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RESEARCH ARTICLE

DISSEMINATION OF NUTRITION MESSAGES TO THE BENEFICIARIES OF ICDS (A GOVT. OF INDIA'S SCHEME)

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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to disseminate nutrition messages through a package of visual aids to the beneficiaries of ICDS (A scheme under Ministry of Women & Child Development) and the study was also aimed to assess the impact of the education programme on the target women.(beneficiaries of ICDS). All the seven circles of the North-West Jorhat ICDS Project in Assam with seven dominant communities were represented in the areas selected for the study. A total of 210 women in the age group of 15-45 years selected in equal numbers from the seven communities. Thirty women from each community were the respondents for the study. The seven communities under study included: General caste, O.B.C., Muslim, S.C., Deori caste (S.T-1), Mising caste (S.T-2) and Tea garden labourer. The three nutrition messages selected were : 'Basics of Food and Nutrition', 'Nutrition for mothers' and 'Nutrition for Children'. The visual aids included Chart, Slides, Flip Chart and Flash cards. An interview schedule for eliciting back ground information and a knowledge check for assessing nutrition knowledge of the selected respondents that is the women beneficiaries was developed and used for the present study. More than 50 per cent from the experimental group showed 'high' level knowledge category as a result of exposure to the nutrition messages. The general caste gained and retained the maximum knowledge, followed by Mising community. This study has thus a great contribution to ICDS scheme in strengthening the Nutrition and Health Education component of the scheme through the package of visual Aids developed. It would be a great help to Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)-a grass root level worker to conduct Nutrition and Health Education programme (NHE) in ICDS with the developed visual aids.

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INTRODUCTION

The Integrated Child Development Service Scheme (ICDS) programme of the Government of India initiated in 1975 is the largest nutrition and health intervention programme in the country providing a package of services to pre-school children and women in an integrated manner. The package of service include Supplementary Nutrition, Health Check-up, Immunization, Referral Services, Pre-School education and Nutrition and Health Education to mothers delivered through an Anganwadi-a grass root level child care centre by an Anganwadi worker (AWW). The target women for the Nutrition and Health Education (NHE) programme in ICDS are women in the age group of 15-45 years, living in the area covered by an Anganwadi. NHE aims at effective communication of certain basic health and nutrition messages. Experience in all over the country points out that the Nutrition and Health Education (NHE) component of ICDS has been weak. Research studies on this component is also scanty. Available research evidences indicated that the there is lack of required content available for HHE is lacked in content to be disseminated instructional material are also scanty.

Available research evidences indicate that the AWWs lacked in content, instructional materials as well as skills in utilising the materials. Nutrition and health education are not fully functioning in the way they were planned to be (Gupta and Gupta, 2013). The present study was therefore undertaken to disseminate some of the important nutrition messages to the beneficiaries of ICDS under NHE programme with the help of developed visual aids.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the North-West Jorhat ICDS Project in Assam state, India. A total of 210 women beneficiaries in the age group of 15-45 years selected in equal numbers from the seven communities (30 from each community) constituted the sample for the study. The seven communities under study included: General caste, O.B.C., Muslim, S.C., Deori caste (S.T-1), Mising caste (S.T-2) and Tea garden labourer. The nutrition messages such as 'Basics of Food and Nutrition', 'Nutrition for mothers' and 'Nutrition for children' were disseminated to the rural women through the developed visual aids namely, chart, photography slides, flip chart and flash cards. An interview schedule to collect the background information of the respondents and a knowledge check was used which was developed and standardized by Rahman and Sithalakshmi (2001) to assess the knowledge of respondents under study. A pre-test and post-test technique was used to assess the gain in knowledge (Difference between immediate post-exposure knowledge score and pre-exposure knowledge score) and retention of knowledge (Difference between Gain in score and reduction of knowledge score) of respondents. Reduction of knowledge score was the difference between first post exposure knowledge score (immediate after exposure to visual aid) and second post exposure (after 15 days of exposure to visual aids)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Back ground of the respondents

Majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years, and educational level was up to high school level. The urban and frequency of extension agent contact of respondents were limited and occasional. More than 50 per cent respondents took their own decision in the kitchen.

Pre exposure knowledge score of the respondents

All the women under study from all the seven communities had medium or low level of knowledge prior to exposure to educational programme. None belonged to high category of knowledge.

Post-exposure knowledge score of the respondents

More than 50 per cent of the respondents moved to the high level knowledge category as a result of exposure to the nutrition messages through the developed visual aids.

