

Success of Community Radio Station in Addressing Child Marriage in Purulia, West Bengal, India

Nirmalya Mukherjee^{1*}, Biswajit Pal², Trishita Lodh³

¹Director-Planning, Manbhumi Ananda Ashram Nityananda Trust (MANT),
164, P. Majumder Road, North Purbachal, India, Kolkata-700078

²Assistant Director-Research, Manbhumi Ananda Ashram Nityananda Trust (MANT)

³Assistant Research Officer, Manbhumi Ananda Ashram Nityananda Trust (MANT)

Abstract: The study was done in remote villages of Purulia, West Bengal where incidences of child marriages had been very common. The aim of the study was to measure the change in perception and level of knowledge regarding child marriage following some behavioural change initiatives undertaken by an NGO. The study clearly indicates that after the sensitization programme of the Qazis, Layas and Purohits—the persons responsible for solemnizing marriages—there was a significant change in their level of knowledge. The case studies also clearly indicate the change in behaviour of the community regarding child marriage.

Key words: Child Marriage, Laya, Qazi, Purohit,

I. Introduction

India has the second highest number of child marriages, only second to Bangladesh in South Asia as reported by UNICEF (2014). Earlier UNICEF reported with an elaborate data (2013) that West Bengal is one of the top 4 states in respect of child marriage. The report categorically mentioned that 54.7 per cent of total marriages are that of minor girls. This means 27082 minor girls get married before attaining their legal age of marriage in the State. As per another report of UNICEF (2011) Purulia is among the 4 worst off districts with 54.03 per cent child marriages.

Child marriage is a socially embedded phenomenon which is deep rooted in our culture. So to uproot child marriage from the culture it requires a 360° approach which will include all its stakeholders and decision makers. Few well accepted theories to reduce or prevent child marriage includes increasing access to Girl's education, providing economic opportunity for young women, supporting the needs of the Child bride, supporting and upscaling of community programme and evaluating programmes to determine what works. The strategy of supporting and upscaling of community programme was uptaken to make some grassroot intervention to prevent child marriage in the selected area as it would include almost all the stakeholders and decision makers. The first ever NGO run Community Radio started to operate in Purulia, an underdeveloped dot of West Bengal, in the year 2010 with support from UNICEF. The Radio has been producing programmes both in Santhali (indigenous) and Bengali languages. The community reporters have been reporting many issues including early marriage problem which came into the fore when the incidence of child marriages is being reported frequently getting initiated with some minor girls resisting their marriages. At this juncture it was decided that a two pronged strategy is to be evolved and applied to address the issue. First, a campaign against early marriage, highlighting the hazards of early marriage, for the education of the adolescents and their parents and a sensitization programme of the Santhali (Tribal) priests called Laya, Hindu priests called Purohit and the Muslim priests called Qazi who have been solemnizing marriages in the area, implanting in them the legal formalities that are to be observed and the why and how of them. The methodology sensitization workshops included were audio-visual presentation, interactive sessions with minor girls and experts while for adolescents and their parents the programmes were prepared in an entertainment-education format, wherein songs, stories and dance (during narrow-casting) were used to transmit messages related to child marriages and the concomitant legalities.

II. Methodology

Participants of the sensitization program on early marriage were 24 numbers of Layas and 18 numbers of Purohits and 15 numbers of Qazis. They were interviewed on pre and post program basis with the help of a pre-structured questionnaire so that their change in the level of knowledge and perception about child marriage can be traced easily. A different set of questionnaire was prepared for the Qazis as their interest and perception about child marriage and adolescent health was different from that of the Purohits and the Layas. The questionnaires were structured with 15 number of questions for the purohits/layas and 25 questions for the Qazis related to adolescents, social status, health and knowledge about early marriage. For each positive answer the

award was 1 and for negative response it was 0. After proper compilation, the data were analysed statistically with paired sample t-test.

III. Result

Table 1: T-test result of pre and post sensitization program of Layas and Purohits:

Parameters/Questions	Laya				Purohit			
	Pre-test Correct %	Post-test correct (%)	Mean dif.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pre-test Correct %	Post-test correct (%)	Mean dif	Sig. (2-tailed)
Boys and girls should get the same importance in the society	91.7	100	0.083	0.162	94.4	100	0.056	0.331
Elders should stand beside adolescent in any and every problem	91.7	100	0.083	0.162	94.4	100	0.056	0.331
A careless attitude towards adolescents can bring serious trouble in their future life	91.7	100	0.083	0.162	94.4	100	0.056	0.331
Social problems like teasing, use of slangs make adolescents mentally depressed	87.5	100	0.125	0.083	77.8	100	0.222	0.04
In any physical or sexual problem the elders of the adolescents family should stand beside the	95.8	100	0.042	0.328	94.4	100	0.056	0.331
To aware adolescents regarding the evils of antisocial work is the duty of the elders of the family	95.8	100	0.042	0.328	100	100	0	1
Adolescents should be aware of their social and cultural heritage	95.8	100	0.042	0.328	100	100	0	1
Elders should respect the will of a teenage boy/girl	87.5	91.7	0.042	0.575	94.4	88.9	0.056	0.579
If the elders of the family misbehave with the adolescent then we should talk to them	95.8	100	0.042	0.328	94.4	100	0.056	0.331
Marriage before 18 years of age is punishable offence	95.8	95.8	0.000	1	100	100	0.000	1
Before 18 years of age teenage girls are not fully physically developed for conception	54.2	83.3	0.292	0.016	77.8	94.4	0.167	0.083
Getting pregnant before the age of 18 could cause both the child and the mother a great risk	62.5	91.7	0.292	0.032	66.7	100	0.333	0.01
Preventing child marriage is our moral duty	79.2	95.8	0.167	0.103	66.7	100	0.333	0.01
Do you know about Kanyashree prakalpa	45.8	91.7	0.458	0.001	88.9	100	0.111	0.163
Do you know about the Anwesha Prakalpa	16.7	79.2	0.625	0.000	5.6	100	0.944	0.000

