

Promoting Social Competence for Development of Rural Girl Child

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ABSTRACT The present study was conducted in rural Hisar. Social competence of rural preschool girls was assessed. Intervention programme was provided to these girls for a period of two months to promote their social competence. Results indicated that after exposure to intervention programme, there was significant improvement in social competence of preschool aged rural girls.

INTRODUCTION

In India, particularly in states like Haryana, in comparison to boys, girls are more deprived. One of the reason is as reported by Hoffman (1988), in India sons are seen as source of economic security. Parents believe sons will support them in their old age, while daughters belong to the husband's family and take on the responsibilities of the husband's family. As parents believe that daughters will belong to their husband's household, the value of sons is enhanced.

It is well known that community is facing social problems such as dowry, early marriage of girls, and violence against women, female foeticide, and low female literacy levels. These problems can not effectively be targeted without the effective and substantial involvement and commitment of the community and the families, particularly the women folk.

During the recent years emphasis is laid on empowerment of rural women and girl child. It is difficult to think of empowering rural women and girl child who are still dependent on men folk in every aspect. They can not think independently and seek the help of male members even in taking daily life decision and getting their every day problems solved.

In order to empower rural women and girl child, it is very important to make them socially competent so that they can solve their every day problems competently and independently. A socially competent grown up girl will be able to think of different alternatives to solve a problem, as well as, she will be able to examine the possible consequences of any solution. She will be able to evaluate pros and cons of different

strategies or solutions before taking the final decision. Therefore, it is important to develop social competence of girls from the early foundation years. The present study was conducted to promote social competence of preschool-aged rural girls.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The present study was conducted in Hisar district. Two villages were selected at random, one from Hisar Block 1 and the second from Hisar Block 2. From both the villages, 120 girls (60 from each village) were selected in the age range of 4-6 years. These girls were assessed for their Interpersonal Problem-Solving skills. Preliminary analyses were done to obtain pretest scores for "total number of different categories suggested". For both the villages, these scores were written in an ascending order. Forty five girls from each village were matched on the basis of these scores. Girls from Village 1 served as control group and from Village 2 as experimental group. Intervention programme was provided to experimental group girls for a period of two months.

Measures and Procedure

Interpersonal problem-solving skills were assessed using following measures:

Social Problem-Solving Test (SPST): Five Peer Problem stories from the Social Problem-Solving Test-Revised developed by Rubin (1988) were used to assess girls' interpersonal social problem-solving skills in hypothetical situations with their peers. These five stories were concerned with Object Acquisition. The

characters in the stories wish to gain access to a toy or material in another child's possession. The stories aim to assess children's cognitive repertoire of strategies for obtaining access to an object. Picture cards were used to depict the stories. For each story two responses were obtained.

What Happens Next Game (WHNG): This test developed by Shure and Spivack (1974) was used to assess children's consequential thinking abilities. This measure has five situations involving a child grabbing a toy from another child. The child being tested was asked to tell what might happen next. Using stick figures and pictures of toys, consequences were elicited by describing a story root to the child being tested.

Scoring of Children's Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills: The children's responses obtained from Social Problem-Solving Test (SPST) and What Happens Next Game (WHNG) were scored for quantitative features. The total number of strategies and total number of different categories found in all SPST stories were computed. Responses were also scored for the number of relevant strategies suggested per story and were computed to get a total relevancy score. An index of response flexibility was also computed. Flexibility involved a comparison of the categories found in response 2 with those found in response 1 for any given story. The categories found within the two responses were compared. Flexibility was computed by giving a score of 0 if child failed to offer a response to the interviewer's probe following the initial answer; score 1 was given if the second response involved only the same category/categories as the first response; score 2 was given when there were modifications of the first response; and a 3 was scored for a completely novel response. The flexibility scores across the five stories were combined to get a total flexibility score. Repeat relevant and irrelevant strategies suggested by children were also computed.

From the total five stories, a child could score a minimum of 0 and maximum of 10 scores for relevancy. A child could obtain a minimum of 0 and maximum of 15 scores for flexibility. On the basis of relevancy and flexibility scores, children could be categorized into above average, average, and below average categories.

The child's WHNG scores consisted of the total number of different and relevant consequences offered for the Peer Problem games.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of Quantitative Scores of Interpersonal Problem Solving (IPS) Tasks of Rural Girls from Control and Experimental Groups at Pre-Testing Stage: As both the groups were matched only on the basis of "total number of different categories suggested"; therefore, pre-testing comparison of control and experimental group rural girls was done to examine if there were any group differences at pre-testing stage. One-way ANOVA was computed to examine group differences. Quantitative scores of IPS tasks were taken as dependent variables and group (control, experimental) was taken as independent variable. Means and standard deviations for control and experimental group girls are presented in

One-way ANOVA revealed that the main effect of group was not significant; hence both the groups were similar in IPS skills.

