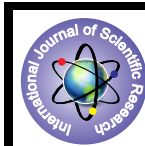


"Beti Bachavo" Street Play - An Approach to Spread Message Among Community Members of Rural Area of a District Located in Western India



Medical Science

KEYWORDS : Beti Bachavo, Street Play, Sex Ratio, Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

One of the many health issues in rural areas is female feticide. This sensitive issue needs to be dealt with very deliberately. The overall sex ratio dropped from 934 to 920 per 1000 males in Gujarat, for Vadodara district sex ratio improved from 919 in 2001 to 934 per 1000 male in 2011. In India, socio-cultural factors and practices are the main reasons behind adverse sex ratio. Looking into background factors responsible for decreasing sex ratio, Government of Gujarat launched an intensive awareness campaign called "Beti Bachavo Abhiyan" (Save the Girl Child Campaign) to change mindsets of community towards the girl child. As an effort to enhance awareness among rural dwellers of Vadodara district and with an objective to contribute in such a noble work, we started various activities at RHTC (Rural Health Training Centre) to add to this "Beti Bachavo" campaign. One such activity was a street play in one of the villages of RHTC area.

Effective health care delivery depends on the education, training and appropriate orientation towards community health. Street playing is one of the aids used to supplement health education for spreading messages among community members. Using this technique we can't convey large volume of message, but can improve the level of understanding concerning some specific problem or health related event in a particular area. In villages of the many health problems some issues are sensitive and to be dealt with very deliberately. One such issue is female feticide. Census 2001 revealed drastic fall in sex ratio of Gujarat, especially child sex ratio⁽¹⁾. The overall sex ratio dropped from 934 to 920 per 1000 males, whereas the child sex ratio fell shockingly from 928 to 883 in Gujarat. This came as a rude shock for one of the most developed states of India⁽¹⁾. As per census 2011, sex ratio of Vadodara district improved from 919 in year 2001 to 934 per 1000 males during 2011⁽²⁾. Child sex ratio also showed a rise from 886 to 897 per 1000 males during same period⁽²⁾. Although sex ratio of Gujarat improved significantly in last ten years, it still remains below accepted level.

In India, socio-cultural factors and practices, such as the status of women, patriarchal structure of the society, preference for a son, fear of dowry and the belief that it is the son who can look after the old parents and so on are the main reasons for adverse sex ratio⁽¹⁾. Looking into these factors for decreasing sex ratio, Government of Gujarat Launched an intensive awareness campaign called "Beti Bachavo Abhiyan" (Save the Daughter Campaign) to change mindsets of community towards the girl child. The Minister laid emphasis on creating awareness against ill-effects of adverse gender ratio through hoardings, wall painting, camps for couples at children's rallies, seminars and workshops, down to the level of civic wards and villages, with the co-operation of educational institutes for success of the campaign⁽³⁾. As an effort to enhance awareness among rural dwellers of Vadodara district and with an objective to contribute in such a noble work, we started various activities at RHTC (Rural Health Training Centre) to add to this "Beti Bachavo" campaign. Apart from obtaining background information in form of lectures and observation, the students learn the art of establishing a relationship with patients⁽⁴⁾ and community members. During this campaign the activities include role plays, street plays and posters to create awareness regarding 'Save Girl Child'.

Street plays or Role plays have proved to be an effective method for Behavior Change Communication (BCC). Street play scores well in providing enjoyable learning and teaching environment. During such play, some of the participants take the roles of other people and act accordingly. It is usually a spontaneous or unrehearsed acting out of real-life situations where others watch and learn by seeing and discussing how people might behave in certain situations⁽⁵⁾. Students may act out situations, problems, and issues in a safe setting and develop skills that promote health⁽⁶⁾. Street play is also helpful in developing team- work skills and communication skill. Communication is the act of conveying a message to another person, and it is an essential skill for establishing physician-patient relationships and effective functioning among health care professionals⁽⁷⁾. It is very important that health professionals have the ability to apply effective communication skills during their interaction with their patients⁽⁸⁾. This article discussed the observations of a street play performance 'Save Girl Child' as an effort to enhance awareness among villagers.

