

Assessing communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness- An interventional study on rural adolescent girls Ludhiana district of Punjab

■ RITU MAHAL, ASHA CHAWLA AND SHABNAM ANSARI

Received: 09.03.2017; Revised: 19.09.2017; Accepted: 05.10.2017

■ **ABSTRACT :** The present study was conducted in Issewal, Purian, Chappar, Aliwal and Maharna Kalan in central plain zone Ludhiana district of Punjab, the purpose of the study was to assess level of communication skills, levels of self esteem and knowledge regarding legal awareness of rural adolescent girls and impact of educational intervention on rural adolescent girls. A total of one hundred sixty five girl students were selected, Standardized scales was administered on rural adolescent girls. The pre test was done on rural adolescent girls to know about their level of communication skills, levels of self esteem and view of their legal awareness and it was found that the girls showed increase in their mean scores (communication skills,) improved their level of self esteem, and also gained in knowledge about legal aspects as impact of intervention provided to them in terms of packages, pamphlets, lectures etc.

See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

SHABNAM ANSARI

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) INDIA
Email : ansari.shabnam59@gmail.com

■ **KEY WORDS:** Rural adolescents, Self esteem, Intervention, Education, Legal awareness, Communication skills

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER :** Mahal, Ritu, Chawla, Asha and Ansari, Shabnam (2017). Assessing communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness- An interventional study on rural adolescent girls Ludhiana district of Punjab. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 12 (2) : 349-354, DOI: 10.15740/HAS/AJHS/12.2/349-354.

In our society, it is obvious that women in general and specially adolescents in rural areas are enclosed and brought up in the culture of silence, their life starting, continuing and ending up in this darkness of silence. They have control over neither resources around them whether it be physical, intellectual and financial resources and the self, nor over ideology which means the ability to determines the beliefs, values attitudes, way of thinking and perceiving situations. Control over resources and ideology are so inseparably and integratedly linked together that the loss of control over them leads to spiral with more and more powerless and helplessness within

an individual and so within a group of individuals.

Success in life is a result of manifold capabilities and opportunities. Significant amongst these is an individual's view about his own worth/value which is conceptualized as self-esteem. Self-esteem is confidence in yourself and a belief in your qualities and abilities (Cambridge Advanced Dictionary, 2000).

Adolescence is an important period for enhancement of self-esteem. In case of adolescent girls it is much more significant as it lays the foundation for their effective performance in future adult/familial roles. Healthy family relationships, parental involvement and

sound peer relationships are significant contributors to development of positive body image, achieving social maturity, emotional balance and eventually developing a high self-esteem in adolescent girls (Lynn and Green, 2000). Inadequacies in all the these aspects, which is very typical of families in urban slums, have a deleterious effect on them leading to insecurities, self doubt, emotional disorders and a lowered self-esteem (Patel, 2002).

Communication is a two-way process. It is the meaningful exchange of information between two or a group of living creatures. The use of effective communication skills is an important social competency. An adolescent's level of maturity is closely related to levels of communication. Well-developed communication skills are essential skills for academic pursuits and for future life. Communication stands so deeply rooted inhuman behaviours and the structures of society. Communication skill is very much essential for village girls, because they are deprived part of population (Baruah *et al.*, 2013).

The National Commission for the women was setup by an act of parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. But, there still exist a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women on the other hand. The underlying causes of inequality are related to social and economic structures, which are based on informal norms and practices. Cultural psyche and patriarchal values play important role in the socialization process. Children learn their gender from birth. They learn the behavioral norms so that they confirm to the group, in which they live and internalize them. In the process girl themselves starts believing in their subordination and inferior position. The situation is worse in rural areas where the young girls have internalized the feeling of total dependency. The social environment makes girls socially and ideologically unequipped to resist. The only treatment of this social pathology is the spread of education among girls/women.

Several studies have been conducted in India on adolescents. But there is rarely any study specifically focusing on the enhancing level of communication skills, self esteem and view of their legal awareness of rural adolescent girls. Thus the All India Coordinated Research Project in Home Science (Child Development) finalized

a research project entitled, "Empowerment of rural adolescent girls for quality of life" Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out the level of communication skills, levels of self-esteem and view of their legal awareness among rural adolescent girls in their rural setting. An intervention in such instances can prove to be beneficial in building confidence and enhancing self esteem, communication skills, and legal awareness. This research was therefore planned with an objective to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention package on enhancing the selected aspects of self esteem communication skills, legal awareness of rural adolescent girls.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Locale of the study:

The sample for present study was purposively selected from five villages namely Issewal, Purian, Chappar, Aliwal and Maharna Kalan in central plain zone (Ludhiana district) having government high schools.