Pre-Testing Classification of Rural Girls on the Basis of their Performance: As depicted in Table 2, on the basis of relevancy scores, 31 girls from control group and 31 girls from the

Table 1: Pre-testing means of IPS scores of control and experimental group girls

<i>Interpersonal problem-solving scores</i>	<i>Control (n = 45)</i>	<i>Experimental (n = 45)</i>
Number of different categories	3.05± 0.31	3.05± 0.33
Repeat relevant strategies	2.17± 0.53	2.25± 0.51
Irrelevant strategies	1.02± 0.41	1.02± 0.49
Relevancy score	3.76± 0.62	3.78± 0.66
With-in-story flexibility score	2.81± 0.55	2.83± 0.62
Number of consequences	3.22± 0.52	3.23± 0.56

Table 2: Frequency distribution of girls on the basis of performance at pre and post-testing stage

	<i>Control group (n = 45)</i>		<i>Experimental group (n = 45)</i>	
	<i>Pre-testing</i>	<i>Post-testing</i>	<i>Pre-testing</i>	<i>Post-testing</i>
Relevancy Scores				
Above Average	-	-	-	19
Average	31	35	31	27
Below Average	14	10	14	-
Flexibility Scores				
Above Average	-	-	-	-
Average	-	-	-	45
Below Average	45	45	45	-

experimental group fell in the average category and 14 girls from control group and 14 girls from the experimental group fell in the below average category. On the basis of flexibility scores, all the girls from control and experimental groups fell in the below average category.

Comparison of Pre and Post-Testing Scores of Interpersonal Problem Solving Tasks of Rural Girls from Control and Experimental Groups: Pre and post-testing performance of rural girls from control and experimental groups was compared using paired-t test.

Control Group: Results indicated that there were no significant differences in pre and post-testing performance of control group girls. Pre and post-testing means and mean difference for control group girls are presented in Table 3.

Experimental Group: Table 3 clearly indicates that there were significant differences in pre and post-testing performance of experimental group girls. After intervention, girls suggested greater number of different categories (M = 5.64), repeated less number of relevant (M = 0.88) and irrelevant (M = 0.41) strategies as compared to pre-testing stage (Ms = 3.05, 2.25 and 1.02 respectively). Also, after intervention, girls obtained greater relevancy (M = 6.22) and

flexibility scores (M = 9.39) than before intervention (Ms = 3.78 and 2.83 respectively). Finally, after exposure to intervention programme, rural girls were able to suggest greater number of consequences (M = 6.13) than before intervention (M = 3.23).

Post-Testing Classification of Rural Girls on the Basis of their Performance: At post-testing stage, as depicted in Table 2, from control group, on the basis of relevancy scores, 35 girls could be classified into average category and 10 into below average category. On the basis of flexibility scores, all the 45 girls were still in the below average category. From experimental group, after intervention, on the basis of relevancy scores, 19 girls moved into above average category and 27 girls were in the average category. There was none in the below average category. Further, on the basis of flexibility scores, all the 45 girls moved into average category.

These results clearly indicate that after exposure to intervention programme, there was significant improvement in interpersonal problem-solving skills of experimental group rural girls. In control group girls there was no significant improvement in interpersonal problem-solving skills. These results are in line with previous research indicating that interpersonal problem solving skills of children improved significantly after receiving intervention programme (Sharp, 1981; Shure, 1993; Shure and Spivack, 1978; Spivack and Shure, 1989).

In conclusion, it can be said that social competence of rural girls can be improved by providing intervention programme during the early formative years. This would help in their socio-emotional adjustment and healthy interpersonal relationships. As they grow older they will be better able to cope with the problems and demands of social interaction. They will be able to think through the problem- see the situation clearly, understand how everyone feels, to be able to think alternative solutions, and to look at the possible consequences of any solution. With their effective involvement community will be able to wipe out the social problems.

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Table 3: Pre- and post-testing comparison of IPS scores of control and experimental group girls

Interpersonal Problem-	Pre-testing	Post-testing	Mean difference	Paired-t values
<i>Social Problem Solving Scores</i>				
<i>Control Group</i>				
Number of different categories	3.05	3.11	0.06	0.34
Repeat relevant strategies	2.17	2.21	0.04	0.19
Irrelevant strategies	1.02	1.03	0.01	0.05
Relevancy score	3.76	3.80	0.04	0.18
Flexibility score	2.81	2.87	0.06	0.35
Number of consequences	3.22	3.26	0.04	0.19
<i>Experimental Group</i>				
Number of different categories	3.05	5.64	2.59	20.42***
Repeat relevant strategies	2.25	0.88	- 1.37	- 11.67***
Irrelevant strategies	1.02	0.41	- 0.61	- 4.03***
Relevancy score	3.78	6.22	2.44	19.39***
Flexibility score	2.83	9.39	6.56	25.89***
Number of consequences	3.23	6.13	2.90	20.16***

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