Objective:

To conduct a street play to spread message of 'Beti Bachavo' i.e. 'Save Girl Child' among community members of a village

Materials and methods:

Primary Health Centre (PHC) Sokhada has been adopted as Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC) by Community Medicine Department, Medical College Baroda since March 2013. Under RHTC Sokhada, there are two other PHCs- PHC Asoj and PHC Sakarda catering nearly 1 lakh population. As per MCI guideline, RHTC posting is included in the curriculum of compulsory rotatory posting of interns who are posted here for their one month training in rural area. Along with interns posting, undergraduate students are also taken to visit and observe the functioning of PHCs during their clinical postings. During their posing and visits medical students carry out some field activities apart from their routine duties. As a part of these field activities they perform role play and street play in different villages. Each time different topics are selected for performing role plays or street plays based on existing public health problem in that area. The problem either requires appropriate solution to some issue or help in improving knowledge of villages regarding some diseases or health problems. Under graduate students of Medical College Baroda decided to perform a street play on 'Beti Bachavo' under the guidance of

staff of Community Medicine Department. Omkarpura village was selected as a place for performing street play. It is one of the villages that come under PHC Sokhada. On 24th April in the evening when most of the villagers were available, medical students performed street play on the 'Beti Bachavo'.

Preparation and performance of street play:

Preparation of street play started 15 days before the performance of street play at the village. ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) worker of Omkarpura village was informed to spread the message about this performance one week before the actual performance. ASHA worker had informed all reproductive age group women during Village Health and Nutrition Day and also to other community members during her routine field visits. On the day of performance we realized that the difficult part before starting performance was community mobilization. Even though people were informed one week prior to the day of street play performance, when we reached village at the selected place few were there to view our play. There we realized that community mobilization is not an easy task. So we divided ourselves among different groups comprising of health workers, staff of community medicine department, interns and undergraduate students. All groups headed toward different direction for gathering people. One group also had small drum as a prop for IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activity. After almost one hour, enough crowds gathered to observe the street play. While other groups were gathering people for watching street play, one group was busy making sitting arrangement for people so that crowd could sit comfortably and listen carefully to the message given. Good communication need to be taken care while performing street play so as to make it a successful event. All students wore same color (black) costume so as to give nice visual appearance. Performance started with making sound of drum and singing songs to attract people. Street play which we were going to perform was dealing with sensitive issue of "Save Girl Child". While performing street play on such sensitive issue it is necessary that message should be conveyed in simple way without making any major conflict among community members. So we took care that play should remain light, people can enjoy it and still message should be conveyed in an easy manner. That's why we kept songs related to save girl child between the play. At the same time we also took care that it should not become too lengthy and message should be conveyed briefly.

Feedback received after street play:

After any street play or role play it's good to have feedback from community members in order to know how effective our play was in spreading the message among them. We were fortunate enough to get good response from community members post play. We got response from male and female member and also from adolescents. They said that purpose with which we performed street play was served and they understood message given to them. Such kind of activities should be carried out routinely to solve other health related problems also. When a question was asked to community members as what message they received from street play, one of the male

members replied that "saving girl child is not only a duty of mother but it's a joint function of family". Then only numbers of girl child will increase. One of the females replied, "To decrease female feticide it is necessary to sensitize mother in-law". As well one of the adolescent girls from community prepared a poem for this event and mentioned in the poetry that girls also have right to live and should be given chance to take birth. Thus we received quiet good response after this street play on "Save Girl Child", and our efforts should be considered successful even if few of them change their mind about girl child and take home the message of "Beti Bachavo".

Street play should also be considered important as a teaching tool for students. For this reason feedback was taken from students and internee doctors also. Most important skills they learned as mentioned by them were team work, community mobilization and communication skills. They also mentioned that it's easy to give health education by simply giving lectures but educating people using performance method is a little difficult task as these methods need good vocabulary, capacity to work as a team, communication skill and interpersonal communication. To make them walk in village streets and motivate them to witness such event which was organized by health staff was considered as an important learning exercise by medical students themselves.

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