

# **An Intervention to Optimize the Fulfilment of Children Needs Through Strengthening Mothers**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Children are born with physical, psychological and social capacities allowing them to communicate, learn and develop. (Evans, et al, 2000) The provision of children needs plays a key role towards the fulfilment of these capacities. It determines the growth, development and the future success of every child. Parents and family have a big role when fulfilling the children needs. (Loh, 2009) In Sri Lanka primary health care system delivers the services focusing on the fulfilment of children needs. However, there are gaps in the expected improvement. Sometimes even though the children receive their requirements through the natural environment, the quality and quantity is not appropriate. Therefore a new approach is needed to address this gap. The objective of this study was to improve the provision of full range of children needs through strengthening their mothers. Material and psychological needs were considered in this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study setting**

A quasi – experimental study design was used in two villages from Anuradhapura district with similar socio demographic background. These communities were selected in appropriate distance to overcome cross contamination.

### **Study sample**

The intervention group consisted of 35 families (Especially mothers) with a child below five years of age in Ellawewa village and the control group without intervention consisted of 33 families (Especially mothers) with a child below five years of age in Thodamaduwa village.

## **Study period**

Intervention activities were carried out from July 2009 to March 2010.

## **Intervention**

Intervention activities were implemented through cluster groups which were created at the weighing centre. Leaders were selected for each cluster group by the group members to facilitate them. First week of every month, leaders were gathered to review and plan the activities for the next month. All mothers met in the weighing centre every second week of the month with a new topic related to the intervention. During that gathering they shared their experiences and achievements of the past month. In the third and fourth weeks of month, the researcher visited the cluster groups and facilitated discussions on the new topic. The interventions were targeted at both the mother and the father. Getting fathers' involvement was mainly through the mothers. Throughout the intervention period self developed tools named 'intervention tool box', 'explanation calendar', 'flash cards' and power point presentations were used to conduct participatory discussions on concepts of early childhood care and development. In this study interventions were mainly focused on the provision of six different pre selected needs namely, nutrition, sanitation and immunization; love, protection and responsive adult relationship; learning opportunities; opportunities for self-esteem; opportunities for socialization and opportunities for emotional development. A logical framework was used to facilitate this process towards the intended objectives of this study.

## **Data collection**

Quantitative data collection methods were used to assess mothers' knowledge, attitude and skills on the provision of children's needs. Pre and post intervention questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data.

## **Analysis of data**

Specialized computer statistical package, MINITAB 15 was used for the analysis of quantitative data. Results of intervention and control groups were compared to see whether there is a significant difference among them.

## RESULTS

**Table 1 : Changes in mothers' knowledge on children needs**

Type of Needs	Improvement (%)			
	Intervention		Control	
	P value (P<0.05)			
	0.004		0.807	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1.Nutrition, sanitation and Immunization	88%	100%	93%	96%
2.Love, protection and responsive adult relationship	37%	91%	42%	18%
3.Learning opportunities	20%	88%	40%	03%
4.Opportunities to self esteem	00%	51%	00%	00%
5.Opportunities to socialization	00%	62%	00%	03%
6.Opportunities to emotional development	00%	11%	00%	00%

As it is evident from the above table pre evaluation marks were comparatively similar in both study groups. When comparing post evaluation results on knowledge of first need, there was no significant difference between the two groups. When compared to the control group, the knowledge on second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth needs were significantly improved in the intervention group by 54%, 68%, 51%, 62% and by 11% respectively.

There was a statistically significant improvement in the knowledge on children's needs of intervention area with compared to the control area 0.004 (P< 0.05).

**Table 2 : Changes in mothers' practices on the fulfilment of children needs**

Type of Needs	Improvement (%)			
	Intervention		Control	
	P value(P<0.05)			
	0.00		0.165	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1.Nutrition, sanitation and Immunization	28%	100%	00%	09%
2.Love, protection and responsive adult relationship	03%	57%	09%	09%
3.Learning opportunities	22%	94%	21%	18%
4.Opportunities to self esteem	03%	86%	03%	00%
5.Opportunities to socialization	00%	71%	00%	03%
6.Opportunities to emotional development	00%	26%	00%	00%

As shown in table 2 at the pre evaluation stage there was no significant difference between intervention and control group regarding mothers' practices on children needs.

The comparison of post evaluation results, show that there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding mothers' practices on the fulfilment of children needs. However, there is an improvement on the practice of first need in control group, because mothers normally considered, feeding of their child was a need. The improvement of scores of two groups in this regard also showed a statistically significant difference.

## **DISCUSSION**

Before the interventions, mothers' knowledge and practices on children needs were limited and mainly focused on the provision of food and medicine. The focus on the provision of stimulation and brain development was poor in both groups. Sometimes parents unintentionally provide stimulation to children without proper knowledge on relationship between stimulations and cognitive development of the child. According to the results of this study, the health promotion intervention was effective to make changes in mothers' knowledge and practices on children needs. Some of the evaluation methods which were used during the intervention period such as participatory discussions and home visits helped to enhance family members' enthusiasm and specially fathers' participation on the provision of needs. Therefore the fulfilment of children needs was improved successfully.

## **CONCLUSION**

Health promotion interventions that consisted of guidance, demonstration and participatory discussions were able to enhance the level of interest and the involvement of the parent in the process of fulfilling children needs.

## **REFERENCES**

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