

# EFFECT OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMME ON PERCEPTION OF ADOLESCENTS TOWARDS ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS

**Dr. Geetha. A**

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Maharani Women's Arts, Commerce and Management College, Seshadri Road, Bengaluru-560001.

**Abstract:** It is very important that a healthy intergenerational relationship is maintained for the betterment of the individual and the society. Application of psychological interventions to face this world with adolescents having positive attitude for the elderly is a need that is being felt in urgency. And hence study of the perception or attitude towards elderly among the rural adolescents and intervention to change the negative attitude was considered as a part of this study. Aim of the study was to evaluate the outcome of the intervention programme on changing the negative attitude/perception of adolescents towards the elderly. The study was conducted on adolescents studying in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard. A Before-After, experimental-control group design was used and follow-up / post assessment was conducted after three and half months of the pre assessment. Pre-post intervention assessment tool of Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test was used to assess the attitude/perception of adolescent's pre-post intervention. Statistical analysis was done using appropriate methods. The results indicated that there was a positive change in the perception of children towards elderly after intervention.

**Key words:** Intervention Programme, perception, adolescents, elderly

## INTRODUCTION:

The demographic trend in India has been towards an increasing number of elderly people. The present population of the elderly is estimated to touch 10 crore by end of 2013 and to 19.8 crore in 2030. A significant number of attitude investigations have found that individuals of different ages hold mixed to negative attitudes toward older people and the aging process (Burke, 1982; Caspi, 1984; Dobrosky & Bishop, 1986; Hummert, 1990; Miller, Blalock & Ginsburg, 1984; Rich, Myrick & Campbell, 1983; Sanders, Montgomery, Pittman & Balkwell, 1984; Seefeldt, 1987). A number of investigations indicate that children hold negative stereotypes regarding older people (Weinberger, 1979). Intervention studies by Carstensen, Mason, and Caldwell (1982); Blunk and Williams (1997) and Rich, Myrick and Campbell (1983) have showed that perceptions of children about the elderly can be positively changed. There is wide variation in the ways in which older persons are characterized in the various attitude inventories (Slotterback & Saarnio, 1996).

Different methods used to study the perception and attitude towards elderly are using photographs of unfamiliar older men and women, rating sketches of only female older people, rate older people in general and not prompt participants with pictures, story writing technique etc. Schools are compulsory institutions that have significant and sustained contact with most children during their formative years of personality development (Rutter, Tizard & Whitmore, 1970). Promotion of the interpersonal relationship in the contemporary emphasizes approaches which are creative, flexible and child-centered. Hence in the present study child-centered play way methods were used as intervention programme to change the perception of adolescents towards elderly Individuals.

## METHODOLOGY:

The objective was to study the impact of intervention programme on perception of adolescents towards elderly individuals. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant improvement in perception of adolescents towards elderly individuals after intervention programme. A Before-After, experimental-control group design was used and follow-up/post assessment was conducted after three and half months to four months of the pre assessment. The sample consisted of adolescents studying in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard aged between 14 and 15 years. The sample was assessed on the screening tool and considered as part of experimental and control group and then the adolescents were administered draw and describe an elderly person test which was devised for the study. Later experimental group was administered intervention and control group was not administered the intervention for one and half

months period. Later both the groups were post assessed on the draw and describe an elderly person test. The responses were scored and appropriate statistical analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

### **TOOL:**

#### **General Health Questionnaire (GHQ – 30 item version; Goldberg, 1972):**

The GHQ is a self-administered screening tool aimed at detecting those with psychological disturbances. It consists of questions about social activities and psychological and physical signs and symptoms. It reveals indications of depression, agitation, apathy and anxiety that are suggestive of emotional disorder. The original questionnaire consists of 60 items from which shorter versions of 30, 28, 20 and 12 items have been derived. The responses are recorded on a 4-point scale and are scored as 0-0-1-1. A cut-off score of 6 was used in the study (Range= 0 to 30). Psychometric properties are adequate with test-retest reliability found to be 0.77, and split half reliability at 0.92. The sensitivity and specificity of the GHQ-30 was 91.4% and 87% respectively (Goldberg & Williams, 1988).

The GHQ has been used in many Indian and Western studies with adolescent samples within the age range 12 – 20 years (Dalal, 1989; D'Arcy & Siddique, 1984; Nandini, 1996; Rao, 1978; Sonpar, 1982). It has been recommended as screening measure for psychological distress (Banks, 1983).

