles, which carry predictable behaviors. Understanding these roles is crucial for explaining why individuals are expected to behave in certain ways and how these expectations shape their own behavior or their evaluations of others' behavior. Role theories emerged from these observations as powerful theoretical perspectives for explaining and predicting human behavior. Generally, these theories function by identifying an observable role (e.g., a woman, a doctor, or a child). This expected role is described with attributes associated with it, and an individual's characteristics, actions, or behaviors are often evaluated based on these attributes by both the individual and others.

Role theory typically adopts either a structural-functional or symbolic interactionist perspective. The structural-functional approach to roles is based on a macro-oriented structural-functional perspective in sociology, which views society as organized according to a set of interrelated rules and laws that bring order to society. Here, roles represent "the basic building blocks of social systems that generate behavioral expectations beyond the occupants of the role. Roles and their associated expectations are assumed to be part of a broader social fabric, relatively stable, and guiding the behavior and reactions of specific groups. Role expectations are generally imposed uniformly, regardless of individual differences (Anglin & et al, 2022, p. 4).

According to the structural-functional perspective of role theory, the concepts of "status" and "role" are fundamental elements of social structure, as these roles contribute to social stability by defining the rights and obligations expected of individuals in their respective social positions. In this context, Ralph Linton views social status not merely as an individual attribute but as a set of culturally defined rights and obligations imposed by the social structure on individuals. Consequently, the social role is the practical embodiment of these rights and obligations—it represents the dynamic aspect that ensures functional integration among different societal components. From this standpoint, performing roles in accordance with societal expectations helps maintain social order, as each individual operates within the framework of their designated role based on cultural and institutional norms (Jakovina & Trpimir Jakovina, 2017, p 154).

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, roles are not simply predefined functions but are instead the result of an ongoing process of social negotiation among individuals during their daily interactions. Erving Goffman, in his dramaturgical analysis, highlights that individuals enact their social roles based on their perceptions of themselves and others, attempting to shape the impressions others form of them through the social performance they present in different situations. Here, the individual resembles an actor performing a role on the social stage, relying on their understanding of the social context and the reactions of others. In this framework, Goffman distinguishes between the frontstage, where individuals strive to present an idealized image of themselves that aligns with social expectations, and the backstage, where they reassess their roles and prepare for possible adjustments based on what they have learned from their interactions (Anglin et al., 2022, p. 4).

Thus, while the structural-functional perspective emphasizes the stability of social roles as part of a broader system that ensures societal cohesion, the symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on the fluid and evolving nature of social roles, which are continuously shaped and redefined through interactive processes between individuals.

From this perspective, for example, every actor in community work occupies a specific social position, and their interactions with others are regulated by a set of rights and duties. When these expectations conflict, it leads to "role conflict" or "role tensions," reflecting the discrepancies and challenges that may arise in the interactions of actors in community work.

Based on this perspective, roles are considered an essential part of the complex social structure, serving as fundamental pillars of social systems. Roles generate uniform and stable behavioral expectations for individuals occupying those roles, and these expectations extend beyond the individuals themselves. Community work can have a significant impact on guiding communities' behavior toward meeting role-related behavioral expectations by organizing awareness campaigns and joint activities that encourage healthy practices and positive behaviors.

Accordingly, this theory emphasizes the relationships and personal meanings individuals assign to roles and behaviors, making roles flexible and negotiable. They can be shaped and modified through social interaction, where community work plays a pivotal role in shaping and adjusting roles based on the needs of both society and individuals. Through collective activities in community work, participants can create new meanings and

guide behaviors flexibly according to societal developments and health needs.

In this context, dynamic studies focus on the interactive aspects of role practice, examining the interactions individuals engage in to exchange roles within the social structure. Here, the focus is on how individuals assume the roles of others, shape their own roles, anticipate others' responses to their roles (role modeling), and finally perform their actual roles (role performance).

