

### ABSTRACT

The present study is a part of the Infancy Project in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University Baroda, and aimed to develop an Infant Stimulation Programme to train Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), the grassroot level workers of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The training programme was envisaged to help AWWs to work with mothers of young children, for fostering infants' development.

The Infant Stimulation Programme aimed at creating understanding of infant's developmental milestones and processes as well as related stimulation activities. The milestones for development were derived mainly from Bayley's Scales of Infant Development (BSID) and field observations. The programme included : (a) Motor and mental milestones of development from birth to 30 months, (b) stimulation activities to foster development and (c) guidelines to implement the programme to mothers. To make the programme interesting, relevant and easily comprehensible, the messages in the programme were conveyed through folklore, puppetry and Bhavai (a local form of dance-drama).

A quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test control group was used to study the effectiveness of the training programme on : (a) AWWs' awareness regarding infant development and stimulation, (b) mother-infant interactions and (c) infants' motor and mental development. The sample consisted of 28 AWWs

(experimental,  $n = 18$ ; control,  $n = 10$ ) and 54 mother-infant dyads (experimental  $n = 37$ ; control,  $n = 17$ ). The tools used were NIPCCD (National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development) calendar, BSID slides of developmental milestones, formative evaluation checklist and programme implementation checklist for AWWs, observation cum interview schedule for mother-infant dyads and motor and mental scales of BSID for infants.

Results of the study indicated that the implementation of the programme had made a significant impact on certain areas at all the three levels. The results of the chi-square test show that number of AWWs in the experimental group showing the pre-post test gains above 35 percent were significantly more ( $p < .01$ ) than that of the control group, indicating an increase in AWW's (E) knowledge regarding developmental milestones of infancy and related stimulation activities. The percentage scores for both organizational and implementation skills were found to be above 79 percent for all the 18 AWWs (E), reflecting their competence to conduct the programme with the mothers.

Observations of mother-infant interactions showed an increase in frequencies of supportive interactions for 'affectionate verbal approach', 'visual and auditory stimulation', and providing toys/objects to infants' were seen in the experimental group whereas the post-test scores of the control group for the same had decreased. The results of the Multiple Classification Analysis showed that the effect of intervention on

supportive verbal interactions of mother-infant dyads was significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the experimental group as compared to the control group.

Significant gain in the mental development of infants, as measured by BSID was also seen, reflecting that the mothers were able to put into practice the knowledge gained from the AWWs. Further, the supervisors of ICDS reported that the AWWs have been using the programme during their home visits and monthly meetings, even after the study was completed. Implications for the design and implementation of early intervention programmes are discussed.