#### **Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test (Devised for the study):**

This test was devised to assess the perception of the children and adolescents regarding elderly individuals. In this test they are to be given sheets of paper, pencil, eraser and crayons, and they are instructed to draw an elderly person by using the materials given to them. There is no time limit and once the child reports that the task was completed, they are instructed to draw an elderly person of the opposite gender they had already drawn. Once this task is also completed they are asked to describe these elderly person's individually in five sentences, they are also asked to give a name to these individual drawings and their approximate ages. Drawings could be analyzed in terms of the physical features, colouring, and activity level of the elderly in the drawing (action) etc. The sentences are analyzed in terms of positive, negative and neutral perception for individual genders for the entire group content analysis of the sentences is to be done.

The test-retest of the same task (after interval of 3 months duration), showed a mild improvement in drawing skills but the frequency of statements of description remained almost the same. This type of test was devised to assess the perception of the children regarding elderly individuals, as it projects the individuals perception of elderly through the drawing, children and adolescents would like activities like this, at the same point of time could avoid limitations of verbal/oral expression, social desirability bias etc.

### **PROCEDURE:**

The 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard rural students group was considered for intervention. Initially the adolescents were administered a screening tool of General Health Questionnaire, and adolescents below the cut-off point were further administered the assessment tools of Describe an Elderly Person Test. Later on adolescents were grouped into experimental and control group. Adolescents in the experimental group were divided into small clusters of five to seven or ten individuals depending on type of activities. The intervention programme was carried on with experimental group. The intervention programme consisted of activities namely art work, games, word and vocabulary activities, cultural activities and other activities. Each activity was conducted on each day for one and half hours duration. The activities were repeated for eight weeks spread across one and half to two months. Later the adolescents were allowed to carry on the programme, being supervised by trained personal for next two months period. After three and half months to four months of pre-assessment, post assessment was conducted by administering post-assessment tools on both the groups of experimental and control.

#### **List of categories of activities involved in intervention programme package:**

Drawing, coloring, drawing on KG card board, sprinkles drawing, mural work- related to topics like me – through the age', 'me-now and when I am old', venue diagram, family tree and craft work; Games and play activities- blind folded and finding person, walking single legged with help of the stick etc.; Word and vocabulary games- story construction, storytelling and enacting-general and elderly, riddles and proverbs, story writing, reading story books, naming activities of elderly and enacting, role play 1 and 2; Cultural activities- Song written and practiced by elderly, dance thought by elderly, mimicking day to day activity of elderly, pick and speak etc.

**ANALYSIS OF RESULTS:****Analysis of data was done under the headings of:**

Pre – intervention (Base line) comparison of the experimental and control group using independent ‘t’ test; Intervention outcome evaluation using Paired ‘t’ tests; Post-intervention comparison of the experimental and control group using Independent ‘t’ test ; Effect size estimation using effect Size (ES; Cohen, 1977)

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Rural adolescent students of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard were administered the assessment tools of Describe an Elderly Person Test. Later on adolescents were grouped into experimental and control group. Children in the experimental group were divided into small clusters of five to seven or ten individuals depending on type of activities. The intervention programme was carried on with experimental group. After three and half months to four months of pre-assessment, post assessment was conducted by administering post-assessment tools on both the groups of experimental and control.

**Table 1: Sample characteristics across class - gender and rural education school:**

No of students											
Type of school	Age range	Class	Experimental group			Control group			Over all		
			Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Rural school	12-13	8 <sup>th</sup>	15	7	22	6	5	11	21	12	33
	13-14	9 <sup>th</sup>	17	8	25	11	5	16	28	13	41
		Total	32	15	47	17	10	27	49	25	74

**Table 2: Pre-intervention (base line) comparison of the mean scores of experimental and control group:**

Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test					
Areas of the test	Group	N	Mean	S D	‘t’ Value
Female Positive	Experimental	46	1.15	0.79	0.16
	Control	27	1.19	0.96	
Female Negative	Experimental	46	1.87	1.64	0.26
	Control	27	1.78	0.97	
Female Neutral	Experimental	46	1.98	1.63	0.17
	Control	27	2.04	0.85	
Male Positive	Experimental	46	1.07	0.65	0.52
	Control	27	1.15	0.66	
Male Negative	Experimental	46	1.78	1.50	0.86
	Control	27	2.07	1.21	
Male Neutral	Experimental	46	2.11	1.51	1.01
	Control	27	1.78	1.01	
t values indicating not significant at 0.01 or 0.05 level					