In another context, it is worth noting that community work is based on a holistic approach to assessing societal needs. The "Social Compass" model by Connor (1969) is one of the key sociological models in community health development. This model identifies twelve elements of the social system, including rules and norms, authority, leadership, knowledge and beliefs, values, and resources, alongside eleven patterns of social relations such as family, education, economy, and government. This framework aligns with the World Health Organization's (1978) classification of key partners in community health development. Through this perspective, community work becomes a central actor in analyzing and intervening within various patterns of social relations to assess health conditions and promote health culture within the framework of primary healthcare. For instance, when addressing a public health issue such as teenage pregnancy, community health developers can adopt Rothman's (1974) "Locality Development" model, which emphasizes community partnership in driving change. This model enables associations to play a vital role in identifying community needs, conducting field studies based on observation and interviews with local actors, and understanding the population's health priorities and the cultural factors influencing health perceptions and preventive behaviors (Hickman, 1990, p 129).

In this sense, community work plays a pivotal role in redirecting health policies according to the perceived needs of the community, acting as a mediator between the population and health institutions through awareness and community mobilization. In practical applications, this role is evident in health planning processes that prioritize community participation in determining health priorities rather than relying on top-down approaches imposed by official institutions. In a rural county in the American Midwest, community health developers, in collaboration with local associations, facilitated community pressure to reallocate health resources to meet actual needs. They leveraged Lewin's social change model, which focuses on identifying driving and resisting forces in the change process. Consequently,

associations emerged as a driving force for improving health services, in contrast to medical bodies that represented resistance to change. These efforts led to tangible improvements in public health indicators and increased awareness of the importance of health culture, highlighting the crucial role of community work in achieving sustainable health transformation within societies.

II- Challenges and Opportunities in Promoting Health Culture Through Community Work :

There is no doubt that the challenges and opportunities in promoting health culture through community work reflect multiple complexities. Adopting new health concepts and changing practices in culturally diverse environments can be difficult. Interacting with different cultural backgrounds and achieving harmony between the values and beliefs held by individuals present a significant challenge. Additionally, creating a meaningful impact in diverse communities requires a deep understanding of the social, cultural, and economic dynamics specific to each society.

However, there are important opportunities in this context, as community work can contribute effectively to enhancing health culture. Through continuous awareness and education efforts, harmful behaviors can be changed, and positive health behaviors can be promoted. Community work can also raise awareness of health risks and encourage individuals to make informed and sustainable health decisions. Furthermore, it can provide social and psychological support to individuals, strengthening their ability to cope with health challenges and fostering personal growth.

In this context, promoting health culture through community work faces several challenges and opportunities, as outlined below:

II-1 Promoting Health Culture Through Community Work: Challenges of Communication and Opportunities for Actor Integration

The dissemination of health culture through community work faces several challenges, primarily the lack of communication and coordination among different stakeholders, both within teams and between health and cultural institutions. Experiences have shown that the absence of effective communication channels between cultural hubs and health units leads to the isolation of initiatives and limits their impact. In many cases, healthcare workers failed to recognize the complementary role of these hubs in

promoting health awareness. Furthermore, frequent administrative changes and the lack of official recognition of the procedures implemented within these hubs have widened the communication gap, making it difficult to achieve common goals. Administrative obstacles and insufficient logistical support have also weakened and slowed down initiatives, highlighting the need to strengthen integration among different stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of projects (Nespolo & et al, 2014, p 1241-1242).

On the other hand, cultural and health hubs present a significant opportunity to enhance cross-sector collaboration, enabling the development of comprehensive strategies that promote community health. Integrating popular culture into health programs and establishing joint mechanisms for policy management can help unify efforts and reduce health disparities. Creating spaces for dialogue and negotiation among different actors fosters better coordination and a complementary distribution of responsibilities, enhancing social interaction and collective creativity in health production. By improving communication mechanisms, cultural and health hubs can be transformed into dynamic platforms for knowledge transfer and skill development, empowering individuals and local communities to actively participate in improving their health and quality of life.