Table 1. Gain in knowledge by the respondents from different communities

N=210*

S.N.	Communities	Mean knowledge score		Mean gain in knowledge	SE	't'
		Pre-exposure	First post-exposure			
1	General caste	48.9	77.2	28.3	0.4502	62.98**
2	O.B.C.	43.8	70.8	27.0	0.5274	51.19**
3	Muslim	39.1	66.2	27.1	0.7101	38.16**
4	Sc	36.6	61.5	24.9	0.7133	34.91**
5	Deori (ST-1)	42.5	66.8	24.3	0.7492	32.43**
6	Mising (ST-2)	38.8	67.1	28.3	0.6993	40.47**
7	Tea-Garden Labourer	24.7	46.4	21.7	0.4603	47.14**

*30 for each community
**Significant at 1% level

Table 2. Retention of knowledge by the respondents from different communities

N=210*

S.N.	**Communities**	**Mean**		**Mean score for retention**	**SE**	**'t'**
		Gain in knowledge	**Reduction of knowledge**			
1	General caste	28.4	2.3	26.1	0.5316	49.10**
2	O.B.C.	27.0	1.8	25.2	0.7081	35.59**
3	Muslim	27.1	3.4	23.7	0.9603	24.68**
4	Sc	24.9	3.5	21.4	1.0200	20.98**
5	Deori (ST-1)	24.3	3.3	21.0	0.8407	24.98**
6	Mising (ST-2)	28.3	3.1	25.2	0.7986	31.56**
7	Tea-Garden Labourer	21.7	5.9	15.8	0.7531	20.98**

*30 for each community
** Significant at 1% level

Table 3. Rank Order of respondents in gain and retention of knowledge

S.No.	Community	Rank order	
		Gain in knowledge	Retention of Knowledge
1	General caste	I	I
2	O.B.C.	IV	III
3	Muslim	III	IV
4.	S.C.	V	V
5	Deori (S.T-1)	VI	VI
6	Mising (S.T-2)	II	II
7	Tea garden Labourer	VII	VII

Gain in knowledge by the respondents from different communities

Mean knowledge score of the respondents from each community at the pre-exposure stage and first post-exposure stage ie immediately after exposure to the visual aids used for dissemination of nutrition messages is presented in the Table 1. On statistically analysis through 't' test, it was found that there was significant difference in pre-exposure knowledge score and first post-exposure knowledge score by the respondents in all the seven communities who were exposed to nutrition messages through the developed visual aids The analysis of variance was worked out to compare the gain in knowledge by the respondents community-wise and found that there was difference in knowledge gained in the seven different communities. The critical difference for all the communities was also worked out and found that the general community and Mising(ST-2) community were at par with each other distinctly gained more knowledge on nutrition than the other communities of the selected area. Mising, though a schedule tribe had high educational status for which they might gain more knowledge. Lowest knowledge gain was recorded for Tea garden labourer , which may be due to their differential personal characteristics such as poor education, a lower degree of social contacts etc.

Retention of knowledge by the respondents

The retention of knowledge by the respondents from each community was assessed and is presented in the Table 2.

It is evident from the table that through 't' test, there was significant in gain in knowledge score and reduction of knowledge score by the respondents in all the seven communities who were exposed to nutrition messages through the visual aids at 1 per cent level. The visual aids developed might have helped the respondents of each community to recall and recollect even after 15 days of the dissemination of message. The analysis of variance was worked out to compare the retention of knowledge by the respondents community-wise and found that there was difference in retention of knowledge in the seven different communities. The critical difference for all the communities was also worked out and found that the general community, O.B.C. and Mising (ST-2) community were at par with each other and retained nutrition knowledge distinctly more than the other communities of the selected area which may be attributed to their educational status. Knowledge retention was lowest among Tea garden labourer, this may be owing to their low educational level and over load of their physical work.

Relationship of selected socio-personal characteristics of the respondents with their gain in knowledge and and retention of knowledge on nutrition

An analysis of simple correlation revealed that, age had negative and significant correlation with gain in knowledge and retention. This indicated that gain in knowledge and retention decreased with an increase in age. Increase of age did not help the respondents to gain and retain the knowledge for longer period. Educational status had positive and significant correlation with gain in knowledge and also with retention of knowledge. This indicated that both gain in knowledge and retention improved with the increase in educational status. The frequency of extension agency contact had positive and significant correlation with gain in knowledge and retention. As the frequency of extension agency ie Anganwadi workers (AWWs) contact increased, knowledge gain and retention also improved. The respondents might get chance to get some information from the AWWs of their area.

Further analysis revealed the rank order for gain in knowledge and retention of knowledge among the respondents and is presented in Table 3. Community wise analysis pointed out the consistency between gain in knowledge and retention. The general caste gained and retained the maximum, followed by Mising (S.T-2). Tea garden labourer held the last position for both gain and retention of knowledge. This might be due to their low socio-economic status.

Conclusion

This study has a great contribution to the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme in strengthening the Nutrition and Health Education component through the visual aids developed for disseminating the nutrition messages in an effective manner. As the existing knowledge of the respondents that is the beneficiaries of ICDS was not satisfactory and studies also reveal that the Nutrition and Health component has been found to be the weakest in the ICDS programme, and time spent by AWWs on this component was less, the content and visual aids used in this study would definitely help to AWWs as well as the beneficiaries to disseminate and receive the messages effectively and satisfactorily. Which in turn help the entire programme to fulfil its objectives in a befitting manner.

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