Adolescents having 90% attendance during intervention period were considered for the analysis. Adolescents who are not exposed to any other intervention programme apart from their regular schooling activities were considered for the analysis. Through the process of administration of tests pre and post-intervention if there was incompleteness on the tests data even such cases were not considered for the analysis, and the students who were irregular and who dropped out of school even their data was not considered for further analysis. Finally the sample consisted of 375 rural adolescent students of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard respectively, aged between 14 and 15 years as indicated in table 1. Both boys and girls were part of the study.

Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test was devised to assess the perception of the children regarding elderly individuals. In this test children are instructed to draw an elderly person male and female and they are asked to describe these elderly person’s individually in five sentences. The sentences are analyzed in terms of positive, negative and neutral perception for individual genders. In terms of analyzing the scores in positive, negative and neutral perception for individual genders the scores indicate that the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard group as a whole has given more neutral attributes, followed by negative attributes for both elderly male and female. The group as a whole has given less positive attributes when compared to negative and neutral attributes for both elderly male and female.

**Table 3: Average scores of students on Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test:**

Test	8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> standard	
	Average score	SD
Female positive	1.18	0.85
Female negative	1.82	1.42
Female neutral	2.00	1.37
Male positive	1.11	0.65
Male negative	1.89	1.39
Male neutral	1.97	1.34

**Table 4: Outcome evaluation: Pre-test - Post-test comparison of the mean scores of experimental and control group pre - post intervention on Test:**

Test/Group	Exptal pre		Exptal post		(N=47)	Control pre		Control post		(N=27)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	't' value	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	't' value
Female Positive	1.17	0.79	2.47	0.65	19.25**	1.19	0.96	1.30	1.20	0.65
Female Negative	1.85	1.63	1.23	1.27	8.61**	1.78	0.97	1.93	1.47	0.78
Female Neutral	1.98	1.61	1.3	1.20	9.06**	2.04	0.85	1.81	1.18	1.19
Male Positive	1.09	0.65	2.23	0.43	11.40**	1.15	0.66	1.04	0.81	0.72
Male Negative	1.79	1.49	1.23	1.20	2.85*	2.07	1.21	2.15	1.35	0.44
Male Neutral	2.09	1.5	1.53	1.06	2.78*	1.78	1.01	1.81	1.21	0.19

\*Significant at 0.005 level  
\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 5: Post-intervention comparison of the mean scores of experimental and control group post-intervention on assessment tool:**

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test					
Female Positive	Experimental	46	2.46	0.66	5.34**
	Control	27	1.30	1.20	
Female Negative	Experimental	46	1.24	1.29	2.09*
	Control	27	1.93	1.47	
Female Neutral	Experimental	46	1.30	1.21	1.76
	Control	27	1.81	1.18	
Male Positive	Experimental	46	2.22	0.42	8.24**
	Control	27	1.04	0.81	
Male Negative	Experimental	46	1.24	1.21	2.96**
	Control	27	2.15	1.35	
Male Neutral	Experimental	46	1.54	1.07	1.00
	Control	27	1.81	1.21	
	Control	27	72.44	32.81	

\*Significant at 0.005 level  
\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

**Table 6: Effect size estimates of intervention programme outcome on assessment tool:**

Test	Group	Mean	S D	ES	ES(d)	Effect
Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test						
Female Positive	Experimental	2.46	0.66	1.29	1.28	Large
	Control	1.3	1.2			
Female Negative	Experimental	1.24	1.29	0.51	0.50	Medium
	Control	1.93	1.47			
Female Neutral	Experimental	1.30	1.21	0.43	0.42	Small
	Control	1.81	1.18			
Male Positive	Experimental	2.22	0.42	2.00	1.98	Large
	Control	1.04	0.81			
Male Negative	Experimental	1.24	1.21	0.72	0.71	Medium
	Control	2.15	1.35			
Male Neutral	Experimental	1.54	1.07	0.24	0.24	Small
	Control	1.81	1.21			
	Control	72.44	32.81			

There was significant difference between means of the experimental pre-group and experimental post-group for different subtests of female positive, female negative, female neutral, male positive, male negative and male neutral on Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test. Whereas there was no significant difference between means of the control pre-group and control post-group for different subtests of female positive, female negative, female neutral, male positive, male negative, and male neutral on Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test.