II-2 Challenges and Opportunities in Promoting Health Culture through Community Work : Between Cultural Influence and Social Integration

The promotion of health culture through community work faces complex challenges related to the influence of culture on health. Culture cannot be reduced to a fixed set of values and beliefs shared by all members of society. While community work aims to enhance health awareness, it encounters obstacles such as cultural diversity and socio-economic disparities that shape individual behaviors. Moreover, assuming that culture is the primary driver of health issues may lead to overlooking structural factors such as poverty, health policies, and commercial marketing, which play a crucial role in shaping health choices. Therefore, fostering health culture requires adopting a more comprehensive approach that considers the social and historical contexts influencing individuals' health practices (Mason & et al, 2020, p 2).

On the other hand, community work offers significant opportunities to introduce new health concepts by promoting integration between different sectors and establishing community partnerships based on direct

engagement with target groups. Anthropological studies highlight the importance of listening to individuals' life experiences and analyzing the factors that influence their health decisions, which helps in developing fairer and more effective health strategies. By adopting a participatory approach that deeply understands social and cultural environments, community initiatives can contribute to building healthier societies that support health equity and promote overall well-being.

II-3 Financial Challenges and Opportunities for Promoting Health Culture through Community Work

The sustainability of health programs faces significant financial challenges, as most health practices rely on federal government funding, ensuring their stability and effectiveness. However, this centralized model poses challenges for local administrations, which struggle to adapt unified national policies to the specific regional characteristics of each state and municipality. On the other hand, such funding helps mitigate the impact of financial resource shortages on the sustainability of health practices, unlike programs that rely solely on local municipal budgets, highlighting the importance of federal investment in ensuring the success of health policies. Nevertheless, certain sectors, such as culture, sports, and recreation, continue to suffer from financial marginalization, either due to weak recognition of their importance in health promotion or the lack of allocated resources (Silva & et al, 2014, p 84).

In the context of promoting health culture through community work, the lack of funding from relevant authorities represents a major obstacle to implementing sustainable and comprehensive health programs. The absence of sufficient support reduces the capacity of associations to offer integrated initiatives that include recreation and culture as essential components of public health. Therefore, health promotion requires a more holistic approach that goes beyond traditional healthcare to encompass other sectors that enhance overall well-being. This necessitates greater awareness among donors and government officials of the importance of investing in these areas, along with strengthening partnerships between civil society and government sectors to ensure the sustainability of health programs and achieve a broader impact on public health.

II-4 Balancing Health Culture Promotion : Between Power Challenges and Partnership Opportunities

Achieving balance in promoting health culture through community work presents a challenge related to power dynamics between actors in the health sector and civil society. While instrumental approaches such as Health Impact Assessments contribute to raising health awareness, imposing them without considering local contexts may create resistance or a sense of coercion among partners. Therefore, dialogue and communication become essential pillars to ensure the seamless integration of these initiatives within community structures. Developing facilitative roles for public health coordinators, rather than enforcing predefined practices, helps foster collaboration and build trust, contributing to the creation of a sustainable health environment that respects the specificities of each actor (Synnevåg & et al, 2018)

On the other hand, community work offers an opportunity to establish effective partnerships with health sector actors, provided that obstacles related to unclear roles or centralized decision-making are overcome. This requires creating spaces for joint dialogue between different levels, where perspectives can be exchanged, and coordination between executive bodies and civil society can ensure the translation of overarching goals into practical initiatives on the ground. However, the success of this process depends on local associations possessing the necessary skills to manage discussions and stimulate cooperation among various stakeholders, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and transforming public health into a shared collective responsibility rather than an administrative obligation.

III- The Role of Community Work in Promoting Public Health Through Health Culture Dissemination

Community work plays a pivotal role in promoting public health by disseminating health culture and ensuring coordination between various sectors to achieve health equity. These efforts are based on the understanding that social determinants, often found outside the health sector, directly impact health, necessitating an integrative approach among different stakeholders. In this context, community initiatives provide an effective platform for integrating health into all policies, as exemplified by the "Health in All Policies" (HiAP) approach, which fosters intersectoral collaboration to ensure sustainable health decisions. Associations play a

crucial role in facilitating health planning processes by preparing reports on local health conditions, analyzing social determinants of health, and contributing to the development of strategies based on active community participation. This helps to establish health awareness and align policies with local needs (Trowbridge & et al, 2022, p 3).