Sample selection:

A total of one hundred sixty five rural adolescent school going girls were purposively selected from five villages namely Issewal, Purian, Chappar, Aliwal and Maharna Kalan in central plain zone Ludhiana district of Punjab. The principles of selected government high schools were contacted and after seeking permission, the purpose of research was explained so as to gain permission to carry out the research. The girl students enrolled in 7th and 9th classes in each school were included in the sample of the study.

Sample specification:

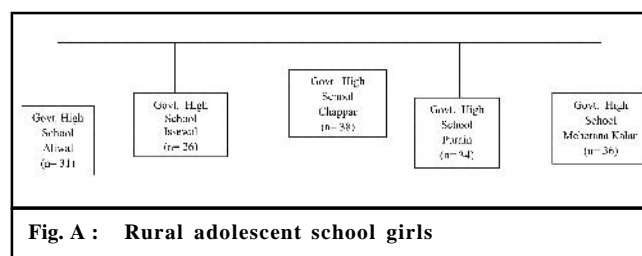


Fig. A : Rural adolescent school girls

Tools/ Scales used:

The following scales were prepared for the data collection:

Communication skills scale:

This scale measures the communication skills of rural adolescent girls within home, in the neighborhood and with authority according to scores given in Table A.

Category	Score
Low	<8.00
Medium	8.01-17.00
High	>17.00

Self esteem scale:

The self esteem scale developed by Kapadia and Varma (1993) was used to judge the self-concept of girls. This scale involves judgment about one's own worth and the feelings associated with those judgments on the basis of following scores (Table B).

Category	Score
Low	1-42
Medium	43-106
High	>107

Legal awareness scale:

This scale was applied to assess the legal awareness and fundamental rights of the girls/women. The categories have been divided according to the scores given in Table C.

Category	Score
Low	1-75
Medium	76-149
High	150-221

Procedure of data collection:

All scales were administered on the sampled girls and the data was collected as posttest I, posttest II, III, IV and V.

Intervention programme:

After analyzing the existing level of knowledge of rural adolescent girls on communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness. The girl students were pretested for their communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness and after 6 months post testing I was done. Six month period was given for intervention inputs such as lectures, demonstrations, group discussion to the girls to improve upon their communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness and be confident in their decisions. Simultaneously post test 2, 3, 4 were done with six month intervention period in each post test.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides a glance on the levels of communication skills of rural girls. The pretest mean scores 1.7 (at home), 1.6 in neighborhood and 1.1 (with authority) were seen. When post testing 5 was conducted after intervention. The overall mean scores also improved from pretesting mean scores (1.46) to post testing mean scores (5.00). Scores were gradually increased in every posttest result. It is clear from the table that intervention gave a good opportunity and exposure to girls to come forward. Even their teachers observed a change among girls. Though the girls are under cultural pressure of not opening up their feelings and emotions but they did internalize the new learnings.

Tests		At home	In neighborhood	With authority	Overall
Pretest	Range	0-6	0-4	0-3	
	Mean	1.7	1.6	1.1	1.46
Posttest1	Range	0-6	0-6	0-4	
	Mean	2.1	2	1.5	1.86
Posttest2	Range	1-4	1-5	0-4	
	Mean	2.2	2.1	1.6	1.96
Posttest3	Range	1-5	1-5	0-4	
	Mean	2.2	2.1	1.8	2.03
Posttest 4	Range	3-6	3-6	1-5	
	Mean	4	4	2.5	3.50
Posttest5	Range	3-8	4-8	3-6	
	Mean	6	5	4	5.00

Table 1 b describes the frequency distribution of rural adolescent girls in view of their communication skill levels. The table clearly shows that till posttest 4, all girls fell in the low category. Though it is clear from the previous table that they showed increase in their mean scores but as far the frequency distribution is concerned only 30 girls could reach the medium category and 135 still remained in the low category of communication skills.

Table 2 a depicts the self esteem scores of rural adolescent girls. The table shows that mean scores increased (84-92) significantly from pre test to post test 5. The intervention regarding their day to day decisions and problems provided to girls in the form of lectures, group games and discussions helped the girls to gain insight in their personalities and identity that inturn helped in improving their mean scores.

Table 2 b describes the frequency distribution of rural adolescent girls in view of their self esteem levels. The Table 2b shows that all girls fell in the medium category of self esteem level at the time of posttest 1.

During the posttest 2 and 3, only two respondents could reach the high category of self esteem scale. After number of interventions, 15 girls at P4 and then 20 girls after P5 moved in high category. With more experiences, It is expected that girls will definitely improve in the given skills.

