

Communication Skill - a Tool for Rural Women's Empowerment

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ABSTRACT:

Background: India is rich in women-power resources. The rural female population is as big as 360 millions but only 31% of them are working population. The rural women, particularly poor, are not exposed themselves though they have talent because they have dearth of communicating skills. Today's world is a globalized and technologically progressed world. So the communication skills are today's need.

Method and Materials: The present study was undertaken to assess the communication skills of rural adolescents young women of nine centers across the country: Dharwad, Hisar, Hyderabad, Ludhiana, Palampur, Panthnagar, Parbhani, Udaipur and Jorhat with a sample of 1,183 young women of age group 15-18+ years. Communication skill scale developed by AICRP(CD) Hyderabad centre was used to assess the communication pattern at home, neighborhood and with authority. The tool was translated to regional language and administered to the adolescents young women in the Balika Kendra / Anganwadi. Educational package was used for intervention which consists of exercises and games for providing inter personal communication to facilitate cooperation and collaboration, to build on ideas by accepting other's ideas, awareness and assessment of problem issues prevailing in the immediate surrounding, community issues and larger issues in the country. The content of the packages were presented as films, discussions, interactions, exercises. The results of intervention was assessed through skill index. The educational intervention was provided to rural young women for a period of 18 months with three post-testing with an interval of six months between two testings.

Findings: Significant difference between two post-tests was observed which revealed that the intervention was effective in enhancing the communication skills of rural women. It was observed that majority (53.6%) were in low, followed by high (25%) and medium (21.2%) category of communication ability. Due to intervention, A least percentage (21.4%) were in low category and highest (43.4%) were in high category of communication skill. Imparting of communication skills through training to the adolescents women would help them to express their views and needs have better access to community resources, banks and be self-reliant.

Key words: *Communication skill, educational package, intervention.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Women have been recognized as key agents of sustainable development and women's equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and processes of development that are sustainable. The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs. Empowerment is a process of awareness , capacity building, leading from a greater participation to a greater decision making power. The process of empowerment strengthens their innate ability through acquiring knowledge, power and experience. (Murugan and Dharmalingam 2000). The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exists inadequately. Empowerment of women is equipping women to be economically, socially, legally and politically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem and to enable them to face any difficult situation and to en able to participate in development activities.

The key underlying concepts that define women's empowerment relate to choices, control, and power (Malhotra and Schuler 2005). Women's empowerment is conceptualized as a function of women's access to and control over resources, which extends to their decision-making capabilities regarding household decisions, employment, income, household assets and expenditure, fertility, sexuality, and freedom of movement (physical mobility) and their control over material and intangible resources such as property, information and time; their position within the household vis-à-vis other male and female household members and their education (Gurumurthy 1998; Dyson and Moore 1983). For most women in South Asia, gaining control over resources, in addition to gaining access to resources, is essential (Gurumurthy 1998).

Communication skills help the women to interact with friends, family and community in an acceptable manner to empower them socially, legally and politically and economically and there by having access to and control over resources, which extends to their decision-making capabilities, resilient and resourceful. Today's world is a globalized and technologically progressed world. The rural women empowerment could be achieved by imparting them the communication skills. It may make the rural women competent. With this theoretical background the present study was undertaken ***to know the impact of intervention on communication skills of rural women.***

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Interrupted time series design - a quasi-experimental design was employed to test the efficacy of the intervention package and programme. As a series of testing were to be administered, villages in close proximity to the research centre were selected. Each of the nine All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP)- Child Development centers in country: Dharwad, Hisar, Hyderabad, Ludhiana, Palampur, Panthnagar, Parbhani, Udaipur and Jorhat selected five villages from one taluk with 15-25 adolescents and young women of 15-18 years (school going / Non-school going) from each village. As a high proportion of girls were non-school going among most centres ,greater impetus was to empower them. A total sample of 1183 adolescents (non-school group) participated. Prior to selection, the group was contacted and briefed to seek their participation for a period of 18 months.