It was found that the respondents improved their knowledge base vis a vis the questions after the sensitization program was over. In case of Layas, it was found that there was a significant increase in their knowledge level regarding marriage before 18 years, early pregnancy etc . A significant change was also noted in their information level relating to Kanyasree and Anwesha clinics which are government initiatives. Purohits equally and significantly enriched their knowledge relating to Anwesha clinic on attending this sensitization program. They were found to have been motivated to stop child marriage which is clearly reflected in their response after the sensitization programme.

Table 2: T-test result of pre and post sensitization programme of the Qazis:

Qs. No.	Questions	Pre-test correct answer	Post-test correct answer	Mean differences	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	In the adolescent period, there seems a number of changes in human body	86.67	100.00	.133	.164
2	These changes are natural	73.33	100.00	.267	.041
3	These changes are caused by some hormones generated in our body	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
4	Changes in the boys and girls in the adolescent periods are different	86.67	100.00	.133	.164
5	Boys and girls should know about these changes of the adolescent period in advance	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
6	In the adolescent period, boys and girls should be provided proper knowledge about the society and sexual changes	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
7	In this period, the adolescents may get harm from the same age groups	73.33	100.00	.267	.041
8	In the adolescent period, growth rate of the boys and girls are very high	86.67	93.33	.067	.334
9	For this growth, they need proper nutrition	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
10	The adolescents should be provided proper diet and nutrition	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
11	Are you aware of proper diet and nutrition?	40.00	66.67	.267	.104
12	Boys and girls of both have same rights in this society	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
13	In this period adolescent boys and girls should get same attention and importance regarding health matters	93.33	100.00	.067	.334
14	The adults of the family should aware and inform the adolescents about sexual matters	86.67	100.00	.133	.164
15	The elders of the family should stand by them in any problems	100.00	100.00	.067	.334

16	The negligence towards the adolescents in this time may cause greater problems in their future life	100.00	100.00	.067	.334
17	Arranging marriages of girls before 18 years is an illegal offence	93.33	93.33	.067	.334
18	Girls before 18 years of age are not ideal to conceive physically	86.67	86.67	.067	.334
19	Anaemia is one of the major problems in the adolescent period	86.67	100.00	.133	.164
20	For girls, menstruation is the sign of their bad health situation	26.67	53.33	.267	.041
21	Ejaculation makes a boy weak	6.67	40.00	.333	.019
22	The boys and girls should be aware and informed about dangers of the intoxicants	100.00	100.00	.133	.164
23	Social problems, like teasing, using abusive languages etc. make adolescent boys or girls mentally depressed	100.00	100.00	.133	.164
24	Do you know about the KANYASHREE Project?	60.00	93.33	.333	.019
25	Do you know about the ANWESHA Project?	0.00	73.33	.733	.000

From table 2 it is clear that there was a significant difference between the score of knowledge of Qazis before and after the awareness programme. Hence, it is evident that the awareness programme brought a positive impact to increase the knowledge level of Qazis regarding the adolescent health.

Case Study-1

Jamuna Mudi, a 13 years old tribal girl and a student of Class VII, did a daring deed. Her marriage was settled against her will. She participated earlier in the Radio Programme and knew that such marriage was not only illegal but hazardous for her health too; hence she protested. As a first step Jamuna called the groom's family and conveyed her unwillingness. Then on 13th of May, 2015 she fled from her home and took shelter at a centre for Children. Later, when support for her stand came from various corners in showers, her parents relented and now she happily pursues her education.

Case Study-2

Two Purohits, Mr. Sridhar Chattopadhyay and Mr. Basudev Mukhopadhyay of Pancha Charanpahari Kali Mandir (Goddess Kali Temple), declined to solemnize the marriage of a boy who was then 6 months short of 21. The Purohits said that they wanted to verify the Birth Certificates of both the bride and the groom and as they found that the boy was not yet eligible for marriage, they refused to get them married.

IV. Conclusion

It was found that participants improved their knowledge after attending the program. There is significant increase in the knowledge level of the Layas regarding the law and consequences of child marriage (p-value <0.01). There are also considerable changes in information level related to Government Programmes that are available. Purohits have also significantly enriched their knowledge related to the issue while they are found to be motivated to stop child marriage which is clearly reflected in their answers—as the pre-test and post-test indicated—the earlier attitude getting reversed after the sensitization program (p-value <0.01). The knowledge level of the Qazis regarding issues like changes during the adolescent period, risk from peer pressure, cause of menstruation and ejaculation, Kanyasree and Anwasha project had significantly (p<0.05) increased. The case studies are a clear evident of the fact that a well articulated behaviour change initiative can work effectively to fight against the evil practises of the society by changing the behaviour and perception of all the decision makers of the society.

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