On the other hand, community work offers opportunities to enhance participatory planning mechanisms that integrate scientific knowledge with social realities, making it a key pillar in spreading health culture and encouraging communities to adopt sustainable health practices. Given the multiple challenges facing health planning, such as disparities in resources and capacities across different regions, it is essential to adopt an approach that combines instrumental rationality with effective communication to ensure broader participation in health decision-making. Experience has shown that associations can act as intermediaries between health institutions and the community by facilitating dialogue, providing guidance and awareness, and fostering innovation in health promotion. This cross-sectoral integration contributes to strengthening health planning as a dynamic process that combines analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of community health initiatives.

In this context, community work serves as a fundamental pillar in promoting public health by disseminating health culture and raising individual awareness. It is concretely implemented through organizing awareness campaigns and educational events, which help guide individuals toward more proactive health behaviors. Additionally, community work contributes to developing individuals' health skills and fostering positive changes in their health behaviors, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

Through awareness and training, community work enhances health literacy and encourages individuals to adopt healthier habits. It also strengthens social support networks, enabling them to assist individuals on their journey toward better health and well-being. As a result, community work contributes to creating healthy environments and sustainable communities that advance public health and individual well-being.

In the United States, and to a lesser extent in Europe and other parts of the world, health education has evolved into one of the most organized and developed social sciences within public health. This discipline has an established certification system for health education specialists and a dedicated professional association, the Society for Public Health Education. The Health Education and Health Promotion Section of the American Public

Health Association represents the interests of many social and behavioral scientists. Most schools of public health in the United States offer graduate programs in health education, emphasizing health promotion and behavior change within their curricula. Research and training in health education rely heavily on theories and models of individual behavior change from health psychology. Additionally, community-based approaches to health promotion are gaining increasing importance, utilizing principles of community development and participation (Coreil & Karen E. Dyer, 2017, p. 602).

Although efforts to promote health culture through community work face numerous challenges, they also present significant opportunities to enhance public health. One of the main challenges lies in the need to unify efforts and coordinate among various sectors to maximize the benefits of partnerships, in addition to securing sustainable funding and necessary resources to support health initiatives. Changing cultural habits and raising health awareness also pose a challenge that requires effective communication and awareness strategies. Moreover, community initiatives may encounter reservations or resistance from different social groups, necessitating a participatory approach based on dialogue and persuasion.

On the other hand, community work offers opportunities to strengthen cooperation between institutions, facilitating more effective knowledge and experience exchange. Additionally, leveraging innovation and modern technology can be a powerful tool in spreading health culture and enhancing the impact of community initiatives. Furthermore, community work contributes to increasing health awareness and encouraging communities to actively participate in health-related decision-making, thereby promoting health sustainability and fostering healthier and more stable environments (Plough, 2014, p. 389).

The necessary changes for spreading health culture fluctuate between "surface structure" and "deep structure." Adapting the surface structure involves "matching intervention materials and messages to the observable characteristics of a population," including modifying language and ensuring that culturally representative individuals deliver interventions or model desirable behaviors. In contrast, adapting the deep structure entails modifications that respond to core cultural values and an understanding of how "ethnic, cultural, social, environmental, and historical factors influence specific health behaviors, or how religion, family, community, and economic conditions affect the targeted behavior." More precise adaptive classifications, such as strategies that incorporate social, cultural, linguistic,

collective, temporal, and cultural pride elements, enhance the role of community work in spreading health culture, raising awareness, and fostering positive engagement within communities (Oman, 2023, p. 16).