Post-hoc analysis using independent 't' test on assessment tool and their sub tests for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard group were done for experimental and control group post-intervention to compare and see if experimental group was significantly better in comparison to control group (after intervention for experimental group and without intervention for control group). There was significant difference between means of the experimental post-group and control post-group for different subtests of female positive, female negative, male positive, male negative on Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test. There was no significant difference between the means of experimental post-group and control post- for different subtests of female neutral and male neutral on Draw and Describe an Elderly Person Test.

For different subtests of female neutral and male neutral on Draw and describe an elderly person test the effect size was of small range indicating small effect of intervention. For different subtests of female negative and male negative on Draw and describe an elderly person test the effect size was of medium range indicating medium effect of intervention on these aspects. For different subtests of female positive, and male positive the effect size was of large, indicating large effect of intervention on this area.

Overall as the above results indicate that the group as a whole is according to the hypothesis stated that there will be a significant improvement in positive and negative attitude towards male and female elderly after intervention programme.

Interventions have been conducted on different groups to enhance different aspects of intergenerational relationship, attitude and perception towards elderly. Some of the studies as conducted by different researchers are for the groups of elementary and high school student's (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Kamenir, 1983; Rich, Myrick, & Campbell, 1983; Couper, Sheehan & Thomas, 1991). Different Interventions have been used to enhance different aspects of intergenerational relationship, attitude and perception towards elderly. Some of the studies as conducted by different researchers have used different Intervention techniques like Curriculum, five hour intergeneration workshop, guidance unit about older persons, mini-course on aging, intergenerational technique –intervention contact (Blunk & Williams, 1997; Couper, Sheehan & Thomas, 1991; Rich, Myrick, & Campbell, 1983; Kamenir, 1983; Carstensen, Mason & Caldwell, 1982).

Play is useful for learning to get along with others and developing social skills such as sharing, taking turns, sympathy, and even develop moral values. According to Brems (1993) play helps children in Relationship functions which allow children to learn about roles, to explore relationships among people, to work through conflict in relationships, to feel connected to others. Processes in play as mentioned by Russ (1998) include interpersonal

Processes where in development of empathy is learnt through the expression of concern for and caring about others. Interpersonal schema/Self–other representation happens through the level of development of self–other differentiation and capacity for trusting others. Games are a fundamental part of human education (Ellis, 1973; Piaget, 1962). Representative games play an important role in the education of youth (Roberts J, 1959). Story telling has been an important means of making sense of the environment and of transmitting information, knowledge and wisdom from generation to generation. Fables, myths, fairy tales and legends have been developed for the purpose of transmitting values and knowledge (Pellowski, 1977).

Many of these aspects were considered and play-way method of intervention programme was used for the present study to bring in change in intergenerational relationship, attitude and perception towards elderly in children. For 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard on different subtests of female neutral and male neutral on Draw and describe an elderly person test the effect size was of small range indicating small effect of intervention. For different subtests of female negative and male negative on Draw and describe an elderly person test the effect size was of medium range indicating medium effect of intervention on these aspects. For different subtests of female positive, and male positive the effect size was of large, indicating large effect of intervention on this area.

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

These implications are outlined, based on the empirical evidence and observations made during the present study. Many of the assessment tools have been highly loaded on verbal ability, which was difficult to be used with rural children. Many students in such areas are first generation literates attending schools. Assessment tools had to be modified to suit this group. Hence there is a need to keep these things in mind and standardise tools to this population also.

The base line scores and levels of the group on assessment tool for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard rural education school adolescent students indicate that on aspects elderly these students showed limitations and negative attitude. It is necessary that early intervention programmes are delivered to such groups for change of attitude.

The rural government schools are unlikely to be provided with costly infrastructure and educational facilities required to children and hence child-friendly play-way methods can be used as intervention programmes.

The present study has shown that there was a positive impact of child friendly, child- directed play-way method on change of perception of the elderly individuals. Such methods can be used as intervention programmes or can also be made a part of the curriculum, so that it is practiced on regular basis.

For regularising the programme there need not be a well trained individual, rather there is a need for individual who believes in child directed rather than adult directed learning. The programmers have to acts as a catalyst and provide the time, space and the materials. All that the children need is some encouragement and supervision.

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