Table 3 a enumerates the legal awareness scores of adolescent girls. The tests components include knowledge regarding the marriage laws, dowry, work related laws, rape, police and women. The mean pretest scores were found to be 1 for marriage laws, 0 for dowry, 0.4 for work related laws, 0.3 for rape and 0.5 for police and women. The scores gradually improved after post testing as a result of intervention provided in the form of lectures and resource material regarding legal awareness. The post test 5 mean score were found to be 6 for marriage laws, 3 for dowry, 5 for work related laws, 5 for rape, 2.5 for police and women. Overall results were also found to be improved *i.e.* from pretesting (0.44) to post testing 5 (4.3).

Table 1 b : Frequency distribution of rural adolescent girls in view of their communication skill levels				(n= 165)
Tests	Low (<8.00)	Medium (8.01-17.00)	High (>17.00)	Total
Tests	165	-	-	165
Pretest	165	-	-	165
Posttest1	165	-	-	165
Posttest2	165	-	-	165
Posttest3	165	-	-	165
Posttest 4	165	-	-	165
Posttest 5	135	30	-	165

Table 2 a : Self esteem scores of rural adolescent girls		(n=165)
Test	Range	Mean
Pretest	72-101	84
Posttest1	72-102	86
Posttest2	71-110	87
Posttest3	73-110	87.3
Posttest 4	80-112	90
Posttest 5	80-115	92

Table 2 b : Frequency distribution of rural adolescent girls in view of their self esteem				(n= 165)
Tests	Low (<8.00)	Medium (8.01-17.00)	High (>17.00)	Total
Posttest	-	165	-	165
Posttest1	-	165	-	165
Posttest2	-	163	2	165
Posttest3	-	163	2	165
Posttest 4	-	150	15	165
Posttest 5	-	145	20	165

Tests	Marriage laws	Dowry	Work related laws	Rape	Police and women	Overall	
Pretest	Range	0-4	0	0-3	0-2	0-2	0.44
	Mean	1	0	0.4	0.3	0.5	
Posttest1	Range	0-6	0-2	0-3	0-2	0-1	1.04
	Mean	3	0.3	1.1	0.4	0.4	
Posttest2	Range	0-7	0-2	0-3	0-2	0-1	1.14
	Mean	3.2	0.3	1.3	0.4	0.4	
Posttest3	Range	1-6	0-2	0-4	0-2	0-2	1.36
	Mean	3.4	0.4	1.6	0.8	0.6	
Posttest 4	Range	2-8	1-3	1-6	1-4	1-4	2.5
	Mean	4.5	2	2.5	2	1.5	
Posttest5	Range	3-9	1-5	2-7	2-6	1-4	4.3
	Mean	6	3	5	5	2.5	

Tests	Low	Medium	High	Total
Pretest	165	-	-	165
Posttest1	165	-	-	165
Posttest2	165	-	-	165
Posttest3	165	-	-	165
Posttest 4	165	-	-	165
Posttest 5	135	-	-	165

Table 3b describes about the frequency distribution of rural girls in view of their legal awareness levels. Though the girls gained in knowledge about legal aspects, but at the same time they remained in low category all through the five post testings. Reason being that the concepts were very new, unfamiliar, not allowed to be discussed and followed at home but it is for sure that at later stage they can recollect the knowledge gained when it needs to be applicable.

Conclusion :

The present research offers a validated and tested intervention package designed in the form of a compendium in Punjabi and can be effectively used with brief training. The entire package has been made interesting and informational by usage of multiple teaching methods and aids. Since, in the present study focus was on selected aspects of level of communication skills, self esteem and legal awareness the study reflects that in view of their communication skill levels till posttest 4, all girls fell in the low category, but after intervention increase in their mean scores but as far the frequency distribution is concerned only 30 girls could reach the medium category and 135 still remained in the low

category of communication skills. All girls fell in the medium category of self esteem level at the time of posttest 1. During the posttest 2 and 3, only two respondents could reach the high category of self esteem scale. After more number of interventions, 15 girls at P4 and then 20 girls after P5 moved in high category. With more experiences, It is expected that girls will definitely improve in given skills. Rural girls in view of their legal awareness levels girls gained knowledge about legal aspects, but at the same time they remained in low category all through the five post testings. Reason being that the concepts were very new, unfamiliar, not allowed to discuss and followed at home but it is for sure that at later stage they can recollect the knowledge gained. Hence, need based intervention was imparted to enhance their communication skills, levels of self esteem and knowledge regarding of legal awareness.

Authors' affiliations:

RITU MAHAL AND ASHA CHAWLA, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) INDIA

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