Through organizing awareness campaigns, providing educational programs, and supporting vulnerable groups, community work helps overcome some of the challenges associated with achieving universal health coverage. It also contributes to enhancing individuals' health skills, encouraging community participation, and promoting preventive practices, thereby reducing health and economic burdens on individuals and communities. Furthermore, initiatives led by associations play a vital role in strengthening sustainable financing mechanisms for health services by supporting community-based health insurance programs and improving resource allocation efficiency, which increases individuals' access to essential healthcare services (Langat & et al, 2025, p 10).

It can be affirmed that local associations and volunteer initiatives provide platforms to raise community awareness about the impact of dietary habits, physical activity, and traditional health practices on public health. Through awareness campaigns and training workshops, these activities contribute to changing social perceptions of illness and promoting healthy lifestyles. Additionally, associations work on building strong social support networks that reduce isolation and provide a supportive environment for individuals to face health challenges, particularly in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities (Ratnasari, 2023, p 12- 13).

Moreover, community work contributes to enhancing the integration between traditional practices and modern medicine, which helps improve access to healthcare and reduce health disparities among different groups. Community programs aimed at raising health awareness and providing guidance on modern and traditional treatment methods contribute to improving quality of life and increasing awareness of the importance of prevention. Furthermore, associations help develop more inclusive health policies through collaboration with health and governmental institutions, fostering a sustainable health environment that supports the well-being of individuals and society as a whole.

Overall, the success of efforts aimed at achieving universal health coverage requires integration between community work and national health policies, as community organizations can play a crucial role in reducing financial and administrative barriers that hinder individuals' access to healthcare services. By raising health awareness, supporting strategic purchasing practices for health services, and contributing to the

improvement of risk pooling mechanisms, community work helps build more sustainable and efficient health systems. Additionally, political will and community support are key factors in sustaining these efforts, creating greater opportunities to enhance public health and achieve universal health coverage that benefits society as a whole.

II- Conclusion:

In conclusion, community work plays a pivotal role in promoting health culture as a fundamental element in building more aware and sustainable societies. From a sociological perspective, community work represents a dynamic space for social interaction, where health knowledge is reproduced through informal channels such as associations, volunteer initiatives, and community networks. In this way, community work goes beyond its traditional role of providing health services to contribute to the development of social capital by strengthening social ties and fostering values of solidarity and cooperation, which helps establish positive health behaviors within society.

Moreover, community work enables individuals and groups to transition from being mere recipients of health services to active agents in shaping their health environment. Through awareness campaigns and health education initiatives, it empowers individuals to make informed health decisions, reducing reliance on costly curative care and reinforcing the preventive approach, which is one of the most crucial pillars of sustainable public health. This sociological dimension highlights the importance of shifting from the traditional biomedical model, which focuses on treatment, to a comprehensive social model that emphasizes prevention and health promotion through interaction and awareness.

Additionally, community work reflects deeper dimensions related to health equity and community empowerment. It helps reduce health disparities among different social groups, particularly in marginalized and impoverished communities with weak health infrastructures. Through its programs and initiatives, community work enhances access to essential health services for vulnerable populations, mitigating the negative effects of social and economic disparities on individual health. In this context, community work becomes a key tool in achieving health justice, bridging gaps that government policies alone may struggle to address.

On a structural level, community work complements official institutions by providing more flexible mechanisms for rapid intervention and direct engagement with community needs. It also creates a space for

experimenting with new health strategies based on continuous interaction among various stakeholders in the health sector. This strengthens communities' ability to adapt to emerging health challenges, such as epidemics, chronic diseases, and environmental changes affecting public health.

In this sense, achieving sustainability in promoting health culture requires recognizing the vital role of community work and establishing an effective partnership between it and official health institutions. Health transformation is not merely a technical process related to service provision but a deep socio-cultural shift that necessitates active community participation and sustained political support. Therefore, integrating community efforts into national public health strategies ensures lasting impact and enhances societies' resilience in facing health crises.

Ultimately, community work remains one of the most significant tools for social change in the health field, fostering awareness, solidarity, and shared responsibility. This leads to the development of healthier and more equitable societies capable of addressing present and future challenges with efficiency and genuine social cohesion.

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