Sample selected for the Intervention programme:

Sl.No	Center	Number
1.	Dharwad	169
2.	Hisar	102
3.	Hyderabad	78
4.	Ludhiana	96
5.	Palampur	112
6.	Panthnagar	75
7.	Parbhani	180
8.	Udaipur	199
9.	Jorhat	172
10.	Total	1,183

The adolescents and young women were assessed by using the Communication skill tool developed by Hyderabad centre. This tool consists of a total of 20 hypothetical situations within the context of home , neighbourhood and authority. The tool was administered to each subject individually. It took nearly 30-40 minutes to administer the tool for each participant.

For each situation the ideas expressed by the subject were rated as follows : no idea expressed-'0' score, , at least one idea- '1' score, two ideas'2' scores, three or more ideas- 3 scores and a long conversation or lecture on the issue with score of four. The maximum attained score was 80 with a minimum score of 0.. Based on the total score, the participants was classified into low, medium and high. The reliability was assessed by pre testing on a sample of 216 with split half technique and was found to **0.98**

Category	Score
Low	<25
Medium	26-50
High	> 50

Data collection procedures:

The scale was translated to regional language (Kannada) and administered to the girl adolescents and young women in the Balika Kendra / Anganwadi/ homes. Some dropped out due to engagement as labourers in fields.

III. INTERVENTION:

The Intervention consisted of improvising social and communication skills. The educational intervention package was developed by the All India Coordinated Research Project – Child Development (AICRP-CD) team. This package consists of exercises and games for providing inter personal communication to facilitate cooperation and collaboration, to build on ideas by accepting other's ideas awareness and assessment of problem issues prevailing in the immediate surrounding, community and larger issues in the social milieu.

The content of the package was also presented as slides, films, discussions, lectures, exercises and trainings. The intervention was provided in Balika Kendra or Anganwadi centre yuvak Kendra/ community hall. The results of intervention was assessed by **Communication Skills Index**. The educational intervention was provided to rural adolescents and young women for a period of 18 months with three post testings with an interval of six months between two post tests.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The mean scores of communication skills components wise is presented in Table 1. The communication skills mean scores ranged from 3.00 to 4.16 in communication at home (4.16), communication in neighborhood (4.54) and communication with authority (3.26) which was very low, where it was least in communication with authority. The communication index was only 11.45 at pretest. knowledge gain index is presented for post test 1 to 3 in Table 3. The gain in knowledge index was observed in post test 1 and 3 , where in it was highest in post test-3.

On comparison between pre test and post test- 3 with classification of the adolescents into low, medium and high levels, it was observed that majority (53.6%) were in low category, followed by high (25%) and medium (21.2%) category at pretest. The post intervention score were in least percentage (21.4%) in low category and highest (43.4%) in high category (Table 3). Indicating that the intervention brought about an improvement on their knowledge indices.

The needs analysis and assessment indicated that a significant proportion of the interviewees and others who provided feedback experienced various forms and degrees of empowerment as a result of their participation in the project. The results of this study suggest that enhancing rural women's technological empowerment is urgently required. As well as for personal and social purposes, effective access to and use of ICTs is becoming increasingly important to rural women's leadership and participation in community and economic development activities.

V. CONCLUSION:

Imparting of communication skill development programme to the adolescents and women proved to be effective in enhancing communication skills. There is need of communication skill development training programmes to have better interpersonal relations, socio-emotional development , to express their needs and access to community resources and promote self-reliance among rural adolescents and women.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I wish to thank the Department of Science and Technology New Delhi for providing the financial assistance in the name of INSPIRE Scholarship.

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Table 1. Mean scores of components of communication skills of adolescents at pretest

N=348

Components of communication		Mean ± S.D	Index
a.	Communication at home	4.16±3.87	17.33
b.	Communication in neighborhood	4.54±5.07	16.21
c.	Communication with authority	3.26±4.58	11.64

Table 2. Mean scores and Index of communication skills at pre test and post tests

	N	Mean ± S.D	Index
Pre test	635	11.45±11.23	14.31
Post test- 1	398	24.56±22.21	30.70
Post test -2	207	21.90±10.56	27.38
Post test -3	191	27.86±11.05	34.83

Table 3. Frequency distribution of adolescents / women by level of communication indices at Pre Test and Post Test :

Categories	Pre Test		Post Test-III	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Low	339	53.6	85	21.4
Medium	134	21.2	140	35.2
High	160	25.2	173	43.4
Total	907	100.0	398	100.0